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## CONTENTS

Hussain mentions that Chambial's poetry ceases hatred flames. P.V. Laxmi Prasad finds the tenets of life crafted on Hindu philosophy in his paper. Prof. SC Dwivedi and Dr. B.K. Dubey who are known as the Rishi poet and modern poet have been highlighted by K.K Kapoor, A.K Choudahry and O.N. Gupta in their respective papers. Duo poets reflect Indianness throughout their works that make them the outstanding literary personalities of the country.

All these five Indian English poets are twinkling across the literary horizon of India and abroad .

'A.K. Choudhary's Poems At A Glance'. Austrian poet Kurt F. Svatek appreciates his poetic style with full- throated ease in his scholarly paper entitled 'Glimpse of Arbind Kumar Choudhary's Poems.'P.J. Sammut , Maltese poet , becomes madonna of his poetic wine in general and the quatrain in particular in his paper 'Poetry of A.K.Choudhary from India. Prof. NDR Chandra , VC at Bastar University, CG ,inhales his poetic essence on one hand and the essence of his multiplicity of love on the other in all his conscience .Prof.S.C. Dwivedi ranks him with Spenser and observes a bubbling fountain of imageries and master of pictorial qualities in his paper 'Multifarious Manifestation of A.K.Choudahry'. Prof.S.C. Dwivedi's mind blowing paper entitled 'Arbindonean Poetic Style' brings to light the chronological sequence of words wreathed artistically in his poems. His interview with D.C. Chambial is also of great poetic interest . Dr. Mahashwata Chaturvedi calls him a literary infantry and bard rather than poet in her paper 'Poetic Flavor of A.K.Choudhary' while Prof. T.V. Reddy explores technical virtuosity in his paper 'Technical Virtuosity in the Poetry of A.K.Choudhary'. Reddy assesses that his portrayal of the political leaders as the product of caste, corruption and compromise speaks volumes about his keen perception andawareness.He is the most influential poet who has been promoting the peeping poets with great poetic potentiality in India. Prof.SCDwivedi writes in his paper 'Multiferous Manifestations of A.K.Choudhary':" The other poetic quality that makes this poet a father figure is the uses of the proverbial lines that strike the reader's mind time and again and also stirs sensations to them.The phrasal words that the poet puts in one stanza after another make him phrasal king in the literary world."(p.115)

D.C.Chambial exhales verse as a flower exhales fragrance as claimed byA.K.Choudhary in his paper 'Impact of English Writers on D.C. Chambial'. A.K. Choudhary finds romantic essence throughout his works that make him primarily a romantic poet of this century. Prof.A.J.Sebastian finds eco-thoughts in his poetry while Dr. Shujaat





## EDITORIAL

Perspectives on literature or, rather literary texts have undergone drastic shifts through the centuries. While earlier, literary texts were considered as products of the author's imagination, with the advent of Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis of culture, texts have been thought of as involved in a play of dispersed, multiple, variable meanings and readings. Following Barthes, Cultural Materialists and the Frankfurt school of Neo-Marxists strongly assert the "worldliness" of texts thereby highlighting the socio-cultural perspectives of literature. In such a context, we launch the twelfth edition of our peer-reviewed Research journal PURSUITS with the avowed intention of expanding, enhancing and strengthening the relevance of socio-cultural perspectives of all literatures. We hope that the articles contained in this issue will serve this purpose to a great extent.

We are grateful to our contributors and readers for their continued support and encouragement which would not only promote scholarly pursuits but also establish our Research journal PURSUITS as a valuable, quality resource material.

**Dr.W.S.Kottiswari**

**Book Review**

- Name of Anthology-Five Indian English Poets, 2014
- Name of Publisher-Paradise Publisher, Rs.1395/, Jaipur
- Name of the Editors-Prof.R.A.Singh & Dr.Ashok Yadav
- Name of Reviewer: Dr.Sanjay Kumar Choudhary, Associate Professor of English, Mendipathar College, Mendipathar, Meghalaya.

'Five Indian English Poets' ( 2014) is edited by Prof. R.A. Singh and Dr. Ashok. Kr Yadav is a new literary adventure for the poetry lovers in India. The anthology that is published by Paradise Publishers, Jaipur, incorporates five dazzling English poets – Stephen Gill ,Arbind Kumar Choudhary , DC Chambial , SC Dwivedi and B.K. Dubey known worldwide for their poetic iridescences in all their conscience .

Stephen Gill who is an Indian by birth but Canadian by settlement has a number of poetry collections in English , Hindi and Punjabi through which he propagates the message of peace and brotherhood for all those suffering from the piggish philosophy of hatred and annihilation in this monetary minded monocracy. Les Merton, English bard, observes poetic journalism and peace in his works while B.R. Barman becomes the suitor of his words and expressions that rarely go over the head of the common masses. To Aju Mukhopadhyay poet Stephen Gill dwells between countries.

Arbind Kumar Choudhary inhales the poetic flavor for spiritual sanctity in life. The prime purpose of his poetic life is to preach the message of peace for the trouble torn society. AKChoudhary, the most starry literary star, has been much liked by the foreign critics- B.M. Jackson, Kurt F. Svatek and P.J. Sammut on one hand and the Indian critics Prof. NDR Chandra, Prof. S.C. Dwivedi, Prof. T.V. Reddy and Dr. Mahashweta Chaturvedi on the other. B.M .Jackson, English reviewer, appreciates his poetic philosophy and ideal style of presentation in his paper

## OUR CHILDREN OF GAZA

**Dr. Vijay Nair**

I am the tear-stained face
In the snapshot without a name
I am the price you pay
In the war of words
Day after day after day

I am the laughter
Hushed by the sirens
And missiles of the night
I am the darkness
After the blazing light

I am the silent scream
Trapped inside your head
The blood-splattered dream
You wake up to
In the birdless dawn of the dead





## ARTIST AS RECREATOR OF THE AGE: A STUDY OF MADHAVIKUTTY'S WORKS FROM THE SOCIO-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

**Dr. Kamala K.**

Very often it is possible to construct the history and culture of a place by looking into the literature produced there. Although literature is primarily meant to be read and enjoyed, it does serve other purposes like reflecting the characteristics of the place and age wherein it emerged. Each literary work is a rich repertoire of facts teeming with social, cultural, psychological, and biographical undertones. On systematic analysis, some literary works are found to be treasure houses of many unseen and forgotten facets of certain periods of history. Creative works are classified and titled depending on which factor outweighs and subdues the others. When it comes to voluminous works especially, language is not a mere carrier of linguistic messages; the function of literary language goes beyond the level of mere denotation. J.A. Fishman, a leading sociologist of the twentieth century speaks about language and literature in the following terms:

> Language is not merely a means of interpersonal communication and influence. It is not merely a carrier of content, whether latent or manifest. Language itself is content, a referent for loyalties, and animosities, an indicator of social statuses and personal relationships, a maker of situations and topics as well as of the societal roles and large-scale value-laden arenas of interaction that typify every speech community. (4)

No work of literature can stand in isolation as a closed structure. Literature incorporates cultural aspects as well as social concepts like power, class,

status, solidarity ,and conflict .The two terms 'cultural' and 'social' need to be elaborated a little bit in order to do justice to the topic under study.

People often use the two terms interchangeably; but a fine distinction between the two goes like this: 'Culture' is a very elaborate term which includes multiple elements like family organization, economic systems, customs, traditions, dress and food habits, religion, language and laws. The term 'social' is used in the context of referring to the net work or fabric made up of people. 'Social' is more about the interactions between people or how the intentions or needs of others become important. 'Culture' refers to the symbolic structures like religion, arts, and beliefs that give meanings to human activities. 'Culture' can be taken as the sum total of the inherited ideas, beliefs, values and knowledge which constitute the shared bases of social action. Culture has many dimensions: one is the normative system which makes people follow ethical norms. The second dimension is the expressive system which consists of art, dance, music and literature. Another dimension is the system of ideas which enables members of a society to interpret the world meaningfully.

In the words of Einar Haugen, "The true environment of a language is the society that uses it as one of its codes. Language exists only in the minds of its readers and it only functions in relating these users to one another and to nature i.e. their social and natural environment" (57). It provides a very interesting study as to how literary content as well as literary language evince, both overtly and covertly, the sociocultural background of the age.

Kerala's beloved writer Madhavikkuty has left behind her many novels which recreate the family atmosphere of her mother's ancestral home and also the society and age which were different from the immediate society around her and in return she enriched the society and nation with her language. In her autobiographical works *Balyakalasmaranakal, Neermathalam Poothakaalam, Januamma Paranja Kadha* and others Madhavikutty is at her best portraying the people around her who, in turn, expose the social fabric of Kerala much more vividly than perhaps historical narratives.





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he ends his speech with, "I myself, O Arjuna, am not sinful. The wretched Drona was a hater of his disciples. Fight now. Victory will be thine" (469). While Dhrishtadyumna enjoys the authority to judge what is sin and otherwise, Ekalavya and Karna are unable to do so. The hegemony judges their actions and determines their agency. The same hegemony invests the Kshatriya prince with power of a different sort-it invests him with agency to choose and act. He is driven by power and that becomes both the means and the end of his vocation. Thus, structure and agency combine to give him the freedom to be forceful in not too subtle a manner.

The rules pertaining to *Gurubhakthi* (devotion to the preceptor) thus seems to differ according to the social class of the disciples. Karna and Ekalavya are both victims and they were made to pay with their lives for the extraordinary skill they possessed in archery, the domain of the Kshatriyas. Drona aspired to power by using his knowledge to help the Kuru Dynasty and thus attain the status of the unquestionable *guru.* Drona as the practioner and the perpetrator of the dominant ideology dies by the same. He pays the price for transgressing the *Varnashrama dharma* otherwise the hegemonic structure. While Karna and Ekalavya become the ideal obedient subjects, the same cannot be said of Dhrishtadyumna. Dhrishtadyumna stands at the other end of the power structure. As the appointed protector of the system, he vigorously and vociferously uses his power. There is no subtlety in his use of power. He is the manipulator or the symbol of hegemony who works to maintain the power structure at any cost-one who forcefully demands obedience from the subject.

The study does not intend to undermine the divinity associated to knowledge and the teacher in an ancient culture. But it would be a mistake to neglect the undercurrents of power and exploitation inherent in the system. Voices of protest have always been in all ages, against all rigid systems. It is the rebel's voice that brings out the darker side and it is through his voice that the narrative acquires new dimensions.





Madhavikkutty, one of the most renowned female writers ever born in Kerala, still remains a source of inspiration to the young and the old alike, even after her death in 2009. She is special for many reasons; the brilliant panorama of her creative works projects characters and situations as though they are part of our everyday lives. There is nothing redundant in her descriptions; each character has a role to play in the real drama of life she/ he lived. Madhavikutty, through her female characters, excels in conveying the strength of feminity and her desire to love and be loved. As the greatest ambassador of love she teaches womanhood that it is her right to love and be loved.

Born at Punnayurkulam in present day Thrissur district in the year 1934, to V.M Nair (he started his official life as a company executive in Calcutta and later became the Managing Director of Mathrubhoomi publications) and Nalappat Balamaniamma (the reputed poetess of Kerala who wrote profusely on motherhood and maternal love), the author had her initial schooling in a European institution in Calcutta. Born to illustrious parents, she had the opportunity to come in to contact with celebrities from all walks of life and be exposed to a wide range of experiences. The insecure life in Calcutta imposed by the colonial regime took Kamala and her elder brother to their maternal ancestral home in Punnayurkulam. Owing to the riots related to freedom struggle, she had to move frequently between Calcutta and her ancestral home. She spent a few years in her mother's home called Nalappat. It was a highly respected 'nair' family of those days and as affirmed by the author in many works, she cherishes the childhood days in Nalappat more than the city life in which she used to feel lonely and neglected very often. The stay at Nalappat opened up a whole new world of dreams, fantasies, and realities different from those of the city. The author's name which her parents had given was 'Kamala'. For fear that she might offend the sense of morality of her grandmother as she started writing from the depth of her heart, she adopted the pen name Madhavikkutty so that she could remain unidentified. The two names Madhavikkutty and Kamala are used interchangeably in this paper and they carry no special import.

Madhavikkutty wrote poems, stories and bigger works depicting her childhood experiences in the Nalappat household. Her autobiographical works *Varshangalkumunpu, Balyakaalasmaranakal, Neermathalam Poothakaalam,* and *Januamma Pranja Kadha,* are true records of the childhood days of the author when the feudal system and its evil effects were shared by a large majority of the society. Kamala was different, from early childhood, as a girl who had an eye for all that went around her; an ear for all that she heard and a superb sensibility for all finer aspects of life. The influence of the educated parents, the scholarly gatherings in the Nalappat house, the Calcutta background – all helped to illumine the genius in the young girl and gradually the girl flew on the wings of poesy. During her childhood days in Nalappat, her grandmother's brother, Nalappat Narayana Menon, was the head of the family. He was a gifted writer and a well known literary figure of the period. Literary meetings and discussions were very frequent in the house and such an atmosphere flamed the young girl's literary talents and also created in her awareness about the social and political conditions of the day. Herein lies the significance of studying the author's works from a socio cultural perspective.

On many occasions Kamala recollects how strong an influence Mahatma Gandhi held in the lives of her parents as well as many elders. Although, as a small girl, she was unhappy about practicing extreme simplicity in life style as advocated by Gandhi, her parents wanted to convince her that every one's hopes lay in Gandhi and that if the country is to be saved , people should follow the ideal set by him. As a student in Calcutta, she very well knew about the discriminating power of the colonial regime and the need to overthrow it. In *Ente Kadha*, she laments over the bitter experiences she underwent as a school student in Calcutta in this way, "It is in this school that I first experienced the cruel intensity of racial discrimination. The teachers of the school who used to kiss the white skinned students and carry them on their laps never even once called me near them or touch me" (42).

Madhavikkutty's works, especially her memory works are a record of the cultural practices and social interactions of the age. Kamala recollects





The irony lies in the fact that Drona ultimately is killed by Dhrishtadyumna, one of his disciples. Dhrishtadyumna uses the same source of knowledge to his advantage- to wreak revenge on Drona. Where Karna and Ekalavya fail, Dhrishtadyumna manipulates his understanding and power over the system to defend his stand. In the Drona Parva, Dhrishtadyumna's retort to Arjuna's accusation of killing one's *guru* seems to be the voice of a revolutionary:

> Fallen off from the duties of his own order and practising those of the Kshatriya order, that achiever of wicked deeds used to slay us by means of superhuman weapons. Professing himself to be a Brahmana, he was in the habit of using irresistible illusion. By an illusion itself hath he been slain today. (464)

Here, Dhrishtadyumna seems to be affected more by the fact that Drona was disloyal to his Dharma( duty assigned by caste) of imparting knowledge and performing sacrifices. Dhrishtadyumna's voice seems to be that of a Kshatriya, infuriated at the Brahmana entering his domain. It is Drona's skill in archery that disturbs him; archery being the monopoly of Kshatriyas. His hatred for Drona is founded on the enmity between Drona and Drupada, Dhrishtadyumna's father. "It is well known that my hostility with the preceptor has descended from sire to son" (465). He tries to justify his act citing the Kshatriya Dharma "to slay or to be slain" and hopes to escape from the sin of Brahmahatya (killing a Brahmana) by arguing that Drona did not pursue the pious life of a Brahmana and hence did not deserve the dignity due to a Brahmana. It is interesting to note that Dhrishtadyumna views his killing of his *guru* from the *Varnashrama* perspective and he is not a bit moved by the guilt of killing his teacher. There is no mention of Dhrishtadyumna being affected by the sin anywhere in the epic. Thus the social system in those times as represented in the epic seems to subtly enforce the prevalent power structures. Thus, the *Shishyadharma* does not seem to apply to Dhrishtadyumna, the prince of Panchala. Neither is it applicable to the Pandavas, including Arjuna, who fought against Bhishma and Drona with the encouragement of Krishna, who justified their actions as *Kshatriya Dharma*. Dhrishtadyumna leaves Arjuna dumbfounded when

Ekalavya, the tribal boy, suffers a fate worse than that of Karna. He becomes the most hapless victim of the system. Drona blemished the glory of the venerable preceptor when he demanded Ekalavya's finger. Here too, it seems, it is Arjuna's anxiety over the forester boy's archery skill that forced Drona to commit this heinous act. Moreover, it was humiliating for Drona to see a Nishada (forester) doing better archery than the valiant princes of the Kuru dynasty. This is exactly why Drona had turned down Ekalavya's request to become his disciple. Drona had promised to Arjuna that there would be no archer to better him. It must also be remembered that Drona's own humble beginnings as a poor Brahmin merited him the scorn of his childhood friend Drupada. Yet this does not make him considerate to other less privileged people. Seen in this way, the life of Drona is an example for an individual who is at once a perpetrator and a victim. But Drona's mastery in Dhanurveda (the science of archery) makes him decide the course of war later. With the timely removal of Karna and Ekalavya from the scene, the platform was made safe for the ruling Kuru dynasty to exercise ultimate power. It was undoubtedly Drona's instruction that made Arjuna invincible and it was Arjuna's valour (along with Bhima's physical might) that encouraged Yudhishtira to aspire for power.

The relationship between Drona, Karna and Ekalavya is also an instance for tacit understanding between power and knowledge. Ekalavya's and Karna's skills are downplayed and rejected outright. Turned down by Drona, Ekalavya practised archery before a statue of Drona accepting him as his *guru*. His sense of obligation which cost him his finger is one created by the system and the beliefs associated with it. It would seem that the two of them aspired to transgress the boundaries that was prescribed for them and so, they must be suppressed. While Karna is insulted and sent away, Ekalavya's skill is taken away from him. Yet both of them accept their fate without demur and continue to be part of the system that denies them power and agency. They become inevitable in the war and fight selflessly for the Kauravas. Karna's loyalty towards Duryodhana and Ekalavya's obligation to Drona are made use of cleverly and effectively. Thus, the *shishya* code of conduct, when exploited for power, became a mighty instrument of suppression.





in *Varshangalku munpu* , "I learned to collect flowers in flower baskets, and make floral carpets out of them for Onam celebrations. I also learned to propitiate Goddess Lakshmi, give alms to the beggars, and receive the temple deity with the full bushel, flower bouquet, and lighted lamp" (19).

The society was essentially built on the principle of hierarchy i.e. social units were so organized as to form a superior-inferior gradation. Of all such hierarchies, the caste system was the predominant; it exercised control on all minute aspects of life. The ideology of hierarchy institutionalized inequality in all aspects of life and such discriminations were believed to be the result of one's accumulated moral merit from the previous birth. Kamala Das's age steeped in all discriminations experienced a plethora of evils. Each caste had its own occupation, customs, and rituals.

It was a startling revelation to young Kamala that the servants and the other poor classes who carried out all the menial work were cruelly treated by the class conscious society of those days. Later she recollects in her *Diarikkurippukal,* the discrimination faced by her (along with other South Indians) at the Nehru Symposium conducted in New Delhi as the most deserving punishment for a member of the Nalappat family who never allowed the 'nayadis' (the untouchable class that occupied the lowest rung in the caste based Hindu society of her childhood days) to come anywhere near their household, "I was reminded of the *nayadis* who used to beg aloud pathetically for alms, standing beyond the paddy fields at a far off place. As a member of the Nalappat family I deserved discrimination and contemptuous treatment" (8).

In *Diarikkurippukal,* the author writes about the social practice of observing untouchability in the following words:

> In my childhood days everyone observed untouchability. Only the 'kiriyath nairs' were permitted to enter our kitchen. They were vegetarians like the 'Brahmins'. Other sub groups of 'nairs' were permitted to walk about the 'thekkini' and 'vadakkini'(rooms on the south and north sides, a type of construction typical of the age generally belonging to the affluent and the powerful). Another

> caste called'thiyyar' could touch only the outside pillars of the house whereas yet another known as 'vettuva'could not cross the border between the courtyard and the outlying lands. Still lower castes 'pulayas' etc had to stand outside the yard and call aloud seeking help. The lowest rung called as 'nayadis' had to hide themselves behind trees and request for a little food as though it was a sin. Each nayadi was an embodiment of inferiority complex and extreme helplessness. When I requested the servants to show me one 'nayadi' they wouldn't do so as it was socially forbidden and the very sight would frighten me. (108)

Madhavikkutty remembers many instances when she happened to observe or experience injustice being practiced as part of the caste based discriminations. She remembers going on a trip to Guruvayoor along with her grandmother, accompanied by some servants. On the way another group comes up screaming 'ho ho'and grandmother takes Kamala behind a tree so that they remain hidden from view. The servants run helter skelter and one of them even falls in to a pit. To young Kamala's dismay the grand mother tells that it was an entourage of some 'namboodiri', a person belonging to the highest caste. The servant was making the 'ho ho' noise so that the lower castes could keep themselves out of sight of the great one and not pollute him. *(Balyakaala* 578)

The author recollects sadly the extreme social injustice practiced in the Kerala of her days and how the situation is different now in the last decades of the twentieth century. She adopts a very critical attitude to the popular myth of Kerala centered on the just King Mahabali who is believed to have ruled the land emphasizing the values of equality and fraternity. Madhavikkutty is happy to notice that the situation has changed drastically and she sees around her only self confident people who no more cringe before others.

The parents fondly called her as Amy; the transformation from Amy, to Kamala Das, to Madhavikutty and to Kamala Surayya was not an accidental one ; on the other hand Amy's growth was entwined with the





Since he happened to be the repository of knowledge, he reserved the authority to impart knowledge and it was the 'twice-born' Brahmana who taught and moulded the Kshatriyas, the ruling class. Here, one can see how the dominant ideology silently permeates into the subconscious of the society and establishes laws that are 'willingly' accepted by the subjects. The *gurukula* also illustrates yet another aspect of power structure. In the essay "Prison Talk", Foucault says how power has a deep connection with knowledge. "It is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge; it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power." (Foucault 125) Foucault employs the compound ' Power/Knowledge' to emphasize the way the systems of classifications were formulated from a Western perspective, with Western interests at the core. This process of production of knowledge took place by excluding the other equally valid forms of knowledge among the natives. So knowledge and access to knowledge become sources of power because one acquires agency through it. Denial of access to this structure consciously or otherwise denies individuals their agency and therefore they are relegated to the margins of the power structure.

When Drona tactfully succeeded in becoming the *guru* of the Kurus, his ambition was primarily materialistic. He was also looking for an opportunity to take revenge on his childhood friend Drupada who humiliated him. Drona's partiality to Arjuna and his loyalty to the Kuru dynasty made Drona turn down Karna's request to accept him as disciple. Karna already carries the burden of his earlier Guru, Parasurama's curse who cursed him for lying that he was a Brahmana. If it was the lie that infuriated Parasurama, Drona was more affected by the fact that Karna was a Sootha, a charioteer's son. He could not be seen at par with princes and Drona did not want to stoop down to the level of teaching him. Here, the teacher monopolises knowledge and reserves the freedom to offer or deny it according to his preferences. The *guru*'s position as the repository of knowledge is easily turned into an exercise of power. When he denies knowledge to Karna, he is not only denying Karna the recourse to power but also his agency. Thus Drona becomes an active and wilful perpetrator of the system of power.

to the *guru*. The second chapter of *Manusmriti* distinguishes between a teacher (*acharya*) and an instructor (*upadhyaya*) thus:

> The twice-born man who initiates the pupil and teaches him the Veda together with the ritual texts and the secret texts is called his teacher. But a man who teaches one portion of the Veda or even , again, the subsidiary texts of the Vedas, and does it to make a living, is called the instructor. ( 31)

Manu has also prescribed a code of conduct for students to follow during their stay in the *gurukula* which includes strict rules regarding prayer, discipline and behaviour. The *shishya* was required to take a vow of celibacy and was to devote himself completely to the service of his *guru* and the *gurupatni* (guru's wife). These codes were perhaps formulated to assert the value of education and to avoid trivializing its pursuit. The disciples lived a poor, uncomfortable life, begging for livelihood and the rules were equally applicable to all the students; be them princes or paupers. Such a life, it was supposed, would prepare them to face their future lives courageously and honestly. But the tradition of *gurukula* itself is a repository of hegemonic ideas. It is both a producer and perpetrator of values of the dominant ideology. This ancient structure, as any other modern societal structure, works its power by indirect means.

The Marxian thinker Louis Althusser believed that modern power is no longer forceful, omnipotent and excessive, but rather it is exercised by stealth. Instead of being regimented and directed, or even manipulated, it is incorporated in customs and institutions, persuading the commoner to accept it obediently:

> The individual is interpellated as a (free) subject in order that he shall submit freely to the commandments of the Subject, that is, in order that he shall (freely) accept his subjection, that is, in order that he shall make the gestures and actions of his subjection 'all by himself., There are no subjects except by and for their subjection. (*Lenin and Philosophy* 169)

Seen in this way, the *gurukula* functioned like a modern religious institution, imposing stringent rules and norms to cleverly safeguard the *guru*'s authority.





social changes that came up around her , with the perspectives of the people – educated ones, elite groups, and the poor working class men and women who moved like satellite around her maternal house called Nalappat, and the servants in the Calcutta house- all with whom she associated herself a lot , and many other factors.

Kamala grew up in close association with the poor and the downtrodden, the deprived and the repressed, for she knew that they formed the quintessence of life. In Chapter 2 of *Ente Kadha* she makes a very sincere revelation:

> I cannot forget the servants who created the background of our life and functioned as the strong pillars of the stage of life. They used to sweep and clean the stage before each scene of the drama started. The first servant who comes to my mind is one Chabilal who wore soiled clothes and had infected teeth. An old woman who wore western type chain with red stone, Tripura who had worn out teeth, and Parukkutty who wore nose stud, Janaki who used to walk behind me wearing green skirt - I do not know behind which curtain they have all disappeared. (18-19)

The active creative life of Madhavikkutty begins roughly in the year 1955 when her short story collection "Mathilukal" was published. She wrote profusely and drew her material from all that she saw around her. This prolific writer, who wrote about the life around her and within her, throbbed with her unabated enthusiasm and zest for life till her end. This is how she herself comments about her style of writing:

> The interest for life is the root cause behind one's zeal for literature. Life, which is seen reflected through imagination, appears more attractive sometimes, a trace of sunlight falling on somebody's face or the sudden bout of laughter from some corner – many things like that I store in my mind …. I examine those things while lying down for an afternoon siesta.Then some

> characters are born in that room. They tell me, "Write about me." (10-11)

The beautiful childhood days when she used to listen eagerly to the stories told by her grandmother, other adults and the servants of the household , the thorough loyalty exhibited by the servants belonging to various castes , the unforgettable scent emanating from the wild plants and flowers of Nalappat, the dance of the eunuchs on the city streets, the wedding ceremony of the dhobis in Calcutta, the pathetic faces of the deprived people, the all sacrificing mother, the lovers who derive fulfillment in each other's company, the woman who is satisfied in her lesbian relationship – these are some of the memories ever fresh in Kamala's mind.

In any part of the world we observe that people are organized in to small or large groups or units. Based on the number of members in the group we call them as nuclear families and extended families. Extended families where the husband, wife, children, grand parents, uncles, aunts and cousins live together were the norm in many places and this has been replaced by the small family system in urbanized areas. In Madhavikutty's age, the families were joint and included a large number of kin, aged and widowed and the like. Madhavikutty, in her memory works, uses many number of kinship terms, reflecting the importance those relations held in her life. The most striking factor regarding the kinship terminology presented by the author is that it is embedded in the matrilineal family set up of the nair community of Kerala. In this family set up the rightful place was assigned to the married women also.

Wardhaugh comments about the presentation of kinship terms in literature thus:

> […], there is a considerable literature on kinship terminology, describing how people in various parts of the world refer to relatives by blood (or descent) and marriage. Kinship systems area universal feature of languages because kinship is so important in social organization. Some systems are much richer than others





## *SHISYADHARMA* AND *GURUBHAKTHI* : A STUDY OF THE HEGEMONIC ELEMENTS IN *GURU-SHISHYA* RELATIONSHIPS IN THE *MAHABHARATHA*

**Sreedevi K. Menon**

The longest epic in the world, the *Mahabharatha* eternally arouses research interest with its complexity of narration, the diversity in the issues featured and the multitude of characters portrayed. The question whether Veda Vyasa is a single author or a compiler of the narratives has never diminished the authority of the epic. Rather, it has raised the curiosity of academicians and scholars since the question helps to unveil the dialogics of the discourse. The multiple narratives help to bring out the nuances and the silences in the narrations and open plenty of corridors before the inquisitive reader to choose the path she prefers. The epic could be re-read from several perspectives to perceive the several voices and the ideologies in the narratives. The main contention of this paper is to discuss the issues of power latent in the *Guru-Shishya* relationships-that of Drona and his four disciples Arjuna, Ekalavya, Karna and Dhrishtadyumna. Using Althusser's concept of interpellation, it is proposed to study how the dominant ideology selects, individualizes and penetrates the subject and invites them singularly into its complex. Once in, the subjects act as if they have freely chosen their particular mode of action. In reality, unknown to himself, the subject is being masterly manipulated by the hegemony.

While the *Mahabharatha* tells the story of Pandavas and Kauravas in its main plot, its episodes are packed with a multitude of other stories. It depicts a rich, heterogeneous culture that gave emphasis to values such as virtue, kinship and righteousness. The *Mahabharatha* is also a story of relationships- personal and social and one can find the exercise of power and hegemony in them. The Vedic tradition has assigned great importance

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> but all make use of such factors as sex, age, generation, blood and marriage in their organization. (223)

Most of the kinship terms that Kamala repeatedly mentions are relations through the mother. The author was closest to her *ammamma* (mother's mother). The young Kamala's parents who lived in Calcutta had entrusted the child to her grandmother who according to the prevailing custom, was the rightful custodian next to the mother. The father's role was vague in the matrilineal system as *ammavan* (mother's brother or uncle) was the head of the family. A man's responsibilities were more towards his sisters and their children. But Kamala's father, being educated and reformist by nature was not strictly tied down to customs. He himself took charge of his children's upbringing; only when Calcutta turned riotous due to world war he sent them to their mother's house. Kamala narrates her experiences of being a member of the matrilineal family set up in the following words:

In those days nair women were taken care of by their brothers. So it was only natural that they loved and adored their brothers. The brothers invariably expected such admiration and respect from the sisters. The brothers could not tolerate it if the sister loved her husband deeply. So it was painful to the nair woman to see the husband and brother becoming enemies (*Neermathalam* 92). Such close relationships between members of the extended family were a feature of the social life of Kerala and this was of the maternal line in the case of the nair community. The author's fondness for her grandmother and other relatives are narrated quite vividly in many works. She attributes her literary bent of mind to the family atmosphere where she spent a good part of her childhood in which the uncle was the head of the family. Kamala's uncle, a scholar and a known literary genius of the age invariably played a role in cultivating the creative bent of mind in the young girl.

In the introduction to *Madhavikkuttiyude Kadhakal*, Dr. Rajeev Kumar pays a glowing tribute to this great writerthus, "These stories are the memorial of the age" (24). Spread in the innumerable number of pages which the author wrote, one comes across a wealth of information about

family systems, religious practices, political movements, popular magazines, writers and other celebrities, art forms and many other facets of life generally unnoticed and might fade from memory. Madhavikkutty has immortalized the social life of Kerala, spanning a period of more than seventy years, not through matter of fact descriptions but in colourful terms and a halo of imagination makes it all the more attractive reading.

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woman- a sari: ""This is England. You can do whatever you like"" (*Brick Lane* 369).

Nazneen's sister Hasina strikes a parallel to Nazneen by narrating her experiences in Bangladesh fraught by the oppressing native patriarchal community. The letters from Hasina serve a very good purpose in strengthening Nazneen's self and identity as a Muslim woman.In this sense, the self –other relationship of Hasina-Nazneen in the form of letters prove to be very positive.Hasina is very hopeful that she can find happiness in spite of the restrictions imposed by her patriarchal society. Her search for identity is externally focused, while that of Nazneen is internal. Hasina responds to her desires and passion, Nazneen does not. Contrary to the rebellious Hasina, Nazneen is docile. The letters instigate Nazneen to respond to her inner aspirations. In other words,the letters glaringly shows the gulf between her desires and reality.Nazneen is warned of the possible negative influences of her patriarchal society on herfemale self, and thus supports her in her final decision to stay back in Britain, her host country, the land which is likely to open up new possibilities for her as a woman.

Nazneen finally finds her identity in Britain, her host country. She doesn't goback to Bangladesh, where her sister lives as an abused woman under the pressure of her native patriarchal society. At the same time, she decides to maintain her identity as a Muslim in the host country, who understands'Hadith', who believes in Allah-Allah who forgives even the sin of adultery, which under normal Islamic circumstances would be punishable by stoning. Cultural right, for Nazneen, is the right for difference without being marginalized and stereotyped. Nazneen asserts her cultural rights and performativity whichto her means the ability to practice one's own culture without criticism or judgment from outside that culture. In short, Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* is about destiny and freedom, acceptance and resistance, the hidden depths of strength that can be found in the most unlikely of places.

> English… they go around covered from head to toe, in their little walking prisons, and when someone calls to them in the streets they are upset. The society is racist. The society is all wrong. Everything should change for them. They don't have to change one thing. (*Brick Lane* 116-117)

Nazneen, however, does not consider herself to be bound or limited by Mrs. Azad's outlook. Nazneen wears traditional clothes, and follows the tenets of her religion fervently. She speaks her native language and does not wish to enter the English community. Her family and ethnic identity remain stable values for her. It is the gender biased oppressing notions of her native patriarchal Muslim community that she resists. She approaches her immigrant status as a medium of resistance against this oppression while asserting her identity as a Muslim. Her assimilation to the host country is restricted by this benchmark.

Nazneen's close friend Razia also positively influences her in voicing her self and identity. Razia quickly realizes the potential of her host country. She decides to live independently and she manages to do so. She is never after traditional ways of her native patriarchal Muslim community. She learns English. She even cuts her hair short and stops wearing a sari: "She was tired of taking little bird steps" (*Brick Lane*95). But, one can't deny the negative aspects in this shift from the traditional roles. Even though Razia never wants to become an English woman, she loses her femininity in her attempts for assimilation with the host society. It is with the support and fellowship of Razia that Nazneen finally succeeds in acquiring economic independence and thereby assert her self and identity as a woman. She projects to Nazneen the fact that the melting pot of multicultural Britain is a domain of endless possibilities for a woman in search of her voice, her self and identity. It even opens up the scope for upholding one's cultural identity. She makes this clear through a comment of her's at the end of the novel as Nazneen hesitates to perform her long cherished dream of ice-skating simply because she is in the traditional costume of a Bangladeshi





## A SOCIO-CULTURAL STUDY OF STEPHEN GILL'S *KALPNA IN RAIPUR*

**Dr.S.Kumaran**

Every society has its own culture that distinguishes it from other ethnicities and this paper explores Stephen Gill's short story "Kalpna in Raipur" to bring out how the society and the culture in which one lives in influences one even to the extent of altering one's earlier way of life. It also brings out how the attitude of an individual gets changed with respect to the new society and its culture she or he comes into contact resulting in the new outlook towards the former one.

Stephen Gill is 'a multiple award-winning' Canadian poet who propagates peace and harmony of existence through his writings. He has authored more than twenty books and they include poems, criticism, and novels. He has also received many international awards and accolades. Further, he has also been bestowed with four honorary doctorates and his writings appeared in many parts of the world.

"Kalpna in Raipur" involves the love between a woman professor Kalpna from India and Reghu, an Indian diaspora in Canada. Reghu believes in love whereas Kalpna believes in the theory of detachment. Though born in India, Reghu's perception of the country in which he was born has been changed since his migration to Canada. He no longer sees India as a place of mental solace rather experiences it as a tourist spot that comforts him monetarily: "He was excited to visit the Great Palace of India, a shopping mall, because it was a pride of Delhi. It was an opportunity for Reghu to buy books, a brief case, and a pair of leather shoes as well as to exchange his money into local currency and to take a relaxed tour" ("Kalpna" N.pag). The view expressed by Reghu is the view shared by many foreigners who

visit India to achieve maximum comfort at minimum expenses. Further, his attitude towards India testifies the impact of the Canadian (foreigner) view of India on him.

The conflict between two dissimilar societies and their cultures is brilliantly shown through the characterization of Reghu and Kalpna. Infact "In sociocultural research, the goal is to see how people interact with each other" ("Sociocultural"). Right from the beginning of their meeting, one can witness differences of opinion and dissimilarity of attitude between them. Reghu met Kalpna for the first time in a conference at Meerut University and he considers it a memorable moment in his life as he recalls their first meeting even after several years thus:

> Then he remembered being frustrated….Reghu believed that when a person offers to help someone, especially without even being asked, then that person should honor it, except in case of an emergency. Kalpna could not imagine a foreigner with luggage. Though Reghu was born in India, it was a foreign land for him. Then her behavior at Kaligarh University was bizarre. ("Kalpna" N.pag.)

They become close friends during their stay at the university campus and Reghu departs to Canada when the conference is over. However, their friendship continues in the form of e-mail and phone call. Inspite of their bond of friendship, Reghu could not comprehend the real nature of Kalpna and he always realizes that she tries to maintain distance though there is no external pressure.

The differences of opinion and attitude between them is not the one between a man and a woman rather it is societal and cultural differences that prevent them from understanding each other. "Perhaps the most important form of social identity is one that links an individual to some large collectivity such as nation, culture or ethnic group" (Berry 3). Kalpna lives in the society that cherishes conjugal ties whereas Reghu does not participate in it. She is married and feels bound to the relationship to her husband though she hates him for his ill-treatment of her and his intrusion into her privacy. In this regard, Bentancourt opines, "Moreover, the relationship of cultural elements to psychological phenomena can be directly assessed.





but admire it. In the sixth chapter, Nazneen tries on a pair of Chanu's trousers. She feels that there is no harm in it. Shahana resists her father's decision to return to Bangladesh, their homeland, and retain their patriarchal roots. She strongly opposes him and even tries to elope to avoid the plight. She finally succeeds by making her mother change her point of view.Shahana instills in her mother, a sense of belonging to their host land, England. She makes Nazneen aware of the fact that a return to their home land will only make them more vulnerable victims of their patriarchal community. As the novel ends, we find Shahana giving a chance for her mother to perform 'ice skating', a long cherished dream of Nazneen. This flight is symbolic of Nazneen's emancipation as a Muslim 'émigré' woman.

Karim, Nazneen's lover, acts as a catalyst in Nazneen's assertion of her female diasporic self. Her extra-marital relationship with Karim, her middle-man in the garment business, opens up new vistas of personal freedom and identity for Nazneen.She witnesses his organizations awakening of the Muslim community in England. Karim teaches her more about Islam, and through this understanding elevates her status as a Muslim. This boosts her in asserting her identity as a Muslim woman in the multi-cultural scenario of post 9\11 British society. She begins to wear a headscarf. She attends his organization's meetings to learn about the oppression of the Muslims in Palestine and in Egypt.

In the course of her immigrant life, Nazneen meets several Bangladeshi fellow immigrant women, whose impact on her emancipation is undeniable. One of them is Mrs.Azad. She is educated, speaks English fluently, and through her intercourse with the Western society, emancipates herself from the traditional role of a Muslim woman compelled by her patriarchal community. She does not conform herself to the stereotype of a traditional Bangladeshi Muslim woman, and ardently follows the Western ways of life. Mrs. Azad comments on the life of a typical immigrant Bangladeshi Muslim woman:

> Some women spend ten, twenty years here and they sit in the kitchen grinding spices all day and learn only two words of

Chanu's inability to establish himself economically in the host land forces him to change his decision. The dream of returning to his home land with his family accelerates this decision. He wants his wife and daughters to fall under the regime of the patriarchal Muslim society. He fears that their long stay in the host society might open up new realms of personal freedom and identity, and thereby an emancipation of the self.

As the economic situation of the family grows worse, Nazneen is forced to work and support her family. Thus, by contributing to the family budget, Nazneen's sewing machine becomes a symbol of her emancipation. One finds a gradual shift in the traditional role of Nazneen as an immigrant woman belonging to the patriarchal Bangladeshi Muslim community. The institution of patriarchy is shattered.Thus, to quote C. Vijaysree: "Exile is viewed as an escape, an escape from the stranglehold of tradition, orthodoxy of religion and oppression of the societal systems of the land of their birth….An ever increasing number of women today are making the choice to stay on in the West to realize their educational and professional ambitions" (*In Diaspora: Theories, Histories, Texts* 135). Nazneen's mixture of traditionalism and adaptability, of acceptance and restlessness, emerges as a quiet strength. She shrugs off her passivity at just the right moment. Slowly, she wakes up to the world beyond her flat, first acquiring a job, then a lover, and finally her own voice and identity. Everyday, life requires courage and Nazneen struggles to make sense of home, family, Islamand even adultery. The excitement lies in watching Nazneen's new identity flower on the stony soil of multicultural British society. In fact, motherhood is the primal agent of change.

Shahana, Nazneen's eldest daughter, serves as Nazneen's mouthpiece in questioning Chanu's patriarchal Muslimness and his notions of enlightenment evolved out of the British melting pot. Bibi, Nazneen's second daughter is too young, and hence, assumes a more or less passive role, even though she supports her sister in her self assertion as much as she can. As a second generation immigrant, Shahana nurtures acertaindegree of independenceand personal freedom promoted by the host society. She wears jeans, tries out the Western ways of life, and Nazneen cannot help





Hence, it is possible to deal with the complexity of the concept and at the same time pursue an understanding of the role of culture in psychology" (630). Further, Kalpna is conscious of the societal bond that demands upholding marriage ties and hence imposes restriction in her friendship with Reghu. On the other hand, Reghu lacks the wisdom of such societal practices and reveals his failure in understanding Kalpna thus:

> Since we met, I have never seen you the same for more than a few days. You are as charming as is the full moon, and keeps changing as the moon does. When I discuss this changing aspect of your personality, you do not consider it worth discussing. You say you are constant in your love, though you take refuge in the view of perspective. When you do not find logic to admit a cover-up or a change in your attitude, you say you were not able to understand why you behaved that way. ("Kalpna" N.pag.)

To make Reghu understand her position, Kalpna reveals her familial conditions and the kind of society she lives in.

The day to day activities of India considered normal by the citizens of the country seem unusual to Reghu and it indicates the influence of society and culture. According to Jameela Begum, "Exiled by choice or circumstance, the immigrant finds himself displaced from his roots, his antecedents, and his Centre. He sheds his monolithic national and regional identity and becomes a repository of dualities and multiplicities" (139). Reghu has been trying to get information where he can charge his mobile phone and he also expects an information booth to get information about where to recharge his mobile and to exchange his currency:

> Someone directed him to the information bureau located in a corner that was almost empty. Shortly three or four boys arrived. She started answering everyone. There was no line and one who could shout louder had his question answered. Reghu was still there and his questions were not answered because she was attending everyone at the same time. It was unusual for Reghu. ("Kalpna" N.pag.)

Irritated by the response of the receptionist, Reghu realized that he did not come to the mall to spend the entire evening at the information booth and he left the place. As "Reghu had spent most of his life abroad and therefore at times it became difficult for him to understand India even though he appeared to be from India and spoke the language" ("Kalpna" N.pag.). His last visit to India had been about two and a half years ago and he had not visited it in about twenty years. His perception of India got changed over the years and his opinion of Indian taxi drivers illustrates it thus, "He had heard that taxi drivers cheated visitors from abroad. He decided to speak in Punjabi, a language he seldom spoke in Canada, but still spoke with confidence. He also avoided using words such as "OK", "Bye", and "Ya" to avoid being detected as from North America" ("Kalpna" N.pag.). All these incidents exemplify how the adopted culture has changed his perception towards India and the whole incident is an instance of the functioning of Indian system and it demands immediate redressal too.

Reghu's insight into the shortcomings of Indian system is noteworthy as it holds scope for the transformation and learning that take place during the encounter of dissimilar cultures. In this regard, Chiang believes:

> The resistance and acceptance of global ideology leads to a more unified world culture, but at the same time it also produces a fragmented cultural hybridity of a local culture.

This international flow of products and capital has resulted in the proliferation of national or regional identity (34). There is a tendency in the people of any country to hail the amenities of foreign land at the cost of their own and in this story Reghu reveals the situation through his experience at a book shop thus:

> Reghu told him that he wanted to buy a directory of the news media, as well as, for universities and colleges. The young man informed Reghu that they had some directories about the United States, but nothing about India. So Reghu settled for a dictionary. The cashier did not accept his credit card for less than a purchase of 300 rupees. He came back to the reference section and bought one more book though he did not need it. ("Kalpna" N.pag.)





*Brick Lane* traces the evolution of Nazneen from her role as a domesticated wife and a mother without any ambitions, to a powerful, modern, independent woman, with a strong sense of self and identity, and, who still considers herself to be a member of her ethnic traditional Muslim community. Occupying an immigrant status in the multicultural scenario of Britainas a woman belonging to the Muslim community, she asserts her unique voice. Right from the beginning, the course of Nazneen's life is left to the choice of her patriarchal Muslim community. As a victim, she accepts unquestioningly, her father's choice of a husband with many disparities, and embraces an immigrant life which she finds baffling. To Nazneen, life in England is different form the one she knows in her home country. The small flat the couple occupies is small and cramp, and lives are trapped in the tiny and closely knit flats where there is hardly enough space to move about. To Nazneen, a girl form the village where space is never an issue, the contrast between the confined space of the flat and vastness of the village is very startling. She experiences a sense of confinement. Physical confinement leads to mental confinement.This creates an issue of identity.

Chanu, Nazneen's husband acts as the next agent of the patriarchal Muslim societywhich victimizes her. Even though he claims himself to be a scholar with liberal views inspired by European enlightenment, he is ingrained in the conservative views of the patriarchal Muslim community. He is self-centered, and Nazneen is forced to cater to his needs and demands. As a victim of her native male chauvinistic patriarchal community, Nazneen religiously satisfies her husband. In spite of his claims of being open minded and educated, he utilizes her callously: "He thought she was a "good worker" (she had overheard him on the telephone). "She is an unspoilt girl. From the village."… Cleaning and cooking and all that. The only complaint I could make is she can't put my files in order, because she has no English" (*Brick Lane* 14-15).When Nazneen expresses her wish to go for work with Razia,Chanu does not agree. It is traditionally believed that women occupy the private domestic sphere while men occupy the public social one. Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose argue, "space is central both to masculinist power and to feminist resistance" (*Writing Women and Space* 1). However,

*Brick Lane* is the story of Nazneen, a simple, religious, Bangladeshi Muslim village girl, and married off to a much older man, Chanu, who transplants her to a dismal housing project in the borough of Tower Hamlets in the East End of London. Nazneen's only connection with the mother country is through the letters from Hasina, her ill-starred younger sister, who as a rule lives a life of passion, lest she burns out. For years, Nazneen limits her self to domestic affairs as a house wife and a mother. But, her immigrant experiences transform her. We see Nazneen transformed by her sedentary years in the moment that she finally questions her right to change. As her daughters Shahana and Bibi rail against their father's strict traditions perpetuated by the native patriarchal community, Nazneen secretly rails with them. She falls in love with a young man in the neighborhood, Karim, allowing herself, a life of passion.He is a contrast to her husband, who believes in European enlightenment, and at the same time, as a hypocrite, strictly follows the orthodox tenets of the patriarchal Muslim community. Karim awakens Nazneen's consciousness. As a second generation immigrant, he gives her a sense of self and identity through his organization's efforts for awakening the Muslim community in Britain, and by cultivating in her a sense of belongingness to the host land. Along with Karim, her fellow Bangladeshi immigrant Muslim women also contribute to her assertion of self and identity, and there by a voice of her own. The most prominent among them are Razia and Mrs. Azad, wife of her husband Chanu's friend Dr. Azad. Nazneen sister Hasina strikes a parallel to this assertion of voice through her personal experiences in the home land portrayed through her letters.The Muslim women characters in the novel go through a chaotic period during which they question both their Muslim values and the values of the Western society. By contrasting themselves with the "others" of the host society, they ultimately define themselves as Muslims, reacting against the cultural injustices or violence that they disapprove of. They are also shown to criticize those aspects of Muslim culture and religion which oppresses them, and yet defend their right to function within it. One cannot ignore the double shades of their resistance whichrun parallel to each other.





Though Reghu has no idea of buying a dictionary he is forced to buy it and the pity is that he is made to buy one more book as the shop accepts credit card only for a purchase of three hundred rupees and more. Infact, the experience of Reghu is the collective experience of foreign tourists who are made to experience the unsound practices. The situation in India as pointed by Reghu needs to be addressed and the learning is the result of Reghu's adopted culture.

Reghu's suggestion to transform the existing systems of India is commendable. He believes, "Tourism is a productive industry these days. We learn from each other through exchanges. Indians do not need to go abroad to learn. India should do something to attract foreign exchange and learn through visitors" ("Kalpna" N.pag.). Though India has started attracting tourists from all over the world, thanks to the efforts taken by the department of tourism, still there is a string of maladies that are to be addressed and it needs the collaboration of foreign delegates. As a person who has experienced the advantages of a foreign culture, Reghu could assess the lack of quality in Indian bureaucracy and points out:

> The main source of this suffering is the electoral ethics. Presently, India has more or less the democracy of the elite. To change this elitism, it is necessary to eliminate the law-makers who exploit their caste, religion or language to come to power. The electorate should elect those who are the best for the job. They should read the pages of their past to know if they had been involved with corruption. ("Kalpna" N.pag.)

Further, he accentuates the fact that the gap between the rich and the poor should be filled to make India achieve peace and prosperity:

> There cannot be peace and prosperity unless there are justices. The political representatives are obliged to speak for the Divine authority that is just in the distribution of His gifts to rich and poor, sinner and sinless, black and white, old and young, male and female and the list can go on and on. The political shepherds are elected with the votes of every citizen. They ought to represent them without discrimination. ("Kalpna" N.pag.)

The knowledge of the shortcomings of Indian bureaucracy is due to the experience Reghu has gained in Canadian bureaucracy and it declares the necessity of dissimilar culture.

It is society and its culture that moulds people's outlook towards human life. The theory of detachment which Kalpna practices in India is perceived differently by Reghu as he belongs to a foreign land. Kalpna relies on the principles of detachment that necessitates the disassociation from natural desires whereas Reghu believes that detachment means something else:

> Reghu believed that the detachment on which Kalpna had practiced was in the citizens' routines to dissociate them from natural desires and to alienate them from life. Kalpna's meditation for detachment had clouded the rose-colored glasses of Reghu's thinking. ("Kalpna" N.pag.).

Reghu realizes detachment as a form of cooperation among people and it focuses on inclusion, "To him, detachment was a self-centered practice. The India Palace itself was the result of cooperation among people with different skills and concerns. It was the manifestation of cooperation in action, not detachment" ("Kalpna" N.pag). He does not approve the theory of detachment practiced by Kalpna and believes that she is wasting her life and going against the purpose of human life by isolating herself from love. According to him, "Love and detachment are incompatible because one leads to the region of concerns and the other to the cave of aloofness and withdrawal from that region. Even if detachment becomes active, it remains an inward-looking eye. It does not produce real emotions, as love does" ("Kalpna" N.pag). He opines that the purpose of any creation is to admire the beauty around it and to extol the principle of oneness. Further, he urges Kalpna to shun away her unfruitful detachment as it distances her from the understanding of God's creation. Moreover, Reghu avers:

> Indian philosophy is for love. Brahma did not create humans to close their eyes to the beauties around them. The sun, air, water and the earth are free for humans to use for their benefit, not to run away from them. Brahma loves humans through His gifts and humans must accept these gifts. If there is problem, it is best





a gendered nature.She is exposed to a different set of values in the host society which she finds quite beneficial for her liberation from the patriarchal society, and she becomes aware of the possibilities of assimilating them to her self in her struggle for liberation.

The consequent inward turns is an essential outcome when independence and separation from dominant hegemonic culture is sort out. If we conduct a journey through sub- continental women writing, it will become evident that the practices of cultural rights and independence for women have always been shaped by oppositions and conflicting interests. In spite of their allegiance to their cultural roots, Muslim women are not ready to forsake their right to live their own lives. This explains their tendency for assimilation within a diasporic community. Their natural human urges and needs like equality, dignity and personal freedom along with innate individual desire for love and affection and social and financial security are often denied to them. They are aware of their status as underprivilegedindividuals struggling under discrimination, exploitation and humiliation. This accounts for their resistance against the injustices of their own patriarchal community.

Muslim women writers in South Asia in the last century have asserted their freedom by speaking out against injustices in their own patriarchal communities. Yet, they seem to assert their allegiance to their cultural rootsin diasporic situation. An understanding of this paradox is essential to an understanding of the current global situation of Muslim women's rights.A double - voiced discourse such as Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*will make this paradox clear. Itis the story of Nazneen, a Bangla womanwho comes to England after her marriage to Chanu, an academic who dreams of success. She is a woman searching for a place to belong in the cross-cultural community of British Muslims, and thereby assert her self and identity.She is a complex woman who turns inward to Islam while also criticizing its outward manifestations which restricts the individual freedom and identity of the female self.

Braziel and Anita Mannur puts it: "diaspora can perhaps be seen as a naming of the other which has historically referred to displaced communities of people who have been dislocated from their native homeland through the movements of migration, immigration, or exile" (*Theorizing Diaspora* 1). Migrant South Asian women have long carved out their niches among the conflicting multicultural scenario of their host countries. The interest of thisarticle lies in analyzing how these paths are carved out anew in today's mixing and merging of cultures with special emphasis on Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*.

With the advent of the twentieth century, the increased opportunities for women in South Asia have paved the way for Muslim women to indulge themselves in writing about their rights both to function as Muslim women and to become liberated within the tenets of Islam. In their writings, one finds a preoccupation with their place in society, their desire to retain certain cultural practices, and their rights to speak out against injustices both within the community and without. The article brings into focus the dichotomy or paradox of the South Asian Muslim woman who wants to assert her Muslim identity, yet longs to be liberated from certain oppressive cultural practices.

Marginalized generations are always in a search for a sense of self and identity. This is equally true of Muslim 'émigré' women who seek ways to assert their self and identity. Their struggle for self-assertion implies a solid footing in the host society, free from the suffocating tenets of their patriarchal Muslim community along with their right for cultural performativity. This struggle entails both resistance and assimilation. A shift in one's location and a change in locational status necessitate the South Asian Muslim 'émigré' woman, a member of the minority community, conscious of her marginalized ethnic identity in the host land. She goes for a gesture of resistance towardsacculturation demanded by the need for survival in a foreign land. This resistance is propelled by a desire to assert her cultural roots. This culminates in a Western essentializing of the 'other', and a consequent perpetration of fear based on the 'othering'. An immigrant woman is made conscious of her difference in terms of color, race, and gender. Belonging to a patriarchal community, her identity politics assumes





> to ask Him to give them energy and wisdom to solve it. Without love, a human is blind. ("Kalpna" N.pag.)

Though Reghu's understanding of detachment differs drastically from that of Kalpna due to the cultural differences, it throws light on its impact on corruption.

Reghu's account of corruption in India and its aggravation by detachment is though-provoking and a reliable one. He believes that corruption in India becomes rampant as the people practice detachment and do not bother about the malaise. He also believes, "Theories of detachment and the previous births had seeped into the psyches of the masses….It is detachment, soaked into the subconscious of the citizens that allows corruption to flourish. India has everything, except the will to leave the dungeon of these theories" ("Kalpna" N.pag). The legacy of detachment continues even in human relationship and hence care should be taken to perceive it in true light. Reghu's account of Kalpna's detachment as the cause of the conflict in their relationship reveals the impact of detachment on humans' behavior. Reghu points out that Kalpna's detachment does not allow her to plan anything on her own and it makes her fail to honour the suggestions proposed by Reghu which she herself has accepted heartily earlier. Kalpna considers these failures just from the point of perspective whereas Reghu takes them as insulting gestures which signify a lack of sincerity. Further, Reghu gets often confused how a highly educated professor like Kalpna could be so thoughtless. Further, at times, he feels that he could not understand India because he has been away for many years. He also thinks that Canadian girls are more straightforward and there is no difficulty in understanding them. Moreover, Reghu started asking other Diaspora, as well as the whites to understand Kalpna better.

Thus, this paper has fulfilled its socio-cultural study of the short story and has brought out the conflict between two dissimilar societies and their cultures, differences of opinion and attitude as a result of societal and cultural differences, perception of normal as unusual, shortcomings of existing Indian systems and their transformation, impact of society and its culture on the outlook towards human life, and the perception of detachment and its influence on humans.

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# MONICA ALI'S *BRICK LANE*: DISSIDENT VOICE OF A MUSLIM 'ÉMIGRÉ' WOMAN

**Krishna Prabha K.**

There is a vast controversy in the post – 9\11 western world regarding Muslims in general and Muslim women's rights in particular. The already existing curiosity and animosity centered on the Muslims seems to have heightened with the bombing of the twin towers. It underscored the West's xenophobia toward the Muslim world and vice versa. As the politics of race intensify, many racial, religious and cultural groups are seen to turn inward for a sense of identity. In a global scenario, the Muslim diaspora are always searching for a way to belong to the larger social fabric.

The issues that Muslim women face today range from issues like whether to veil or to segregate, whether to agree to arranged marriages, whether to speak out against their religion and its mullahs\imams and their interpretations of their laws, and whether to speak out against the violence perpetrated in the name of religion by their religious brothers. The Muslim women do take pride in cultural Islamic ways. At the same time, they resist certain practices and speak out against their wrongs. They are denied their cultural right to their own religion from within their Muslim community, which regards them as apostates, and from without because the West has its own misconceptions. In an opposite dimension, Muslim women seem to assert their rights to their identity by gestures considered oppressive by the west, such as wearing the headscarf or veil. This issue has gained particular notice in the current transnational, diasporic, globalised world.

The term 'diaspora' is derived from the Greek term 'diasperien', from 'dia'-'across' and '-sperien', 'to sow or scatter seeds'. As Jana Evans

troops but at what cost? Does three decades of war and turmoil in Afghanistan have come to an end? In all walks of public life, the status of women in Afghanistan today is still under threat. According to the Integrated Regional Information Network of the UN, the condition of women is still pathetic with illiteracy, low life expectancy, forced marriages, poor medical care and subjection to physical, psychological, or sexual violence. The question still remains-the reasons for the backwardness of this rustic land-and the causes can be varied and many. This is open for many discussions as there can be myriad of explanations.

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## THE WORDS IN THE WORD: LITERARY DIMENSIONS OF BIBLE

**Nithya Mariam John**

Lelan Ryken, in *How to Read Bible as Literature* opines that a literary approach to Bible shows a concern for the literary genres of the Bible (11). There is an inclination to use literary terms to evaluate the texts, "…an appreciation for the artistry of the Bible, a sensitivity to the experiential, extra-intellectual (more than ideational) dimension of the Bible" (11). It means that to appreciate Bible as literature we must be sensitive to the physical and experiential qualities of a passage and avoid reducing every passage in the Bible, to a set of abstract themes.

The human beings' relation to God is described metaphorically because it deals with that which is not evident to the visible eyes and must describe the unknown in terms of the known. Metaphorical rendering of such a relationship gives literary dimension to the text. Thus, God's people are addressed in the Bible as his adopted sons or children, his bride, kingdom of priests, holy nation, peculiar treasure, servants, jewels, witnesses, noble vine, pleasant planting, fruitful trees, and so on. The church in the New Testament is called the New Jerusalem, the bride of Christ, the Israel of God, the body of Christ, God's temple, building, field, his covenant people, new creation, or colony of heaven. Church members are pilgrims, aliens, exiles, strangers on the earth, slaves of righteousness or of Christ, heirs, fools for Christ, citizens of heaven, or ministers of reconciliation. Christ himself is their righteousness, sanctification, redemption, first fruit, covenant, temple, high priest, sacrifice, word, or wisdom and power of God. He is called priest after the order of Melchizedek, man of heaven, Son of God,

servant, last Adam, Son of man, Messiah, and Lord. The above biblical metaphors prove that biblical language abounds in literary images, which itself proves the literary quality of Bible.

In "Teaching the Bible as Literature," R .W. French opines that the simplicity of Biblical language arises from the fact that it was meant to be a book for all. He says, "… the Bible is particularly receptive to literary study, and to the development of analytical skills and techniques, for at its frequent best it is characterized by exceptional brevity and simplicity" (798). He continues that such simplicity does not mean that Bible is written as a book with a single viewpoint; but it is "an extraordinarily varied collection of writings composed over a period of more than a thousand years, with all the wide range of theme, attitude and literary mode that would be expected from so prolonged a development" (French 799). The writers of Bible did not jot down their works so as to form part of a larger text called "Bible". When they wrote, they just penned down "…independent histories, biographies, myths, legends, lyric poems, short stories, proverbs and other forms of literature, and they did their writing isolated from each other in time and space" (French 801). This can be proved with a cursory glance at the compilation of the books of the New Testament. Initially, the books of the New Testament were written to address specific situations of specific readers. They were espoused on cheap papyri rather than the parchment used for Torah scrolls. Then the codex-the precursor of the book- enabled the cheap and convenient distribution of writings. The earliest form of communication took the form of letters which flourished due to excellent system of roads and multiple courier services. Senators, philosophers and archeologists carried on extensive correspondence. This form soon assumed an important place in the New Testament as the epistolary discourse. St Paul's letters to different churches and people can be considered as examples. Some of them are co-written; in some he uses secretaries to pen down his thoughts and in others there are literary traces of Greco-Roman and Jewish study activities that are carried out by teachers and students. He uses the conventions of ancient rhetoric, hymns, sayings of Jesus, with which the letters assume a literary shape. Another example is





shows the bleak side of submissiveness. But at the same time the spirit in these women are not dead; it is burning, ready to burst any time.

The story of Tariq is ridden with hardships, drugs, prison life and infinite love to Laila.Meanwhile the fire lurking in the two women bursts out when Rasheed tries to kill them.It is clear now that Rasheed always knew that Aziza was Tariq's daughter, but had married Laila in lust and a hope of a son. He becomes mad with anger when he learns about Tariq's return and in the ensuing struggle; Mariam had to finish him off in self-defence. This is where we can read into the actions of the two women. Are they really submissive or are they subjugated by the 'rules' imposed by the Taliban and nurtured by the men? The willingness and calm acceptance of death penalty by Mariam shows the true mettle of Afghan women. Even during the trial the difference in attitude of the jury is clearly sketched. The stereotypical image of an arrogant, authoritative and chauvinistic Afghan is broken through the behavior of the middle-aged judge.

The last section deals with the happy family life of Tariq and Leila, settled in Pakisthan. However, Leila wants to go to Kabul, after the coalition forces had driven Taliban out of every major city. ISAF, an international peace keeping force has been sent to Kabul.Hamid Karzi, backed by the US was the interim President. In the brief lull following the fall of the Taliban regime, propaganda concerning women's rights and general emancipation surrounded the 2001 US invasion of Afganisthan.Hosseni makes only a few disjointed efforts to depict the social and political reality during those years. In the first years of the US-installed Karzai regime, there is no much change from the Communist or Taliban regime. It angered Laila that the same incidents are happening again, "It slays Leila that the warlords have been allowed back to Kabul….Laila has moved on. Because in the end she knows that's all she can do. That and hope" (398-399). The uncertainty over their future, under US occupation is resolved by the protagonists by concluding that there is really nothing they can do to affect the future of Afghanistan, but wait and hope for a better future. Hosseni ends the novel in April 2003, just months before large parts of Afghanistan erupted in counter-occupation insurgency. It has ended with the exit of US

John Storey, in his *Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Culture* explains:

> Authors may have intentions, and texts certainly have material structures, but meaning is not something inherent in a text (an unchanging essence); meaning is always something a person makes when he or she reads a text. Moreover Gadamer is adamant that texts and readers always encounter each other in historical and social locations and that the situatedness of this encounter always informs the interaction between reader and text. I n this way, he contends, a text is always read with preconceptions or prejudices; it is never encountered in a state of virginal purity, untouched by the knowledge with which, or the context in which it is read. (47-48)

When we read *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, it is not without any without any preconceptions or prejudices. The war –savaged Afghanistan is almost a symbol of subjugated race, religious fundamentalism and terrorist activities It is with these prejudices that a reader tries to read between the lines. But as Gadamer expounds:

> The discovery of true meaning of a text or a work of art is never finished; it is in fact a infinite process. Not only are fresh sources of error constantly excluded, so that the true meaning has filtered out of it all kinds of things that obscure it, but there emerge continually new sources of understanding, which reveal unsuspected elements of meaning. (49)

In short, the encounter between the text and the reader is always a fusion of different historical horizons and they are always historically situated.

In many incidents in the novel, we can read into and the text comes into life. "It is the reader;" according to Wolfgang Iser "who brings the text to life, and thus brings the work into existence. Therefore it is in the act of reading that meaning is realized" (50). The instances where Aziza is left in the orphanage and beatings Laila had to suffer to visit her own daughter





the narrative form used in the four gospels which trace the stories of Jesus. The wide persecution of minority Christians led to the written records of life of Jesus, which was aimed at preserving the oral stories of the great teacher or Messiah. Revelation is a visionary narrative which records the dream-like experience of John. Thus the letters, narratives and the apocalyptic form the New Testament, which is indebted to the literary and rhetorical conventions of their age. They also show how such conventions were re-shaped and why they were used so as to preserve biblical literature. Such literature emerges from diverse circumstances in communities across the Mediterranean in the second half of the first century, and they reflect the diversity in their literary forms and religious perspectives.

Jeannine K. Brown, in "Genre Criticism and the Bible" says that the fluidity of genres of biblical texts call interpreters to a more flexible understanding of genres (142). What is more useful is to consider the genre of the text in relation to other generic similarities. Ultimately genres must help in identifying the different reading strategies possible, and this is where genre classification plays an important role in biblical studies, according to Brown (147). The examples given below relate how biblical genres have been analysed by literary critics and were found to be epitomes of literature.

Tod Linafelt, in "The Pentateuch" says, "Biblical narrative [especially in the first five books of Bible] works with a very limited vocabulary, and it often repeats a word several times than resorting to synonyms" (214). For example in Gen.32.21, the word "face" is repeated several times, without using another synonym. Another feature of biblical narrative is its economy of linguistic descriptions. The physical descriptions, inner lives, thoughts and motivations of the characters are sparsely described by the author. This terseness and scarcity of depiction, gives ample scope for multiple readings. For example, Lev.10.2 says that Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, were consumed by fire when they did something unpleasing to the Lord. Aaron's response to the death of his sons is a single phrase: "And Aaron was silent"(215). Linafelt says that this small phrase can mean Aaron's pure shock at what had happened, or his overwhelming sadness or his anger at God or his confusion as to what to do next.

In "Psalms", Alastair Hunter says that the one hundred and fifty Psalms have been an inspiration to many poets including Sidney and Hopkins (251). Individual phrases were borrowed into common usage through the Book of Common Prayer (Hunter 249). Apart from the wide array of metaphors and similes employed to describe God, intertextuality is the major quality of Psalms. A good example is the wayPs.8 toys with the creation account in Gen.1and2.

J.Cheryl Exum, in her "Song of Songs" opines that The Song of Songs is the most lyrical poetry in Bible with "rich, sonorous, sensuous vocabulary", dense metaphorical language, imagery which offers "flights of fancy" and freedom from poetical conventions (259). The lover conjures the image of his beloved through language, "by describing her bit by bit in densely metaphorical language, until she materializes, clothed in metaphor" (Exum 261). Kirsten Nielsen in her "Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job" draws the four major features of Old Testament imagery:

1. Imagery acts as a specific context by an interaction between two different statements.

2. Information can be derived from imagery in the form of new proposals for understanding reality (informative function)

3. The object of imagery is to involve the audience in such a way that by entering into the interpretation they take it over as their own perception of reality (performative function)

4. Imagery can be reused in another context, with the possibility of new interpretation and new evaluation of the informative and performative function respectively (276).

A perfect example is the image of Wisdom, in Proverbs. 7; it is of a woman who asks young men to come to her instead of being lured by another woman "dressed like a prostitute", who refers to foolishness .These images according to Nielsen "speaks volumes – much more than the bald statement simply that wisdom is good" ( 278).





try this again and I will find you…And when I do, there isn't a court in this godforsaken country that will hold me accountable for what I will do" (265). Rasheed's words are the representation of the social structure against the women during the reign of Mujahideen.

On September 27, 1996 when Taliban lead by Mullah Omar, leader of the faithful, took over Afghanistan, many people rejoiced. The instructions issued by Taliban came as a shock to the women, like Laila and Mariam, but is wholeheartedly accepted by men, like Rasheed, who had actually been doing the same for last many years. The crippling realization "that in the eyes of the Taliban, being a communist and the leader of the dreaded KHAD made Najibullah only *slightly* more contemptible than a woman" renders the women speechless (272). Entertainment like cinema and songs were banned. The university was shut down and its students sent home. The Kabul museum was smashed to pieces, paintings ripped from walls; books except the Korean were burned in heaps, sookstores closed down. Television and radio were forbidden and destroyed. Men were dragged from the streets, accused of skipping *namaz* and shoved in to mosques. But "Rasheed regarded the Taliban with a forgiving and affectionate kind of amusement" (274). It was the common attitude of men as all the rules and regulations were beneficial for them. He could even give away his daughter and wife and no one would be against him. The issue of health, especially for women is apparent in the novel.Laila had to undergo a cesarean without anesthesia and even the lady doctor had to wear a burqua during the operation. But it was the way she accepted it that sets our mind working. The thought that it could have been worse, makes a woman accept this terrible lot. Zalami, Rasheed's son, though only two years, shows the male superiority in his actions, when his father is present.Rasheed has become a devoted father and "his patience with Zalami was a well that ran deep and never dried" (289). However in the case of Aziza, he wants her to be a street beggar. The justification is that, "Everyone in Kabul is doing the same" (291). This points out the condition of the people during the drought in Kabul in 2000.

was 'charitable enough' to marry Laila, a fourteen year old girl,young enough to be his daughter. To avoid social disgrace, - as she was pregnant with Tariq's child-and in search of protection -she falsely believed that Tariq was dead-she too agrees to the marriage. The beauty of the narrative is the way Rasheed gives out the justification for marrying for the second time. When Miriam protested that she was too old to suffer this, he answers without any remorse. "It's a common and you know it. I have friends who have two, three, four wives" (208). The life of Afghan women under Taliban regime is developed through the lives of main characters. It lays bare the precarious existence of young people, especially the horrendous condition of women. Mariam's life depicts the role of social political scenario on the life of Afghan women who are victimized from all sides .Laila, in spite of a happy childhood suffers the same fate of Mariam. Even before the Taliban regime women were treated as dirt and it is clearly depicted through Rasheed's treatment of his women.Hosseini, through Rasheed sketch the hypocrisy of the males in Afghanistan. A woman's value in Afghan society has often been measured by her ability to bear children, specifically boys.Mariam was abused by her husband throughout her life because she unable to give him a child. Later on Laila was also abused by Rasheed because she gave him a baby girl as her first child. Rasheed, a typical chauvinistic male could not love Aziza and his sexual cravings have no bounds even with new-born baby. He even blames Mariam for Laila's withdrawal and when he starts physically abusing Mariam, it was Laila who pleads with him to put a stop to it. It is the common suffering that brings about the friendship between Mariam and Laila.

The Supreme Court under Rabbani passed rulings based on Shari'a, strict Islamic laws that ordered women to cover, forbade their travel without a male relative, punished adultery with stoning. The pitiful incident when Mariam, Laila and Aziza try to run away from the abusive Rasheed is an eye opener. The way the officer deals with this is pathetically funny. "What a man does in his home is his business" (260). The women are cruelly beaten and confined on their return 'home', and when their husband releases them, starving and broken, they and he know the truth of his words, "You





In "Prophetic Literature", Yvonne Sherwood opines that prophetic literature is marked by metaphysical conceits, which gives ambiguous meanings and undo language (303). The four gospels are narratives marked by plot, characterization, setting, which continuously use literary devices like irony, symbolism, metaphor, parables and most markedly intertextuality. Visionary literature in Bible demands our imagination to picture a world beyond reality. Lelan Ryken says, "It is a world where a river can overflow a nation (Isa.8.5-8), where a branch can build a temple (Zech.6.12) and a ram's horn can grow to the sky and knock stars to ground (Dan.8.9-10)" (169). Such images break through our normal way of seeing things, and shock our senses with the forces of nature suddenly becoming the actors in the scenes.

Apart from the consideration of genres, a broad overview of character, setting, plot, atmosphere and dialogue give us novel ideas on Bible as literature. The writers of Bible were also creative writers who took pleasure in exploring the formal and imaginative resources of their fictional medium. Many biblical narratives have a similar, recurrent pattern. For example, Jacob, Isaac and Moses have their brides associated with the water and wells, and the stories follow recurrent images of a woman or women drawing water from well, meeting a stranger, running to their house to deliver the news and later the stranger is invited for a sumptuous meal. Such a recurrent pattern affirms a unity of narration in a text written by different writers. Dialogue is a serious literary weapon used by the writers of Bible to reveal a thought. Contrastive dialogue is used to espouse the critical thought which ensues out of the context. For example, Pothiphar's wife's short and lustful sexual proposition to Joseph is contrasted with his long-winded statement of morally aghast refusal in Gen.39. The naked lust of Amnon to his sister Tamar is expressed in a similar contrastive dialogue in 2 Samuel.13.11.

Quite often, the text is not given enough consideration as a book of literature. Stephen Prickett writes in *Words and the Word* that the modern English translators are quite unanimous in rejecting any ambiguity in the text, and tries to substitute such words and phrases with whatever translation

that is free of oddities (7). The quest is for a univocal interpretation, and closure of the text to plural significations. Prickett says that it is such a closing of our eyes to the varied readings offered by the text, which pulls it down from the status of a literary text. He says that the modern English translations of the Hebrew text try to reduce the mysteriously suggestive Hebrew. For instance, the Hebrew word " aura" in 1 Kings.19.12, which suggests "motion of the air" is translated as "the still small voice", "a low murmuring sound" (*The New English Bible*) and "the soft whisper of a voice" (*The Good News Bible*), so as to provide the reader with a more clear idea. But such narratives convey a framework which shows very little interest in the literal sense of the Bible with its attendant complexity and resonances, and have instead chosen quite blatantly "interpretative paraphrases which, it appears, they feel are more culturally acceptable to modern sensibilities" (Prickett 13). David G. Firth, in his "Ambiguity" opines that the translators' attempt to seek the true meaning of the text ensures that modern readers of Bible do not confront with ambiguities so often found in the original text (151). But such a closed approach to the text limits its value as literature. He concludes that ambiguity "is not something to be feared by readers of the Bible as something to be removed in every instance. Rather its presence can be a sign of a skilful writer who invites readers to enjoy and play with the text" (Firth 185). It is only when there is a scope for a second reading, that Bible as literature reaches its goal.

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In April 1988, the Soviet signed a treaty of retreating but Afghans were not happy because they were ruled by Najibullah who was a Soviet puppet president.The history of the crumbling of the Soviet Union is portrayed in a few words and the Republic of Russia was born. In Kabul, Najibullah changed tactics and tried to portray himself as a devout Muslim so that Mujahedeen will agree to reach a full settlement. In 1992 Najibullah surrendered and he was given sanctuary in the UN compound. The holy war was over and leaders belonging to different ethnic groups came back to their home.The behavior of Laila's mother is typical of an ordinary Muslim woman who wanted the Mujahedeen to win. She is jubilant after a long time and hopes that this will be a golden era for Afghans. But it also changed very quickly. The different factions fought with each other and Mujahedeen, who lacked a common enemy found the enemy in each other. So once again the battles began and the ordinary citizens were caught in between.

One of the strengths of the novel is the author's ability to weave historical event in to the narrative. The life of Afghans during 1992, the time when different factions fought with each other like pasthuns, fighting Hazaras clearly gives us a picture of the hell they are living in. Even Laila had to stop her studies and she had seen Giti killed by a stray rocket and heard many incidents of the brutalities of Mujahedeen. Many of her friends and neighbours ran to different places like Tehran,India,Iran, Islamabad etc. All this clearly delineate the fatalism, the acceptance of fate as it is. Even the proud and brave Tariq leaves for Pakistan as it has become too unsafe for anybody to continue living in Afghanistan.At last even Laila's Mammy agrees to leave Kabul and go to Peshwar but both father and mother are killed by a rocket .The irony is that it was the same regime that they had hankered for which had bought this upon them.

The third part of the novel starts with the orphaned Laila, who had lost her hearing ability in her left ear due to a rocket attack, utterly desolate and withdrawn. It is here that the male chauvinism and 'magnanimity' of Rasheed comes to the surface.Hosseini has given us just glimpses of the 'animal' beneath the slick city man in the way he treated Marian when she had miscarriages and when he got angry.Rasheed who was sixty or more

It was the time when Leila could live freely and happily with her father, a high school teacher and education was given to both boys and girls. This was the time when women were given freedom to lead their lives in comparative equality than earlier or later. According to Babi, even though he was fired from his vocation as a teacher-it was the best time for women. "Women have always had it hard in this country,Laila, but they're probably more free now under the communists, and have more rights than they've ever had before….Of course, women's freedom is also one of the reasons people took up arms in the first place"(133). The cities like Kabul were always been relatively liberal and progressive with women teaching and doing office jobs. But in the communist regime the tribal areas, especially the Pasthun regions in the south where women were rarely seen on the streets and were always wearing burqua and accompanied by men, changes were taking place. The communists had decreed to liberate women, to abolish forced marriage and to raise the minimum marriage age to sixteen for girls. This was all taken as an insult by the men and they were against this godless government. It was sacrilege for them to see their daughter leave home, attend school and work alongside men.

But parallel to the progressive spirit was the havoc caused by the communist regime. The Mujahedeen fought to oust Soviets and regain power. The commander Ahmad Shah Massoud, the Lion of Panjshir is made a hero and the war, a holy war, jihad. The atrocities of the Soviet regime are also clearly outlined in the novel. The novelist has also mentioned about the Soviet land mines and the many persons suffering from it. Tariq, Laila's sweetheart is an amputee who cheerfully leads his life with one leg.Laila lost her two brothers, Ahmed and Nor in war. Laila's family was disrupted because of her brothers' death. Laila's mother became a broken woman, who even thought of suicide, but kept on living to see her sons' dream come true. She wanted to see the day the Soviets go home disgraced and Mujahedeen come to Kabul in victory. Her father, Babi was also heart-broken but he tried to move on valiantly. He even planned to leave Afghanistan and migrate to America. But he was tied to the land with the unseen bonds of his dead sons.





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## PARTITION LITERATURE: A TESTIMONY OF TRAUMAS AND TRIBULATIONS

**Sravasti Guha Thakurta**

In the year 1947, India finally won the independence it had been fighting for an unwarrantedly long time. However, although Independence was won, it was won at the cost of the greatest tragedy that had befallen the distraught nation—Partition, and the inhuman, illogical violence unleashed by it. People on both sides of the border demarcated by the Radcliffe Award experienced unprecedented violence—this was a degree of violence which had not been witnessed before and would never be witnessed again. People had fought together for the Independence of one nation, but when the much dreamt of Independence was finally achieved, it brought along with it the trauma of the two-nation theory translated into reality; changing the lives of millions of people forever.

Bengal, in the late 1940s, saw a psychological crystallization of Hindu and Muslim communal identity. The riots which terrorized Kolkata and Noakhali in 1946 witnessed the disappearance of the earlier division along class and economic lines making way to "religious and political alignment, which was overtly communal" (Fraser 20). Bihar also witnessed an upsurge of violence. As Bashabi Fraser has pointed out, "In Bengal, it [the violence] was organized with the Muslim elite and masses forming a common front with leadership from mullahs and a sympathetic League Government, against a weak opposition of a divided Pradesh Congress without the necessary support from the Congress High Command" (20). This mindless violence, unleashed by political decisions, taken by the political elite, of which the common man was never a part of, nevertheless, brought the maximum suffering to the uncomprehending, clueless, common man.





between Babi and Laila.in the novel. But the feeling of unity or brotherhood, belonging to Afghanistan, the motherland, is what which bound all of them together:

> To me, it's nonsense- and very dangerous nonsense at that- all this talk of I'm Tajik and you're Pasthun and he's Hazara and she's Uzbek. We're all Afghans and that's all that should matter.But when one group rules over the others for so long…There's contempt Rivalry. There is. There always has been. (128)

The 1979, the Soviet invasion, which supported a communist government triggered a major intervention of religion into Afghan political conflict and Islam united the multi-ethnic political opposition. Islam is the religion of 99.7 percent of people in Afghanistan and of the 80-89 percent of the population practice Sunni Islam and belong to the Hanafsi Islamic law while 10-19 percent are Shia, majority of them follow the Twelver branch. There are also a very small percentage of people who practice other religions such as Sikhism and Hinduism. In spite of many attempts to secularize Afghan society, Islam practices pervade all aspects of life. A tendency was sought to conceptualize Nationalism in religious terms. When the Soviet-backed Marxist style regime came to power in Afghanistan, it reduced the influence of Islam. In the novel the Soviet backed regime is glorified to an extent but also deglamourized at the same time. Shanzai, the daughter of a poor peasant who became a teacher had great regards for the communist regime. According to Laila, who was her student:

> She said that the Soviet Union was the best nation in the world, along with Afghanistan. It was kind to its workers, and its people were all equal. Everyone in the Soviet Union was happy and friendly, unlike America, where crime made people afraid to leave their homes. And everyone in Afghanistan would be happy too, she said, once the antiprogressives, the backward bandits, were defeated. (111)

women in Afghanistan from time immemorial. There is a history of subjugation of Afghan women. Many writers have pondered over the history of violence against women in Afghanistan in their writings.Hosseini, through his second novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* not only analyses the situation of women but also sketches on a larger canvas which in includes political and social change.

The first part also gives us a picture of Mullah Faizullah ,the elderly village koran tutor, its 'akhund'. He is a typical Mullah, an old, kind-hearted and intelligent man who understands Miriam and champions for her education at a school, but Nana immediately rejects the plan stating that "What's the sense schooling a girl like you? It's like shining a spittoon. There is only one, only one skill a woman like you and me needs in life, and they don't teach it in school…Only one skill. And it's this: *tahamul.* Endure" (18). It was the culmination of this slavish spirit which ended on a piece of rope. The orphaned Miriam is taken to Jalil's house and his wives force her to marry Rasheed, a widowed shoemaker in Kabul. Even though Mariam is a Tajik, who prefers to marry a local, a Tajik, Rasheed was a valuable catch in terms of money and position. Though a Pasthun, he speaks Farsi and according to Jalil's wives he is only forty-five compared to Mariam's fifteen years. It is clear from this incident that child marriage is rampant in Afghanistan. "Yes. But I've seen nine-year-old girls given to men twenty years older than your suitor, Miriam. We all have. What are you, fifteen? That's a good solid age for a girl" (47). Even before the advent of Taliban, the barbaric customs like childmarriage,polygamy,unequal treatment of women all were prevalent in Afghanistan. It can be inferred that the disparate treatment of women is not a new experience but it has its root in the religio-cultural scenario of Afghanistan .

The majority of Afghanistan's population consists of the Iranic people, notably the Pashtuns and Tajiks. The Pastun is the largest group followed by Tajik, Hazara,Ubek, Aimak, Turkmen,Beloch and others. Tariq and his parents were ethnic Pashtuns, who were the largest ethnic group and Laila and her parents belonged to Tajiks, who were a minority and tensions already existed between their people. This differentiation is clearly seen in a dialogue





Violence, already in evidence everywhere, escalated to hitherto un-witnessed degrees with the declaration of the Indian Independence and Indian Partition. Men, who had, from some time earlier, already begun to view each other not as fellow human beings but as 'Hindus' and 'Muslims' now fully donned their communal identities, and exhibited virulent antagonism towards the members of the 'other' community. People who had inhabited a certain part of the now divided country for generations suddenly woke up a fine August morning to the realisation that they were on the "wrong" side of the newly demarcated border; that, for their own safety and security, it would be the best for them to emigrate to the 'other' side of the barbed wire to what was now their 'own' country, as decreed by one Mr. Radcliffe. It is for this reason that we need to concentrate on creative literature for a deeper understanding of what Partition really meant to the people who were directly affected by it. The violence unleashed by Partition was horrific and unprecedented, its greatest impact was on those common people who had nothing to do with the decision making process, but, had to bear the brunt of that decision—as depicted in the short stories of several writers from Bengal. In most of these short stories the dividing line between fact and fiction gets blurred.

Dibyendu Palit's story "Alam's Own House" ("Alamer Nijer Bari") records the not only the physical violence, but also the psychological alienation that partition had engendered, "Partition had taken place in two forms—one political and the other mental. The second one had not been sealed and signed by Mountbatten" (Fraser 458). The story offers us a glimpse into the psyche of Alam, who had been born and brought up in Kolkata, and had later migrated to Dhaka—after Partition—but could never really adjust to the new life in a new country. His traumatised psyche endlessly sought the answer to the question as to where was his "own" house—in Dhaka, where he had emigrated, and set up a new life for himself, or in Kolkata, the city which had moulded his adolescent psyche. It was an un-answerable question to which he continued to seek an answer.

Ritwik Ghatak's story "The Road" ("Sarak") also highlights this sense of mental alienation that Partition was responsible for:

Damn it—that was my room! I had spent so much time there. If today someone comes and occupies it won't I get angry? I feel like finishing off the bastard! But I know there's no justice here. That's why I am leaving for Pakistan. That room, this road, you and so much else... won't my heart break to leave all this behind? But I need a place to live... that's why I must go.'

'Who stays in your place now?' my friend asked.

'Who knows? Whoever he may be I will find no peace until I tear him to pieces. He is my enemy now—the whole country is my enemy.'

Suddenly my friend spoke out like a sage. 'Who's the enemy—that's the question.' (Sengupta 8)

The speaker, Israel, who had decided to migrate to Pakistan soon after Partition, had perhaps not been subjected to any physical violence himself, but nevertheless, he felt mentally alienated, cut off, from the pulse of the country which he had inhabited and called his own before the cataclysmic event of the Partition. In an article entitled "Dismemberment and/ or Reconstitution: Visual Representations of the Partition of Bengal," Somdatta Mandal says:

> In August 1947, two international borders were drawn through British India. The first separated West Pakistan (now Pakistan) from India and the other, some 1500 kilometres to the east, separated East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) from India. None could deny that partition was an act of political expediency, yet at the time there were few who had any real inkling of the very worst in human behaviour that the uprooting of millions of people on apparently sectarian grounds would give rise to. Whether there was a political stance behind it or whether a greater catastrophe could have been prevented by it—these issues concern politicians and intellectuals. But for the large number of people in both Bengal and Punjab, this was not a theory to be discussed. It was a





## THE SHADOW LURKING: KHALED HOSSEINI'S *A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS*

**Ms.Sheeji Raphael**

*A Thousand Splendid Suns* shows the social and cultural and political structures that support the devaluation, degradation and violence endured by Mariam and Laila. Seemingly a novel which deals with feminism, it also sketches the political condition of Afghanistan and the plight of women during several invasions in the country. It ponders a serious question of acceptability of regimes which clearly marginalized women. It is in this context that the ethnic groups-their culture and beliefs- of Afghanistan come to the forefront. The question is why they passively submit to regime after regime which subjugates them, specially the women.

The story begins from 1960s as Mariam, an illegimate child of a wealthy business man from Heart is growing up. The word ' harami' is repeatedly seen in the beginning of the novel as it depicts the social and cultural ostracization of illegitimate children in the society. Mariam though a 'harami' loved her father who is the preparator of her sorrows. With three wives and nine legitimate children, Jalil, her father is idolized. A very wealthy man who left his illegitimate child and helpless, embittered woman whose only fault was bearing his seed, to live alone in a 'rat hole' is blameless and kept on a pedestal. The cryptic words of Nana, Mariam's mother demonstrates the place of women in the society. "Learn this now and learn it well, my daughter: Like a compass needle that points north, a man's accusing finger always finds a woman. Always. You remember that,Mariam " (7). So it is clear that the socio- cultural extremism and religious elements have posed as obstacles towards the development of

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> ground reality, a direct physical experience, the pain and wound very difficult to heal. (qtd. in Sengupta 135)

He has emphasized how the pain and the wounds of Partition left psychological scars in the psyche of the victims and how mere data and statistics was not sufficient for understanding its impact.

Ranajit Guha has distinguished between three levels of historical discourse, a 'primary' level, consisting of factual reports, a 'secondary' level, consisting of commentaries and memoirs that aspire to the status of history, and a 'tertiary' level, which could be referred to as history proper, with references, footnotes, objective distance and scientific language (Guha 3). This is certainly the case with the history of Partition. Gyanendra Pandey, another scholar belonging to the same Subaltern Studies group, has also reiterated on the idea of violence. In his book, *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India*, Pandey has stated how newspaper reports of violence, FIRs lodged in police stations, personal memoirs, all have an important role to play in the construction of the history of Partition. All of the accounts pertaining to the Partition point to a single direction, the unsettling truth that the Partition of India was accompanied by violence on an unprecedented scale.

History, as Mushirul Hasan, the noted historian, has stated, is incapable of capturing the angst, the despair, the helplessness of the common man who had to bear the brunt of those traumatic times. Histories, political science and sociology are records of mere facts and figures; they are incapable of capturing the very real and palpable psychological anguish and physical suffering that the people affected by the event of Partition had to endure. Hasan is of the opinion, "Literature has emerged as an alternate archive of the times" (qtd. in Fraser xiii). Especially, in the study of the Partition of India in particular, "…literature has articulated the 'little' narratives against the grand; the unofficial histories against the official. What is peripheral to recorded history—the actual impact of official decisions on the everyday life of the people—is central to literary representation" (qtd. in Fraser xiii).

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'other' is undermined, and in Bhabha's understanding of Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, 'identities are always oscillating'. Both the black skin and white mask is not a neat divide but a 'doubling, dissembling image of being in at least two places at once…. It is not the Colonialist Self or the Colonised Other, but the disturbing distance in between that constitutes the figure of colonial otherness…' (qtd. in Loomba 125). Stevenson's novel point towards the fissures of history which in its mirroring, express 'the liminality and hybridity' as symptomatic of the colonial condition itself' (qtd. in Loomba 148). If for Jan Mohamed , the ambivalence located in the use of the double is a sign of 'imperial duplicity' and underneath it all the dichotomous relationship between the colonizer and colonized still prevails. Jekyll realizes to his horror that he 'was slowly losing hold of my original and better self, and becoming slowly incorporated with my second and worse' (Stevenson 62). That he was 'radically both' (55) comes to haunt him. For Bhabha, the doubling reveals both the trauma of the colonial subjects, the 'Satanization' of Hyde-like creatures, but also entails 'the workings of colonial authority as well as the dynamics of resistance (qtd. in Loomba 149).

Not only does the novel is representative of the times, but its constant preoccupation with the Other, is evocative of a realization that beneath the veneer of civilization, the 'irreducible differences' is more of a fictional construct. This novel is one of the early precursors in the acknowledgement that the nation is frayed at the borders that the 'investment in individualism, in originality' (McGowen 3), of the British Empire is a myth and that as Terry Collits rightly points out, 'the meanings are social, discursive. What skin and masks have in is that they mark the interface between the self and the world: they are the borders' (qtd. in Loomba 148).

Whatever might be the case, Jekyll and Hyde epitomises a concern of an age- in its fear, and understanding that the uniqueness of one's own nation is far removed from an originary essence, that the real and art, fiction and history, true and false are not only problematized but the underlying fictionality of the so-called discourses is revealed, to possibly envisage a new future.





## INTERSECTIONS IN THE MATRIX OF CASTE AND GENDER: DR. BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR, THE ARCHITECT OF MODERN INDIA

**Prof. Shobha P. Shinde**

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, enhanced regulation of women became a mechanism to resolve anxieties about social status. Socio-cultural practices led to the segregation of women through the withdrawing of their labour and physical presence from public space. Debates arose over caste identity which intersected with the narratives of sexual violence and sexual reproduction of caste Dalit reformers drew attention to the Dalit women's sexual exploitation according to custom through enforced sexual servitude through the 'Devdasi' system – women's ritual dedication to a god, thus leading her into prostitution. There was a severe critique of the interdependence of sexual compulsion and the material deprivation of the Dalit communities. Anupama Rao writes in "The Caste Question: Dalits and the Politics of Modern India":

> The contradictory effects of the social reform of gender by caste radicals can be explained by the fact that Dalit and non-Brahmin political subject formation increasingly involved the politicization of Dalit and lower caste men through the reform of family and female subjects. (Rao 54)

The social reform in the early days of colonial rule had cut across Brahmanical models of caste and sexual purity to produce the hegemonic ideologies of domesticity, female enfranchisement and companionate marriage. However, the Dalit social reformers led by Mahatma Jotirao Phule criticized these vigorously and pointed to the relationship of caste and gender. The public presence of women and the centrality of female

labour to the household economy of the Dalits and the lower castes was a matter of contestation. As Anupama Rao notes, "Gender and sexuality came to the centre of the political community of caste in the colonial times" (540). Coerced sexual labour was a key to the collective humiliation of a stigmatized community

In the period between 1905-1909, eight hungred and thirty-six women had been dedicated to god in Belgaum, nine hundred and eleven in Bejapur and eight hundred and seventy-six in Dharwar districts. The degradation of Dalit women became a powerful issue to demand gendered respectability through the abolition of this custom. This reform came to be allied with the reform of the Dalit's life of untouchability and segregation. Dalit female sexuality was synonymous with sexual availability and degraded female value. Women were allied to caste and religious communities reproducing female backwardness and preventing female emancipation.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, born in the Mahar community, had faced injustice and discrimination due to his caste in his own personal life. He had the advantage of a good education not only in India but in England and America. He led a national crusade against untouchability. He became a leader of the Dalits and emerged a great modern visionary, renaissance leader and the architect of the Constitution of India. He inspired and initiated a mass mobilization to enforce the socio-cultural upsurge for the total emancipation of the Dalits by awakening their consciousness to work for their own liberation.

The focus on the female body, how it was experienced and represented was a part of women's emancipation. Dr.Ambedkar called upon Dalit women to reform themselves and play a central role in modernizing the community. They had to give a new meaning and significance to the gendered habits. In a speech given before thousands of women on 27 December 1951, he said:

> You should wear your sari in the way that upper caste women wear their saris.You incur no expense by doing so. Similarly, the many necklaces around your neck, and the silver and the bangles you wear from wrist to elbow is a mark of identification.… If you





the fears and threat of an invasion from the disenfranchised Irishman and the immigrant Jews from the Eastern Europe, as well as the concern that their own civilized British subjects would become enamoured of the primitiveness of the colonies abroad, and are not only visible in novels like *Dracula* and*Lady Audley's Secret*, but also manifested in the numerous reform acts over the years spanning from 1870 to 1905- the so-called 'Alien Destruction Acts'.

Homi K. Bhabha's concept of 'unhomeliness' becomes the prototypical model to encapsulate thecomplexity involved in the colonial encounter of the self and the other and illustrated in the functioning of the double of Victorian novels. The instability of the home and hospitality in a colonial setting is disrupted, thereby hopelessly corrupting the categories of the host and the guest. Likewise, Jekyll's speculation- 'man is not truly one but two…' (Stevenson 55) and consequent experimentation, 'challenges the boundaries between public and private spheres, as well as between past, present, and future; since imperialist power struggles call into question control of identity, territory, and national history' (qtd. in Hollander 19).

This blurring of the opposed binaries, is what marked the nationalist thinking at the end of the century, one which caused immense consternation amongst the British that they were not different from their 'misshapen' Others. Jekyll's investigation of the duality within man is a metaphor for a nation troubled with the 'sameness within difference', one which calls into question, the very fabric of national consciousness. As his narrative reveals the anxiety of a nation and race obsessed with purity: '[i]t was the curse of mankind that these incongruousfaggotswere thus bound together – that in the agonized womb of consciousness, these polar twins should be continuously struggling. How, then, were they dissociated?'(Stevenson 56).

*Jekyll and Hyde* is a product of a historical conjuncture when the dynamics of the colonial project were first being put under the scanner. The positing of an essential, natural European self in opposition to an essential

It should be noted that the discourses of race and the purity at the same time were also inextricably linked with the 'issue of sexuality and the issue of sexual unions between whites and blacks…. Theories of race were thus also covert theories of desire' (Young 9). Stevenson's novel emerged during a time when women were finally breaking the shackles of the image of 'angel in the house' and entering into the public sphere. The encapsulation of this conflation of the public versus the private spheres is to be located in literature in the sensational novels written by women like Sarah Grand at the turn of the century. The fear that Britain would be 'peopled' with more 'Calibans', that is, the fear of miscegenation looms large which brings together the discourses of racial purity and female sexuality and as immigrants enter closer home or as the 'colonial contacts widen and deepen, it increasingly haunts European and Euro-American culture' (Loomba 134). Sexuality also becomes the means to maintain or dissolve racial purity. One can see this in the discourse of Indian nationalists as well. In *Jekyll and Hyde*, this fear is apparent in its absences, there are no women characters in this novel, but then the spectre of homosexuality is revealed. It should be understood that women, blacks, the lower classes, madness and homosexuality all formed a part of a chain that as the century wore on, became apparent in the famous trial of Wilde's.

The discourse of Imperialism is a fascination with the 'colonial margin' described by Bhabha as 'that limit where the West must face a peculiarly displaced and decentered image of itself in "double duty bound" at once a civilizing mission and a violent subjection of itself' (qtd. in Halberstam 80). Hyde is at once a 'stereotype of Otherness', at once desirable and repulsive, delineated in Jekyll's inability to give up the potion of transformation and Hyde's taxonomic features as representative of an 'essential signifier of evil'. The recurrent images of black people, Moors and heathens in literature and history are all manifestations of anxiety, as can be seen in the phrase used in Shakespeare's tragedy *Othello*- 'turning Turk'. In the words of AniaLoomba, as colonialism advanced, missionary expanded, so did European fears of contamination (100). Jekyll's narrative that the 'ugly idol in the glass' was both 'natural and human'(58) shows the paradoxical nature involved in the construction of national and self-identity reflected in





> must wear jewelry, then get gold jewellery made. Pay attention to cleanliness! (qtd. in Dhara 22)

Good clothing, good posture, standing erect while speaking, refusing to bend down or bow was critical to Dalit women's personhood.

Dr.Ambedkar, like Mahatma Phule who he regarded as his guru, dealt with the issue of gender equality as a part of total liberation and empowerment of a subjugated and suppressed people. Dr. Ambedkar attacked the root cause of women's subordination, the caste system. He looked at women as equal partners, tried to remove them from the burden of victimization and gave them agency. He brought about an awakening and consciousness among Dalit women that they were not inferior to anybody. All his life was devoted to the social reforms which would lead to a just and egalitarian society, where men and women would be equal partners in a new social regeneration. He said :

> Every girl who marries must be ready to stand by her husband. Not as his slave but in relation of equality, as his friend. If you behave according to this advice you will lift up not only yourselves but the Dalit society as well and increase respect for yourselves and for the community. (Moon 160)

Dr. Ambedkar had a deep understanding of the Indian social system and identified the root of the stratification, "Women are gateways to the caste system." He firmly held the belief that the superimposition of endogamy on exogamy means the creation of caste (*Collected Speeches and Writings* 9).

In one of his finest intellectual discourses, "Annihilation of Caste," he maintained that the Hindu social order prescribed that "a surplus woman," must be disposed or else she will violate the endogamy of the group. So according to him, to preserve the endogamy of caste, Hindus disposed of woman by two methods. One by burning her on the funeral pyre of her deceased husband and getting rid of her and second by enforcing widowhood on her for the rest of her life (Ambedkar 10). This placed women in a perpetual state of slavery and humiliation to suffer gender injustice. As a solution to such evil practices he proclaimed, "…make every man and

woman free from the thralldom of the "Shastras", cleanse their minds of the pernicious notions founded on "Shastras" and he or she will inter-dine and intermarry (Ambedkar12). In a strong appeal to demolish such a system he said, "Society must be based on reason and not on atrocious traditions of the caste system" (Ambedkar 12).

Dr.Ambedkar's movement to implement the claims of the Dalits to the source of all of life's nourishment was also a movement to constitute public space as truly public. Dalit activism under his leadership was taking new forms to fight stigmatization and exclusion. Disparate and localized challenges to the caste order led to an explicit demand for civil rights. Thousands of people participated in the Mahad Satyagraha on 25 December 1927 to take water from the Chavdar Tank. The satyagrahis burnt the "Manusmriti", the ancient Brahmanic code that was the cultural and legal symbol of caste slavery, gender inequalities and social injustices based on the Varna system. Dr.Ambedkar acknowledged the debt to the techniques and strategies of popular nationalism. He compared this public rejection of the caste system with the burning of foreign cloth by Indian nationalists to challenge colonial exploitation. Both cases were examples of spectacular repraisal of oppressive, sociopolitical orders (Anupama Rao 80).

New conceptions of public access and civic inclusion animated Dalit public action through attacks on symbols of caste orthodoxy through events like the Ambadevi temple entry on 13 November 1927 and the Parvati and Kalaram temples at Pune and Nasik. The temple was a symbol of Dalits' exclusion from religious worship and a potent site of Dalits denigrationof caste Hindus. It was an effort to democratize caste relations.

Dr.Ambedkar as a lawyer, scholar, theorist, publicist, activist and as a Dalit participant himself was actively engaged in shaping India's democracy right from 1917. He was engaged in a lifelong effort to find a language into which Dalit deprivation could be translated. He insisted on restoring the personhood which was denied to Dalits historically through the caste inequities practiced by society. He thought of the Dalit as a universal historical subject and struggled to invest Dalits with human dignity and political legitimacy. He tried to recreate a Dalit identity by revaluing Dalit stigma. He addressed women thus :





in Malchow 125). Moreover, the equating of these races with darkness, in fact the whole 'continent of Africa' being spoken of as 'dark', the site of illogical reason as well as primitive desires is exemplified by associating Hyde with the dark murky alleys, blurred vision of chaos, prowling by night while Jekyll when rid of the shadow of the 'evil' walks in the sunshine and through the day.

The trope of doubleness is not only an acknowledgement of the failures of the grand narratives of 'colonial regimes to produce a fixed and stable identity' but the ambivalence that implies the dynamics of the colonial encounter itself. The story of doubling in *Jekyll and Hyde* point to the 'terrible, mutating force that the official history of a unified Britain cannot subdue' (qtd. in Martin-Jones 115). Hyde becomes representative of the exclusions that inscribe the 'writing of one's nation', which continues to disrupt the linear history of Thomas Babbington Macaulay's idea of Britain as being the site of 'continuous historical progress' (Bod 253).

**'Double' from Postcolonial Perspective**

*Jekyll and Hy*de probes the historical complexities involved in, to use Benedict Anderson's phrase the 'imagined community' of one's nation, a dialogue between the European self and the Other (represented by the 'effeminate' Scots, 'barbaric' Irish and the 'primitive', 'bestial' Africans or Indians), which tries 'to capture the ways in which identity is distorted and redefined' in cross-cultural encounters.National identity is a reflection on boundaries, borders, with the margins and peripheries being thought of as fixed and unchangeable. However, with the flow of dispossessed exiles, migrants as well as the disruption implied within the narrative of colonial encounter itself, these borders become destabilized leading to a mutual interaction which is both attractive and threatening to the concept of a nation.Jekyll learnt early'to recognize the thorough and primitiveduality of man; I saw that, of the two natures that contended in the field of my consciousness, even if I could rightly be said to be either, it was only because I was radically both...' (Stevenson 56). This 'radically both' is the beginning of the trouble for the stability of the individual as well as for the nation.

published during a time when many novels (*Dorian Gray; Lady Audley's Secret; Dracula; Women in white; Heart of Darkness*) were dealing with this duplicity and doubling. This similarity of themes cannot be read as coincidental, as the earlier instances of doubling in other eras also point towards the same conclusion.In the Renaissance period the use of doubling is accompanied with the entry of African slaves into Britain and the discovery of new colonies, and in the eighteenth century, with the mass migration of the rural dwellers on account of the Industrial Revolution, and the American Revolution which impacts its resurgence, illustrated in the inauguration of the Gothic genre and the historical novel. However, the use of this motif reaches its zenith during the Victorian novel. The emergence of the trope of the doppelganger is a response to the anxieties regarding the question of what does it mean to be British.

**'Double' in Victorian Era**

This was a period overtly concerned with the consequences of the cross-cultural encounters that took place on account of the dispossessed migrants as well as because of the imperialist project. Robert Knox *The Races of Men: A Fragment* (1850), the English translation of Max Nordeau's*Degeneration* (1892), both testify to a growing concern with the 'cultural degeneration of late nineteenth century Europe', because of the growing proximity with the 'intellectually inferior' Irish, Jews, and the Eastern people.For Judith Halberstam, the warring of the self between Jekyll and Hyde is 'between bourgeois individualism and the nineteenth century stereotypes of Semitic and Black physiognomies' (80). This is amply demonstrated in the physical description of Hyde who is constantly associated with the terms 'dark', 'savage', 'deformed', 'evil', his face marked with the 'signature of Satan' and his body suggests 'something troglodytic' (Stevenson 16). As Nordeau stated in his book, 'these inferior races were atavistic as well as emotionally regressive' (qtd. in Tomaiuolo 66). As soon as Jekyll transforms into his 'evil' other, even his stature minimises and he becomes 'misshapen' (Stevenson 52). Terry Eagleton in his essay, "Heathcliff and the Great Hunger", observed that Ireland 'comes to figure as the monstrous unconscious' of the Empire (383). Sherlock Holmes in Conan Doyle's spoke of the Eastern people as 'decannabilizing the savage', and about the Jews as 'another species of bloodsucker' (qtd.





> You must make a pledge that from now on you will not lead such a stigmatized existence, just as the men have resolved to bring about progress in society, so must you. Men and women together resolve the problems of everyday life. So must the problems of society be solved by men and women working together…to tell the truth, the task of removing untouchability belongs not to men but to women….(qtd. in Moon 108)

This quest for a new identity also forged towards the emancipation of women through education, knowledge and enlightenment.

In the essay, "The Woman and the Counter Revolution," Dr. Ambedkar traced how Manu laid down the laws followed by thousands of years of religious sanction and social acceptance of the secondary status of women. Manu defined that a woman was to haveno intellectual pursuits nor free will nor freedom of thought. Following the *Manusmriti*, the Hindu religion had tried to confine a woman's sexuality, fearing her defilement, and sanctioned the belief that a woman was a commodity to be utilized for a man's satisfaction and devoted only to a life of service and servitude. The public burning of the Manusmriti was an open defiance by Dr.Ambedkar to challenge the Varna system.

Dr. Ambedkar in this essay, has traced the position of women in a Hindu society before the days of Manu. The Vedas sanctioned that a woman could conduct the upanayan ceremony and Panini's "Ashtaadhyai" bears testimony that women attended the Gurukul and studied the Vedas and taught them to other girl students. Unlike Manu, Kautilya's idea was that of monogamy and in Kautilya's time, women could claim divorce on the ground of mutual enmity and hatred and widows could remarry by making a comparison between the codes of Manu and the position of women before Manu, right from the Vedic period, Dr.Ambedkar pointed out through a historical review the lacunae in a religiously sanctioned patriarchal mindset of a Hindu community built up over centuries and a need for women to throw off these shackles of their own mental and physical slavery.

As the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution, Dr.Ambedkar, formulated an inclusive policy to overcome multiple forms

of deprivation which also included women. The Indian Constitution is a challenge to the patriarchal, unequal social order and with its focus on equality claims for gender justice and provides special safeguards to Indian women through a reformative and affirmative agenda.

Dr. BabasahebAmbedkar's visionary legislation project of the Hindu Code Bill has been called by Gail Omvedt, "…in many ways a culmination of woman's social reform efforts that had been going on since the colonial period" (131). Women are the central core of the Hindu Code Bill and through laws on marriage, divorce, adoption, inheritance rights and property rights, Dr.Ambedkar worked to further the cause of the emancipation of women. The Hindu Code Bill regarded bigamyas a crime and prescribed monogamy. Civil marriages would help to cross over the barriers of caste and class practiced so widely in a traditional Hindu marriage.

The new Bill was submitted on 16 August 1948. For three years it faced a long contentious debate. Orthodox Hindus attacked it vociferously for destroying the sanctity of Hindu marriage and defiling of Hindu ideas of Ram and Sita. The government's decision to drop the Hindu Code Bill was regarded by Dr.Ambedkar as a great betrayal. He submitted his resignation as a Law Minister on 27 September 1951. He concluded his letter of resignation and speech with a statement which resonates even today:

> The Hindu Code was the greatest social reform measure ever undertaken by the legislation in this country…to leave inequality between class and class, between sex and sex which is the soul of Hindu society untouched and to go on passing legislation relating to economic problems is to make a farce of our Constitution and to build a palace on a dung heap. (*Writings and Speeches* 325)

Time proved Dr.Ambedkar right and subsequently, the Hindu Code Bill was split into four bills and they were passed separately by the Indian Parliament in 1955-1956.

Dr.BabasahebBhimraoAmbedkar together with almost half a million people, in a final definitive and moving gesture, led a public conversion out





London emerged in the nineteenth century as the epicentre of potpourri of cultures. Stevenson's use of the doppelganger is, along with the other novels of the late 1880s an articulation of the anxieties of a nation grappling with issues of purity of race and unemployment in the wake of the immigration of Jews, 'Irish question' and the lure of the colony beyond the borders of Britain. According to Edward Said, late nineteenth century and early twentieth century novel is accompanied by the ever increasing anxieties surrounding the 'moral legitimacy of the English national identity' that provided the thrust to the Imperialist project as well as to the Victorian novel itself, and raised the concerns regarding the 'purity' of ethnic identifications (qtd. in Hollander 18). Racial stereotyping was not a product of colonialist venture, as even during the Greek and Roman times, one found categorization of the 'barbarians' and 'outsiders'. However, this stratification became more entrenched, and expanded with 'European colonial expansion and nation-building' (Loomba 93).

Told from the perspective of two conservative men Lanyon and Utterson, Stevenson's novel isabout doctor Jekyll who is well respected among his community, and belongs to the upper class but succumbs to the attractions of duality which encompasses the human soul. He engages in some chemical experimentation that results in his taking over another personality, the savage- Mr. Hyde, a figure who causes instant revulsion when he comes across other characters in the novel. Lanyon found him fascinating but repulsive at the same time, when he comes to his house, Lanyon found 'there was something abnormal and misbegotten in the very essence of the creature that now faced me – something seizing, surprising and revolting . . .' (Stevenson 52). Hyde's physiognomic savageness is replicated in his action in the unaccounted for murder of Sir Danver Carews, an M.P which results in a realization for Jekyll, that his alter-ego or his double has become more potent. Even when the potion is not consumed, the doctor keeps on changing from one identity to the other, which gives him no way to get out of the mess of the shifting identities but to end his very life. A posthumous narrative, Jekyll is revealed to be Hyde.

The novel has been interpreted variously as a war between the noble and the baser, the 'evil' parts of human nature (Henry James), as an instance of alcoholism but, what is of particular importance that the novel was

reflection on national politics, as well as human consciousness. Double is the world of keeping the 'irreducible differences' separate as well as the dissolving of these boundaries of binary oppositions what Sheri Ann Denison said, the world of 'nightmarish '"collapse of identities, ambiguous borders, buried histories' (11), of a series of acts of copying and deception even in the form of forgeries that challenge the gendered and racial constructions of history.

**The Trope of the Double**

The Trope of the Double becomes the means to investigate, interrogate the splintering of identities confronted with what Edward Said termed the 'silent other'. What does it mean to be a 'Self'? Who constitutes an 'I'? 'Colonial as well as anti-colonial discourses have been preoccupied with these questions, what Abdul JanMohamed calls the 'Manichean allegory', the 'othering' of vast number of people by European colonialist discourses'(qtd. in Loomba 91).The link between the formation of the 'self' and the positing of the 'other' has been time and again explicated in various social, psychological, and philosophical theories. Jacques Derrida, in "The Other Heading", wrote, 'what is proper to a culture is not to be identical to itself' (qtd. in Vardoulakis 1). Adi Hastings and Paul Manning in *Language and Communication* observed, that 'identity is always understood in relation to alterity. After all, it takes two to differ' (qtd. in SilkeHorstkotte and Esther Peerens 1).

As the British Empire grew, the question of England's relationship to 'Other' intensified. What is interesting about the prevalence of the doppelganger is that its manifestation in literature as well as its cultural relevance is foregrounded at particular periods of history. The use of the double is particularly relevant for the Victorian age, though its ancestry can be traced back to as early as Plautus's comedies of mistaken identities. Distinguished by the rise of capitalism, and the growing might of British Empire, nineteenth century Britain is riven with conflicts and contradictions beneath the 'optimism' and the positive 'affirmations of values' referred to as the 'Victorian values' (Carter and McRae 250). The sense that everything is right with the world because God's in his heaven, as Browning declared in "Pippa Passes", is duly questioned and critiqued through the mode of the 'double'(249).





of Hinduism on 14 October 1956. It was the climax of a life devoted to the cause of the upliftment of the oppressed untouchables, the Dalits of India.

Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar, Bharat Ratna, is iconic of Dalit struggle. He provided the set of political idioms that effectively changed the negative identity of the untouchables into the historical agency and political power of the Dalit. He gave the Dalits a social and political visibility at a particular point of history. He did this through a constant engagement with liberalism and the ideals of democracy.

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# READING LESLIE MARMON SILKO'S *ALMANAC OF THE DEAD* AS "COUNTING COUP" ON EURO-AMERICAN NATIONALISM AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

**Ms. Sheena John**

*If history moves forward, the knowledge, of it travels backward, so that in writing of our recent past we are continually meeting ourselves coming the other way.*

(Terry Eagleton)

From the late twentieth century to the contemporary moment, the most debated topic and the most frequently asked question in postcolonial politics have been about identity. Questions involving identity inevitably raise critical issues relating to roots and origins, history and memory. These insistent questions about origins or identity, which have been at the forefront of national imagination, may be looked upon as the direct offshoot of European colonialism. Colonialism, as a cultural phenomenon, not only manifested differently in different parts of the world but everywhere of brought together the original inhabitants and the settlers in the most complex and traumatic relationships in human history. Since contact, indigenous people in all parts of the world went through difficult life-altering experiences because colonization invariably meant the invasion of their territories, appropriation of their lands, destruction of their habitats and ways of life, and even genocide.

Contemporary issues of the indigenous communities in the U.S., officially named "Native Americans", can be better understood against the backdrop of colonization. It is true that the American Indian communities are not yet "post-colonial" in the temporal sense of the word, for the tribes still exist in conditions of internal colonization. But a concomitant perception,





## Introduction

In the early 1980s, an advertisement of Coca–Cola which proclaimed itself – 'That this is the Real Thing' was hugely popular. More than this advertisement being about selling a product, this advertisement is itself a timely reminder of the constant preoccupation of philosophers, intellectuals on the notion of what constitutes as the real, the truth, and what is a double.Doubling, doppelganger, copying, or forgery are the terms that play, conflate, and problematize the notions of what is legitimate or authenticate, fiction or history, destabilizing the very foundations of human society. The art of copying or doubling is seen as a threatening and a powerful force that interrogates the very fabric of culture-its formation and its disjunctions. Since the inception of Western metaphysics, with Plato's rejection of the notion of mimesis as being a mere copy and a shadow, the engagement with the dialectics of real as constituting the paradigm of truth, and art though being its 'double' as also the site of lies and deception has been very much alive in the intellectual and academic circles.

Primarily, understood in terms of psychoanalysis, doppelganger is thought to express innermost desires, as a reflection of an estrangement to one's personality, at times also inhabited by a strange, alien, monstrous character who in the words of Marina Warner, 'might be impersonating you on the outside'(164). Otto Rank read the trope of the double in terms of a 'narcissist guilt, desire for an immortal soul' (qtd. in Wong 80), and Sigmund Freud in his famous essay of 1919, "The Uncanny" reads the doppelganger as the 'return of the repressed' which is a terrifying experience, on account of its being unfamiliar and removed from consciousness (Bate 39). In a poem written by Emily Dickenson, beginning with the lines 'One need not be a Chamber/ To be haunted', concludes with the line 'Ourself behind ourself, concealed'- exemplifies this notion of the splitting of the self (qtd. in Warner 164).

Double is the liminal space standing between reality and imagination, consciousness and unconsciousness, art and life, as a site of contestation and negotiation to deal with the fissures of history. The question of the double is inextricably linked with the issues of representation and its relationship with the apprehensible world, opening up a space for a wider

# DOUBLE AND THE MAKING OF THE NATION: RE-READING STEVENSON'S *THE STRANGE CASE OF DR. JEKYLLAND MR.HYDE*

**Indrani Das Gupta**

Double, double, toil and trouble

(Shakespeare Macbeth iv. i)

The 'shilling shocker' novel of Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) could be taken as an emblematic example 'of the forms and meanings' of the trope of the double in Victorian period. One of the most popular novels of all time, it provides new insights into the notions of self and Victorian political identity. In a continuous line of descent from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818); Charles Dickens's *Little Dorrit* (1857); through James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs of a Justified Sinner* (1824) and the Bronte sisters, to Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) and to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899); Stevenson's novelhighlights the peculiar use of duplicity and doubleness in the fiction of the Victorian age.

This paper seeks to examine the nature of the 'double' or the doppelganger in Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), as an instance of the obfuscation of the racial and sexual overtones, beneath the psychological explanations forwarded to explain the meaning of the novel. Using the theoretical framework of Homi K. Bhabha's 'unhomeliness', this novel can be understood as historically contingent, in terms of the imperialist project and a response to the various reforms acts of the late 1880s. In this paper, I would examine the motif of the 'double' in Stevenson's novel as it informs the debates around national identity, as well as a means to diagnose the dynamics of colonial encounter of the late Victorian era.





one shared with other postcolonial areas, has been that of the political operation of language, the exercise of hegemony through the word.

Since it is not possible to create or recreate national or regional formations wholly independent of their historical implications in the European colonial enterprise, it has been the project of postcolonial writing to interrogate European discourses and discursive strategies from within and between both worlds. Helen Tiffin, in "Post-colonial Literature and Counter-Discourse" argues that it is counter-discursivity, rather than any shared style or theme which is the definitive quality of postcolonial writing (211). These oppositional discursive practices are marked by a speech and stance which not only refuses a position of subjugation but also dispenses with the colonizer's definitions. Indigenous writing or Fourth World fiction of the U.S. is equally marked by such a transformative engagement. The recovery of a lost or subaltern history, told from the point of view of those who have been dispossessed and oppressed, has been a central concern in Native American writing.

In *The Wretched of the Earth,* Frantz Fanon analyzes the prospects of resistance literature and literature of national consciousness which try to "write the nation," and thus link Native peoples to their ancestral roots (180). Fanon passionately asserts the importance of rescuing history from the colonizer's custody. Similar sense of national identity and cultural belonging is stressed in the works of the Barbadian poet and historianKamau Brathwaite. Still others like Chinua Achebe, Raja Rao, and Salman Rushdie have focused on revisionist history. Their works may be read as alternative histories which both challenge colonial narratives and give voice to those whose stories have been ignored by European historians. In the U.S., the explosive indigenous activism of the 1960s and 70s and the Native American Renaissance that followed were conceived in terms of nationalism.

The politically charged works of Vine Deloria Jr., N.Scott Momaday, James Welch, Paula Gunn Allen, Leslie Marmon, Louise Erdrich, Thomas King, Simon Ortiz, and others, resisted colonization and Western historiography, projecting a model of ethnic identity for the future of the nation. Leslie Marmon Silko (1948- ), a writer of mixed Laguna Pueblo, white, and of Mexican ancestry, sees herself as someone in whom a concern

with memory and the past operates as a constitutive element in writing, as well as in personal and cultural survival. Silko's discursive method in works such as *Ceremony* (1977), *Storyteller* (1981), *Almanac of the Dead* (1991), and *Gardens in the Dunes* (1991) may be described in Catherine Rainwater's terminology, as "counting coup"[1] on Western historiography. These works clearly reveal her agenda of decolonization. The idea of a contested "nation" becomes the central idea in Silko, assuming apocalyptic dimensions, through a revival of ancient prophecies in Mayan almanacs regarding the ultimate destruction of the white race, and resurgence of tribal culture on the continent.

Silko's Nativizing and reclamatory project is evident in *Almanac of the Dead*; her take on Eurocentric historiography of the Western hemisphere or the Americas. Her cultural nationalism falls into the pattern suggested by Amilcar Cabral for she sees a clear link between history and culture; with her, nationalism is a historical act.

The major framing devices of the novel – a Table of Contents and a visual map – point to the novel's dismantling of the way in which the Western hemisphere has conventionally been divided into nation states with rigid borders. The Table of Contents displays competing systems of signification in the titles given to the six parts: "The United States of America," "Mexico," "Africa," "The Americas," "The Fifth World," and "One World, Many Tribes" (8-12). A Eurocentric nationalist view of history would posit "One World, Many Tribes" as the oldest and least mature social formation. "The Fifth World," similarly, would refer not to the so-called Third World nations but to pre-Columbian indigenous cultures. After the "discovery," the Western hemisphere would become "the Americas," while "Africa" and "Mexico" would precede the U.S., the latter standing as the culmination of national maturation and civilization. But instead of such a pattern of place and development, *Almanac of the Dead*'s contents locate the U.S. as the formation to move away from, and the more plural non-national phenomena such as Mexico as the formations to be explored.

In order to complement this reversal of Euro-American nationalist narrative, the title of each Part contains numerous Books, whose titles exhibit different kinds of naming as well. For instance, the title "Africa"





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Rushdie realises that at the very birth of the nation, the politics of exclusion has divided the nation on communal/religious lines. However, the city of Bombay, which preserved its hybrid culture, is now degenerating. Rushdie knows that "If RDX was being brought in Bombay, in sufficient quantities for the stuntists to be able to sell off a little on the side, there was serious trouble in the air" (358). With fundamentalist groups inching deeper inside with puritanical zeal, the hybrid space is under threat. Nevertheless, Rushdie's Moor still invokes a different sort of hybridity – a history of mingling that would create a hybrid and complex nation. Rushdie says:

> My view is that the Indian tradition has always been, and still is a mixed tradition. The idea that there is such a thing as pure Indian tradition is a kind of fallacy, the nature of Indian tradition has been multiplicity and plurality and mingling … I think the idea of a pure culture is something, which in India is, let's even say, politically important to resist. (qtd. in Jain 29)

These mixed traditions are now being subverted and excluded in the name of the nation. But Rushdie still espouses such a tradition. As an artist, he contemplates his vision of India in the paintings of Aurora Zogoiby:

> In her vision of the opposition and intermingling of land and water there was something of the Cochin of her youth, where the land pretended to be a part of England, but was washed by an Indian sea.… Around and about the Moor in his hybrid fortress she wove her vision, which in fact was a vision of *weaving*, or more accurately interweaving … [I]n a way they were an attempt to create a romantic myth of the plural, hybrid nation; she was using Arab Spain to re-imagine India, and this land-sea-scape in which the land could be fluid and the sea stone-dry was her metaphor … miraculous composite of all the colours in the world. (227)

Thus, the novel retains the vision of an all-inclusive nation in spite of growing fundamentalism and sectarian politics.





does not refer to the vast continent across the Atlantic and south of Europe but, instead, contains plots organized around states and cities in the U.S. Such semiotic dissonance emphasizes the history of forced migration of enslaved Africans to the Americas more than the voluntary migration Europeans to the continent. In calling attention to this history of forced migration, "Africa" suggests that there is a large population of descendents of enslaved Africans as much as anyone else, vying to produce realities in the Americas.

According to Virginia E. Bell, the novel's visual map, which calls itself "Five Hundred Year Map," also echoes this semiotic dissonance and attention to paths of migration and travel. The two-page map represents the U.S./Mexico border but points to, and labels, other places which would lie beyond the page's contours. A borderline runs through the middle of the page but only Mexico is labelled and not the U.S. Tucson is shown as lying a little to the right of centre, rather than exactly at the centre. A few other places – oceans, islands, nations, cities, sites of monuments – and events are labelled, and next to each one, are given a list of character names, from the novel. The characters, however, are from different historic moments and are connected to the dotted lines to represent the migratory paths they take. There are four boxed short narratives in English that refer to past, present, and future events, some of which make reference to Christian calendar years. The cumulative effect of all these details is a map that brings three dimensional, vertical notions of time into a two dimensional and horizontal representation. Such a strategy serves to undo the very idea of clear distinctions or borders between the past, present, and future. Moreover, because of the presence of dotted lines which suggest paths of migration and travel, this becomes a map that can undo spatial and temporal borders of the nation state, the U.S. Silko's framing map thus becomes an act of subversion, challenging the claims of both cartography and national history.

The dotted lines also point to the movement of historiographical manuscripts discussed in the novel, through time and space, in the process of their production, dissemination, and reception, and the movements of characters who work on these manuscripts. Thus, we have the names of Angelita La Escapia, a former Marxist, who tries to perform oral

chronological histories as a technique of popular education in Chiapas, Mexico. Clinton is a Black Indian and homeless Vietnam veteran whose "notebooks" and "broadcasts" are designed to inspire uprisings in Tucson, Arizona, and other parts of America. And Lecha, an old Yagui woman, is editing and transcribing an ancient manuscript, "Yoeme's old notebooks," the almanac for which the novel is named. These stories are embedded in many other stories and plots in the novel and, together, they form the prose narrative framed by the Table of Contents and the visual map.

In *Almanac*, her saga of postmodern decadence and crime, Silko depicts storytelling as a kind of political activism. To expose the culpability of the Christian-capitalist society, Silko amalgamates classic epic and medieval allegory with Native-style storytelling and symbolism. Employing a free-from chapter outline, *Almanac's* elliptical structure demonstrates Silko's storytelling method borrowed from tribal oral tradition. There are numerous complicated digressions and narratives within narratives. Silko herself admits that traditional storytelling has shaped the novel: "The story they told did not run in a line from the horizon but circled and spiraled instead like the red-tailed hawk" ("Notes on *Almanac of the Dead*" 140).

The ancient notebooks of the title, modelled on Mayan codices, are both a symbol and a tool for Native survival. Silko holds that the perpetuation of past tribal narratives in modern stories within stories ensures Indian survival because the Native people's ignorance of their history had been the white man's best weapon in forced cultural assimilation. When Catholic priests started forcing Mayan children to study Latin and Spanish in the sixteenth century, elders realized that written texts offered a tool to combat these attempts at cultural genocide. In assessing the worth of ChilamBalam's ancient texts drawn and written on horse gut, Zeta speaks for all the First Peoples against colonial theft. She points out, "… [whites] came in, and where the Spanish-speaking people had courts and elected officials, the *americanos*came in and set up their own courts – all in English" (*Almanac* 213). A damaging factor in interracial negotiations, a one-sided legitimation of language shut out the non-English speakers, and turned sovereignty and recompense in the favour of usurping whites who took "all the best land and … the good water" (213). In her layered telling, Silko evokes history, "the sacred text," for "within 'history' reside relentless forces, powerful





by Bal Thackeray spread the rumour that the Muslims have rejected "Hum do Hamare do" (we two and our two) slogan, as they want to increase their population in order to out-number the Hindus. The novelist portrays thus:

> MA workers went into the tenements and slums to tell Hindus that Muslims were refusing to co-operate, with the new policy. If we are two and we have two but they are two and they have twenty-one, then soon they will out number us and drive us into the sea. (339)

With such propaganda, he vitiates the whole ambience of Bombay and disturbs the age-old harmony of the nation. The nationalist zeal of the older generations of Moors is now almost dead. But as a memory of the past, a stuffed dog, which was named after Jawaharlal, is kept which the Moor then carries to Spain, where it is finally discarded in a cupboard. It signifies that the national ideals espoused by the founding leaders have been discarded just like the stuffed dog.

At the end of the novel, the Indian Moor escapes to Spain unable to sustain himself in the communally charged atmosphere of contemporary India. He dies in Spain, hoping to awake "renewed and joyful, into a better time" (433). Rushdie acknowledges the recent intensification of communal hatred and religious chauvinism in India, the drive towards ethnic cleansing and purity which debunks multicultural past and age-old shared history, thus:

> Christians, Portuguese and Jews; Chinese tiles promoting godless views; pushy ladies, skirts not saris, Spanish shenanigans, Moorish crowns …. Can this really be India? Bharatmata, Hindustan-hamara, is this the place? War has just been declared. Nehru and the all-India Congress are demanding that the British must accept their demand for independence as precondition for Indian support in the war effort; Jinnah and the Muslim League are refusing to support that demand; Mr. Jinnah is busily articulating the history-changing notion that there are two nations in the sub-continent, one Hindu, the other Mussulman…. (87)

That particular incident in Mumbai where the famous painter, M. F. Hussain's gallery was ransacked by the Shiv Sainiks protesting against the nude depiction of a Hindu Goddess also draws the attention of the novelist. Salman Rushdie, in his own way, highlights the incident when he comments on the communal colour acquired by politics and sports in India:

> The MA had announced its intention to march to Kekoo little show-room, claiming it was fragrantly displaying a pornographic representation of a sexual assault by a Muslim 'sportsman' on an innocent Hindu Maiden. (232)

Rushdie also shows us how Bal Thakeray claims "Hindustan" to be a country of Hindus only. He makes it clear that this kind of militant religious nationalism is jeopardizing the very essence of the Indian nation. It seems that the same religious persecution which had forced the ancestors of the Moor to leave their homeland and come to India in the beginning of the novel was now bringing pressure on him to leave that very country of his adoption. Rushdie further comments on "Mainduck's" political activities and observes thus:

> He was against unions, in favour of breaking strikes, against 'working women' in favour of Sati, against poverty and in favour of wealth. *He was against 'immigrants' to the city by which he meant all non-Marathi speakers,* including those who have been born there, and in favour of its 'natural residents', which include Marathi Medium types who had just stopped off the bus. He was against the corruption of the Congress (I) and for 'Direct action', by which he meant *paramilitary activity in support of his political aims, and the institution of a bribery-system of his own*. He derided the Marxist analyses of society as class struggle and *lauded the Hindu preference for the eternal stability of caste*. In the national flag he was in favour of the colour saffron and against the colour green. He spoke of a golden age 'before the invasions' when good Hindu men and women could roam free. (298-299 my emphasis)

With his archaic ideas, "Mainduck" is shown engaging in socio-political campaigns against the "others". Rushdie exposes how the Shiv Sainiks led





spirits, vengeful, relentlessly seeking justice" (316). The Yaqui rever the almanac because it identifies them as a nation from earliest times – "who they were and where they had come from… all the days of their people" (246-47).

Silko presents the history of the ancient Maya manuscripts in a modern day Gothic tale. The potency of the ancient almanac as a weapon in Indian resistance is suggested by the fact that their Native custodian keeps them in a wooden ammunition box. When the Southwestern tribe that had composed the almanac was dying out from the impact of European invasion, tribal members argued among themselves as to what should be done with the book. Because they were the very last of their tribe, strong cases were made for their dying together and allowing the almanac to die with them: "After all, the almanac was what told them who they were and where they had come from in the stories. Since their kind would no longer be, they argued [that] the manuscript should rightly die with them" (570). Finally, however, it was decided to divide the text into parts and send it north with four children, knowing that, in that way, at least a part of the story would survive: "The people knew that even if a part of their almanac survived, they as a people would return someday" (569). The power of the almanac stories to sustain people, because of its physical and spiritual properties, is made manifest when the children are forced to eat pages of the book as food and thrive as a result. The youngest child becomes so hungry that she chews the parchment; the eldest adds a page to vegetable stew, literally feeding the siblings on Yagui history. To preserve the precious lore orally, the eldest relates the contents of the page to the other three. As critic Martha Cutter observes, the almanac is no longer original, authentic, static, or uncontaminated but a fluid work in progress, an evolving narrative. Silko makes the earliest staves accessible to the late twentieth-century as history and revelation, through a decoding of the arcane glyphs and ancient chants and prophecy. The inconsistencies in the text reflect the fates of divergent tribes and people who overcome differences to forge a joint assault against the white usurper.

Towards the end of the novel, Silko's nationalism broadens in scope for she envisions a pantribal revivalism which extends to interpersonal relationships across tribes and organized groupings for survival and combat.

The intertribal alliance envisioned in *Almanac* goes beyond pan-Indianism to include a panhistoric map of peoples – African Americans, Aztec, Cubans, Guatemalans, Haitian Black Indians, Hopi, Inupik, Laguna, Lakota, Mexicans, and Yaqui as well as the homeless, and war veterans. Silko presents her shared worldview through the insights gained by Clinton, the urban Black vindicator and rebel leader who orchestrates change. Similarly, Calabazas, a Yaqui, underscores the rights of the dispossessed groups to their homeland: "We are [sic] here thousands of years before the first whites…We know where we belong on this earth" (216).

Silko validates the push from the south, which foreshadows the ultimate overthrow of the white society by poor Mesoamericans reclaiming their heritage. Arnold Krupat in *The Turn to the Native* sees the specific strategy of resistance in *Almanac* in terms of its insistence on a north-south/south-north directionality as central to the narrative of America. Krupat finds this shaft in the directionality of history an ideological subversion of the hegemonic Euramerican narrative, whose geographical imperative presumes a "destined" movement from east to west. Krupat quotes Roy Harvey Pearce's claim, "The history of American civilization would… be conceived of as three-dimensional, progressing from the past to present, from east to west, from lower to higher" (52). That movement cannot be reversed for, to go from west to east would be the same as going from higher to lower, from civilized to savage, something unthinkable in the context of "Manifest Destiny," nor can the movement be adjusted to accommodate the south. It is exactly this inexorable east-west narrative that Silko contests. Insisting that history happens north to south and south to north, she shifts the reader's perspective to the message of the novel. The novel concludes with the return to Laguna Pueblo of a "giant stone snake" that had disappeared long back when the rivers dried up.

Silko's revolutionary rhetoric is written into this powerful symbol associated with ancient tribal prophecy foretelling the arrival of Europeans to the Americas and their eventual disappearance from the continent. In the essay titled "Fifth World: The Return of Ma ah shra true ee, the Giant Serpent," she speaks of old Pueblo stories mentioning a giant snake who was the messenger of the Mother Creator, who had lived at Lake Kawaik in Laguna village but disappeared when the lake was destroyed, never to





politicized to arouse communal tensions between Hindus and Muslims whenever the test matches are being played between India and Pakistan. He throws light on the situation and says:

> In his game, essentially Hindu but with its Hinduness constantly under threat from the country's other, treacherous communities, lay the origin of his political philosophy and of 'Mumbai's Axis' itself. There was even a moment when Raman fielding considered naming his new political movement after a great Hindu cricketer-Ranjit's Army, Mankad's martinets but in the end he went for the Goddess- a.k.a. Mumba-Ai, Mumbadevi, Mumbai-thus uniting regional and religious nationalism in his potent, explosive new group. (231)

This "Mainduck" (Frog) and his "Ranjit's army" have a substantial influence on the political and social affairs in Mumbai, ranging from Ganpati puja to cricket matches. Rushide sums him up in the following words:

> His old nickname from the cartoonist days was never used in his presence, but throughout the city has famous frog-symbol-vote for Mainduck-could be seen painted on walls and stuck on the sides of cars…. He held his court beneath a gulmohar tree in the garden of his two-storey villa in the Lalgaum suburb of Bandra East, surrounded by aids and supplicants, besides a lily-padded pond, and amid literally dozens of statues of Mumbadevi…. And in his lawn cane chair with great belly slung across his knees like burglar's sack, with his frog's croak of voice bursting through his fat frog lips and his little dart of tongue licking at the edges of his mouth, with his hooded froggy eyes gazing greedily down upon the little beedi-rolls of money with which his quaking petitioners sought to pacify him… he was indeed a frog king, a Mainduck Raja whose commands could not be gainsaid. (231-232)

Thus, everything in Bombay seems to be carried out as per his pleasures. Anyone violating the norms set by him or daring to contradict him has to face his ire.

rural peasant women of India. The suffering of the film's heroine is, in fact, the real predicament of rural women. He discusses the film in order to convey the following message:

> In Mother India, piece of Hindu myth-making directed by Muslim socialist, Mehboob Khan, The Indian peasant women is, idealized as bride, mother and producer of sons, as long suffering, stoical, loving redemptive and conservatively wedded to the maintenance of the social status-quo. But for Bad Birju, cast from his mother's love, she becomes as one critic has mentioned, that image of an aggressive, treacherous, annihilating mother who haunts the fantasy life of Indian males. (138-139)

The novelist also throws light on the pitiable condition of the poor people in different parts of South India who, compelled by their poverty, donate their children to the temples. The poor girls, who become the servants of the Goddess Kellamma, become victims of various forms of exploitations. In other parts of India too, the system of "Devdasi" has been a constant source of exploiting the poor young women (Sarma and Choudhuri 2006). Highlighting the plight of these miserable young women, Rushdie comments:

> I regret to say, especially from those shrines dedicated to the worship of certain Karnataka Goddess, Kellamma, who seemed incapable of protecting her poor young 'disciples' … it is matter of record that in our sorry age with its prejudice in favour of male children many poor families donate to their favoured cult-temple the daughter they could not afford to marry off or feed, in the hope that they might live holiness as servants or, if they were fortunate, as dancers, vain hopes also for in many cases the priest in charge of these temples were men in whom the highest standards of probity were mysteriously absent, failing which laid them open to offers of cash on the nail for the young virgins and hot-quite virgins and once again — virgins in their change.(183)

Rushdie is a minute observer of Indian society and even minor social incidents do not fail to catch his attention. For instance, despite living thousand miles away from India, he knows well as to how the game of cricket has been





be seen after that. When the uranium mining started in the Paguate village in the late 1940s, the Laguna Pueblo elders declared the earth was a sacred mother and blasting her open would be an act which will bring about terrible consequences. Hence, Silko says, it did not seem extraordinary to the old people that a giant stone snake formation was found one morning, in the spring of 1980 among the uranium tailings at the Jackpile uranium mine. By invoking the snake image in *Almanac*, Silko makes it clear that the messenger from Mother Creator has come with dire warnings to those who despoil the sanctity of the earth. She also makes it clear that Native defiance and resistance to European oppression will continue unabated.

With this clarion call, Silko declares that Indian Ward have not ended in the Americas. Also, by moving the action of the novel closer to her own times, Silko discounts the white boast of five hundred years of conquest on a continent where Aborigines have lived for eighteen thousand years. Her message is made explicit in the annotated map: "Native Americans acknowledge no borders; they seek nothing less than the return of all tribal lands" (n.pag.).

Silko's cultural nationalism manifested in *Almanac* fits into the pattern suggested by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities*; to him, nationalism goes beyond the geographical and the physical. The tribal "nation" envisioned in *Almanac* is "an imagined political community" (6). This forging of a unifying collectivity involves careful selection from multiple histories, with nationalists repeatedly invoking the idea of precolonial traditions symbolized by race, culture, and language which have been trampled upon by the colonial invades. As Silko's novel demonstrates, for the ethnic communities in the U.S., who have been subject to centuries of oppression and exploitation by the dominant Euramericans, nationalism is a cultural construct which enables them to posit their autonomy.

**Endnote**

1. In manyIndian tribes, a warrior's bravery was traditionally gauged by his success at "counting coup," getting close enough to the enemy to touch him or to appropriate his belonging contemporary Native American writers such as Silko may be viewed as

successfully "counting coup" on the white man's language and literary forms, not only appropriating the semiotic "property" of the other but also reinventing it by making it serve Indian ends.

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the fundamentalists. Throwing light on the politicization of "Ganesh Puja" in Bombay, Rushdie bitterly satirizes the politicians, particularly Bal Thakeray, and calls him a "Mainduck" (Frog). Rushdie suggests that some politicians take undue advantages of such puja occasions to serve their political ends. Rushdie explains the situation thus:

> By the time Ganesh Chaturthi had become the occasion for fist-clenched, saffron-head banded youth thugs to put on show of Hindu-fundamentalist triumphalis, egged on by bellowing 'Mumbai's Axis party politics and demagogues such as Raman Fielding, a.k.a. Mainduck (Frog). (124)

These politicians are merely using a religious occasions merely to increase their influence rather than doing any good for the people. Because of these narrow minded and grossly opportunistic activities of the politicians, the city of Bombay has reached a degraded state and lost much of its old glory. The novel portraying the by-lanes and factory areas of Bombay shows us factory gates and dockyards spread into the slum-city of Dharavi, the "rum-dens" of Dhobi Talao and the "neon fleshpots" of Falkland Road. In a perceptive passage, Rushdie draws the actual picture of the struggling poor of the metropolis:

> …quarrels of naked children at a tenement standpipes, the grizzled despair of idling workers smoking beedis on the doorsteps of locked up pharmacies, the silent factories, the sense that blood in men's eyes was just about to burst through and flood the streets, the toughness of women with saris pulled over their heads, squatting by tiny primus stoves in pavement-dwellers' jopadpatti, shaks as *they tried to conjure meals from empty air*, the panic in the eyes of lathi-charging policemen who feared that one day soon, when freedom came, they would be seen as oppression's enforces, the elated tension of the striking sailors at the gates to the naval yards. (130 emphasis mine)

Rushdie understands that the politics of the day has made the nation doubly difficult for women. By referring to the famous Hindi film *Mother India*, Rushdie demonstrates how the heroine of the film symbolizes the common

> above vengeance because forgiving, above tribe because unifying, above language because many-tongued, above colour because multi coloured, above poverty because victorious over it, above ignorance because literate, above stupidity because brilliant…. (51)

The novel was written in the wake of the serial bombings and the consequent communal riots in Bombay following the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya by Hindu fundamentalists who tried to define India as a Hindu nation to the exclusion of all other religious groups.

The novel begins with the tale of Moraes Zogoiby, nicknamed the 'Moor', a spice trader engaged in his business activities at Cochin. The Moor is born of a hybrid lineage. His identity is a rather curious mix of Catholic, Jewish, Arabic and Indian - much like Bombay:

> Like the city itself, Bombay of my Joys and sorrows, I mushroomed into a huge urbane sprawl of a fellow, expanded without time for proper planning, without any pauses to learn from my experiences of my mistakes or my contemporaries, without time for reflection. How then could I have turned out to be anything but a mess? (161-162)

Referring to this, Paul Cantor argues that "by portraying Indian society through the lens of Moorish Spain, Rushdie condemns efforts to impose a uniform culture on a nation and celebrates instead cultural hybridity"(1997:325). The Moor looks after his ancestral spice-trade business which has been giving him a good return. He looks after his business methodically in spite of various problems, such as "the menace of emerald smugglers, the mechanizations of business rivals, the growing nervousness of the British Colony in front Cochin, the cash demands of the staff and of the plantation workers in the spice mountains, the tales of communist trouble-making and congresswallah politics"(9). However, in the post-independence India, communal politics has seriously messed up everything including his business.

Rushdie is highly critical of religious fundamentalism and its political abuse. The religious festivals have become an occasion of rivalry among





## THE MAKING AND UN-MAKING OF COMMODITY-SELVES: A CASE STUDY OF THE SELECTED DIAMOND ADVERTISEMENTS IN KERALA

**Najeeb P.M.**

Wilhelm von Humboldt, the renowned German philosopher and linguist, stated that "man lives in the world about him principally, indeed exclusively, as language presents it to him" (qtd. in Bernstein 95). Humboldt's observation about the deterministic intervention of language in moulding the cognitive and socio-cultural behaviour of humans led the way for the theory of linguistic determinism that was developed by Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf. The idea of linguistic determinism, or the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis as it is widely known, holds that the language one speaks determines the way one interprets the world around him, in other words, language determines culture (Bernstein 95-96). So, it derives as a corollary that it is possible to shape the thinking and living patterns of individuals in a particular mould by meticulous process of indoctrination. At the outset, this paper proposes that what is argued about the determinism of language is applicable in the case of advertising also especially, in the highly consumeristic market-societies like ours. Advertising determines the socio-cultural behaviours and self-identities of post- modern individuals; it intervenes in almost all the realms of human life- from dietary practices to conjugal etiquettes. The paper elaborates the idea of the determinism of advertising by analyzing the transient and arbitrary nature of the symbolic values ascribed on diamonds by advertisements. It examines how diamonds, which were once perceived as the priceless possession of the aristocrats, "lost" their sheen and were "relegated" to the realm of the "mundane," as illustrated by some of the recent advertisements. .

Diamond is one of the most sought-after precious stones in the world. Many myths and legends are woven around it and so many wars and conflicts were triggered by this piece of mineral. With the intervention of De Beers in the diamond industry in the nineteenth century, newer symbolic values were invented for diamond with the help of ingeniously crafted advertising campaigns and slogans like "diamond is forever." Diamond has long been equated with eternal love in the urban legends spun by such advertisements.

The paper examines three diamond advertisements by Kalyan Jewellers in which ManjuWarrier, the comeback Mollywood heroine, endorses the commodity. In the first advertisement, the character played by Manju is engaged in a conversation with her colleague about the latter's plans about spending the bonus allowance, and she suggests to buy a diamond stud. The colleague reveals that she has already made plans to buy some expensive gifts for her family and is left with only a meager amount at her disposal. Here, Manju retorts and says that it is possible to purchase diamonds with as meager an amount as her colleague is left with and volunteers to conduct her to the nearby diamond shop. In the last scene, the colleague is all beaming and excited after wearing the newly bought ornament; she is surrounded by admiring onlookers. In the second advertisement, a boy sitting in a coffee shop with his sister is preparing to reveal his love to a girl with a red rose. The sister disagrees with his idea of proposing with a rose, and strongly recommends that he should offer a diamond ring instead. The boy replies that he does not have sufficient money. Here, as in the first advertisement, Manju offers a solution and takes him to the diamond shop. In the end, the boy rejoices because the girl has accepted his proposal.The third advertisement is set in a middle-class household in which a girl is getting ready for a ceremony in which the prospective bridegroom is meeting the girl for the first time. The girl's mother gives some old ornaments before the ceremonial meeting. Manju's character intervenes into the scene and asks the parents to discard the old ornaments and buy diamonds. At this context, the father, a man of principles, replies that he is a low-earning school teacher and he cannot afford a diamond. He emphasizes that he does not want expensive ornaments to become a criterion for his daughter's matrimonial prospects. Anyhow, Manju convinces him and takes the





## RESISTANCE TO EXCLUSIONARY POLITICS: A READING OF RUSHDIE'S *THE MOOR'S LAST SIGH*

**Dwijen Sharma**

*The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995) narrates the disillusionment of the growing cultural and religious degeneration and animosity that marked the post-independence history of India. Rushdie apprehends a threat to the multicultural, multinational and multilingual India. Therefore, in this novel, he attempts to define the boundaries that exclude and include people, and tries to expose the lives of the marginals, who are often suppressed and alienated. In a sense, this novel is a valediction to the Indian nation that Rushdie knew and loved for its secular, democratic and inclusivist principles. In this paper, an attempt has been made to understand how Rushdie debunks the exclusivist principle of nation building in this novel.

*The Moor's Last Sigh*, with a historical panorama of almost a century, is a sequel to *Midnight's Children* with its main focus being on the drawbacks of contemporary India after the Emergency of 1975. According to Jyotsna Singh, "Rushdie destabilizes and pluralizes the category of 'nation-in-formation' in *Midnight's Children*, and continues this project in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, where he 'lays to rest all the comforting myths of postcolonial Indian nationalism'"(169). Through a complex interweaving of fictional narrative and metanarrative, the novel tells the story of modern India through the fortunes of a Christian Jewish spice trading family from Cochin, and celebrates competing versions of the Indian nation. Through this novel, Rushdie explores the cultural diversity of India and the role minorities play in maintaining the rich cultural mix. The novel nostalgically evokes the Nehruvian vision of a free, secular and hybrid India:

> Above religion because secular, above class because socialist, above caste because enlightened, above hatred because loving,

voice of the civil society reverberate throughout the novel. Along with the tremor prevalent in the island is heard the soft whistling of the Irrawady Dolphins. Civil Society remains an ambition as ever.

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"meager"amount of money that the father keeps, and buys a diamond ornament. As expected, the story comes to a happy end with the girl winning the boy's heart.

These advertisements are skillfully designed attempts by the jewelry brand to popularize diamonds among common people. As it has been explained above, the diamond has been a very rare and unique object in the earlier times. It has never been a common man's possession. Even in Kerala, it was advertised as an exclusively exquisite object to be possessed only by a limited circle of people. The advertisement of Blue Fire Diamond by Francis Alukkas, another jewelry brand based in Kerala, is a good example in which diamond is portrayed as an object which is unique and distinct. The distinction, uniqueness and exclusivity of diamonds are shattered by the Kalyan advertisements—diamond has become "ordinary."

Some common features can be found in these advertisements, which are set in very ordinary backgrounds. These advertisements are purposefully created in a mould which is against the conventional structures of diamond ads with elegant ambience and models resembling princesses. The celestial aura of diamond is being totally discarded in the Kalyan advertisements. Diligent care has been taken to give an impression that the action takes place in an ambience which resembles the mundane life of the audience.The audience is repeatedly reminded of the fact that the diamond shop is very much near their neighborhood, like any other corner shop. Thus, the purchase of diamonds is skillfully equated with the purchase of bric-a-brac from a local vendor.

Two points can be raised here. First, Kalyan ads democratize the concept of consuming diamond by presenting it as a common man's object.The symbolic values which are attributed to the diamond can now be accessed by every individual. Second, by deliberately deconstructing the sacramental aura and noble status of diamond which has traditionally been attributed to the diamond, Kalyan ads inadvertently defeat the purpose of their own attempt to make diamond a desirable object. What makes diamond a desirable object is its "uniqueness" and "rareness." If everyone is allowed to wear diamonds, they may naturally lose the "essential" value

which renders them desirable. These advertisements try to extrapolate the symbolic values of uniqueness and distinctiveness which were built around diamond by previous advertisements of other brands in an attempt to make them more "ordinary". The irony is that the meaning and value of diamond which was replaced by the newer symbolicvalue disseminated by the Kalyan ads had originally been created by other diamond brands. It was De Beers, a renowned diamond brand, which created the modern urban myth around diamonds: "diamonds are forever." It was De Beers who introduced diamonds as the "most valued symbol of your devotion," and "treasured beyond all other gifts" (qtd. in Lohman). So, once the diamond becomes a common man's article, its uniqueness as a commodity will be lost forever and this loss of value will naturally make it an "ordinary" object. The ordinariness may eventually force the consumer who is always in the lookout for commodities with unique symbolic values to search for other objects with a better sign-value.

The Kalyan ads exemplify the ways in which advertising determines the socio-cultural forms of post-modern individuals. Diamonds are cleverly inserted into the cultural fabric of Kerala by equating them with their mundane life. One can perceive the subtle changes in the symbolic-values of objects or commodities by closely observing advertisements. Rose, for instance, is an object which is symbolic of love across societies. But in one of the Kalyan ads, rose is replaced by diamonds—Robert Burns would have written "my love is like a diamond" instead of,"my love is like a red, red rose," if he were alive in the present consumerist society. And, in the immediate future, the diamond would become the "natural" emblem of common man's love.

Here, the advertisements try to make a vital change to a particular cultural pattern. The socio-cultural behaviours that the advertisements try to replace are social constructs, which were embedded within the social psyche at different points of time. But, when an advertisement tries to replace an existing cultural pattern with a nuanced one, the arbitrariness of meanings and values become more evident. It is in this particular context that the words of Humboldt quoted in the beginning of this paper become relevant. In a consumer society, it is through the images shown by advertising that individuals perceive the world. The world according to the Kalyan ads is a place where experiences which were held to be luxuries are accessible





Horen talks about the fear lingering in the island, "Because it's the fear that protects you, Saar; it's what keeps you alive. Without it the danger doubles."(Ghosh 244). The fear of the tiger and the demon god strengthened them but the horror of the riots and the exodus hadn't left them. At every small disturbance they shudder unknowingly. This politically weakened their revolting spirit. Unable to free themselves from the trauma (twice, when what they believed to be a secure base betrayed them) they could not reach that phase of politics which a civil society can. The CPM did not sense this. Or else they would have followed Stalin's advice of liberal communism, and made them a better state and democracy, only to make them their weapon. The state too in a state of panic resorted to coercion.

Unlike Marx, Gramsci believed that civil society is super structural. It included political organizations, but also churches, schools and family. It is everyday life. Some societies grow more than the state. The ideology that takes them forward is not that of the crystalline sedimentation of the ruling class, but forces capable of creating a new consciousness and history. The world of labour and production should not be abstracted from culture, creativity and humanism thought Gramsci and that was what was seen in the island. Production was organized culturally, not a mechanical act of drudgery where the worker is not the insignificant weaver of a fishing net. Labour was creativity in the island. Had they been given time, a political, aesthetic and philosophical group would have flourished as a democracy. The state was not very confident of its position. Any growth outside without their support was considered a hindrance to their own existence. When it dawned that it is only an element of diminishing importance it attempted to curtail the growth of the society. Meritorious factors should be rewarded or at least acknowledged if the law is an educator. The state failed to do this and used law as a weapon to destroy its citizens.

Interweaving history and fiction, Ghosh brings back to us the dark days of partition. Not much have been said or written on the Morichjhapi massacre (not forgetting Mallick Ross's study) for the press and the intelligentsia preferred to remain silent. Critics agree that through Ghosh's novel the world knew of how the largest ruling democratically elected communist state could indulge in power politics to destroy a civil society. The silent horror that lingered in the *basthuharas* and the never seen

The civil society, though it did not have a military force, had grown strong, not strong enough to fight the state, but to yield to the weakening of its social position. The state's aim was to stay in power and the society's aim was not too overthrow the state. The state needn't have a military force but when a downtrodden mob begins to recognize its selfhood and power, the state can politically oppose it. History has proved that any improvement in the position of the peasants can be catastrophic for its social position.

As for the civil society there was a lull when happiness began to thrive in the island. When a certain way of life content and happy becomes possible, the crime and violence of the past are no more judged as dangerous. When there are no fights for survival they are convinced that they are safe. They are no more cautious. The state force comes in as if they were waiting for all the trees to be cut down. In order to fight back the society resorts to the same weapons used by the state. They invite the journalists, writers and politicians to the island and give them a big feast. This happens when many families in the island were starving. "In order to ensure press coverage after the blockade a refugee, Saphalananda Haldar, evaded police patrols and swam to the mainland where he informed the Calcutta press of police firing. They published the story along with his name which resulted in his arrest" (Ross 110). The intellectual leader's words (it came very late) fixed on ideal happiness are not heeded to. They had no other choice. They were caught half way in their struggles. They did not have an economic power and so had to beg and yield and be betrayed by forces that once needed their consent. Nirmal failed or rather, he wasn't strong enough. Between the rebellion and peace they didn't realize the developments that had popped up outside their world. They did not have an intellectual leader to tell them that the process of change is not merely for a change in their living conditions, but for a deeper realization of the reality that no land offered to them can be theirs forever. They were yet to realize what experimental learning was. The fundamental ethics that had once gathered them together were slowly forgotten. The state succeeded in pushing them back to where they came from, a scattered, wandering lot, *basthuhara.*





to common men: "ordinary" selves are allowed to be "extra-ordinary" self-identities.

The construction of commodity-self is founded on the idea that our identity is defined and determined by our peers. "Commodity-Self" refers to "one's own subjective identity arising from the commodities one purchases and uses" (Way 106). Our self-identity is "the way in which we want others to perceive us" (Bailey). Kalyan ads are actually trying to create a new set of commodity-selves: ordinary people who can possess the luxuries of aristocracy. Ironically, the distinction between the patrician and plebian is solved by these ads. In an attempt to offer more exquisite commodity-selves for the "common" consumers, Kalyan ads strip the diamond off its "esteem." But one should not miss the point that the "high value" which diamonds arguably lost on account of Kalyan ads had, in one sense, been the construct of similar ad campaigns in the preceding years.

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## PORTRAYING HOME AS A SOCIO-POLITICAL METAPHOR IN NOVELS

**A.Balu Vijayaraghavan**

Home is probably one of the most recurring literary metaphors in novels. It is variously described in literature as conflated with or related to house, family, haven, self, gender and journeying and therefore, the ideas of home are multilayered.[1] Naturally, one finds today a proliferation of writing on the meanings of home within the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, psychology, geography, history, architecture and philosophy. The images of home seem to be intrinsically 'chronotope'[2] in the sense that they symbolize the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature. Home is thus no longer just a dwelling place; it subsumes the socio-political developments of the time and space when it is created in literature, as also the psychological, anthropological, sociological and other issues of humanity. The present work is prompted by the premise that in the light of new cultural studies, home is portrayed in certain novels as an ideological construct reflecting the social, political, intellectual, moral and psychological climate of the time and place of the respective works. I have selected for my study five novels by writers of different ages, languages, cultures and worldviews: Charles Dickens's *Bleak House,* VS Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas*, Toni Morrison's *Home*, Rabindranath Tagore's *Home and the World* and MT Vasudevan Nair's *Naalukettu*. A re-appraisal of these novels from a cultural perspective seems to reveal that the treatment of home in them varies depending on the time and space in which they were written and also in accordance with the ideology of the authors. In Dickens's *Bleak House*, for instance, home represents the injustices and inequalities of Victorian England, while in Naipaul's *A House for Mr.Biswas*, home is a metaphor of postcolonial search for identity. Similarly, in Toni Morrison's





> "Then do you know anyone with power? Policemen? Forest rangers? Politicians?"
>
> "No," I said. "No one."
>
> "Then what can you do for us?" he said, growing peevish. "Of what use could you be?"(Ghosh 172-173)

The islands, only sixty miles from Calcutta, were not in the vicinity of the government till then. When the society began to flourish the CPM began to dread it as a subaltern uprising. They feared that more refugees from Bangladesh might flow into Bengal and will become the weapon of the opposition like how they themselves had done once. The only way before them was to evacuate the refugees from the island legally. Immediately the government accused the refugees of having violated the Forest Act by cutting down trees and occupying the Tiger Reserve. When persuasion failed the police were brought in. With guns and tear gas they encircled the island. Many were killed, and many drowned.

After this the government brought in an economic blockade. The fishing industry was destroyed. Food supply stopped and people began to die of starvation. The tube wells were destroyed and the people drinking impure water from puddles developed cholera. Muslim gangsters were hired by the government. Women were raped and thrown into the water.

Jyothi Basu, the CM, declared that nothing much had happened in the island and that everything was made up by the press. The journalists too eventually supported the government and called the refugees poachers. All the parties in the coalition didn't support the government but that did not save the society. About the cutting down of trees the WWF and environmental activists did not take an official position. A final twist to the episode was that the CPM settled its own supporters in the island, occupying and utilizing the facilities left by the refugees. It was the strength deduced from the people that the party exercised on them. They took the power of the people and used force to control them.

The society in Lusibari which had confined itself to a women's association with a leader gave itself a name and willingly accepted donations from the rich in the ruling party. It compromised to win the acceptance of both the ruling and the opposition parties. Once it became a trust it became a part of the ruling class a hegemonic power. Nilima had become a liberal communist whose rationality is ruled by commonsense (not 'good sense' as Gramsci has it in his *Pre-Prison Writings*) which made her and the society slaves of the state. "Building is always a matter of well chosen compromises," she tells Nirmal (Ghosh 214). She had begun to enjoy the power of a proprietress. Nirmal had warned her before, "You have joined the rulers; you have begun t think like them. That is what comes of doing the sort of social work you have been doing all these years. You have lost sight of the important things" (120).

By then the society in Morichjhapi had begun to suffer the oppression of the state. Nilima refuses medical help to the society. Moreover she doesn't want her husband to get involved in the protest because she didn't want to lose the support of the Bengali politicians. Nirmal too reacted coldly by saying that it was no business of his. They silently agreed that encroaching government property is a crime to be punished. But he wanted to become a part of it without having to take much trouble.

The society was helpless by then, and had split into two with two leaders simultaneously negotiating with the government and the opposition to prove that they are not revolutionaries. A leader told Nirmal:

> "What's most important to us at this time is to mobilize public opinion, to bring pressure on the government, to get them to leave us alone. They're putting it out that we're destroying this place; they want people to think we're gangsters who've occupied this place by force. We need to let people know what we're doing and why we're here. We have to tell the world about all we've done and all we've achieved. Can you help us with this? Do you have contacts with the press in Calcutta?...."
>
> …..





*Home*, home is a repository of memories while in Tagore's *Home and the World*, home is a symbol of the journey to the self. Home in M.T. Vasudevan Nair's *Naalukettu* stands for the traumas of the transition from the Feudal setup to modern Renaissance in Kerala. This perhaps supports my argument that home in novels is not just a dwelling place for family, but a multi-dimensional concept, representing the time and space of the respective works and the ideology of the authors. The five novels under study have, of course, different backgrounds, themes, characters etc., but all these novels seem to have apparently a common link that in all of them the description of home has a functional result. Home here 'acts.'[3] Home acts most probably as an ideology.

Home clearly serves as a repository for complex, inter-related and at times, contradictory socio-cultural ideas about people's relationship with one another, especially family, and with places, spaces and things. Many scholars have now recognized home as a multidimensional concept or a multi-layered phenomenon, and acknowledge the need for multidisciplinary research in the field. P. Saunders and P. Williams, the joint authors of "The Constitution of the Home: Towards a Research Agenda," observe that home is a major political background. They add that the feminists view it as a crucible of gender domination, while the liberals identify it with personal autonomy and challenge to state power. The socialists, on the other hand, approach home as a challenge to collective life and the ideal of a planned and egalitarian social order (91).

Craig Gurney, a sociologist, who believes that the worlds people inhabit are socially constructed, argues that home is an ideological construct that emerges through and is created from people's lived experience (375). Like Gurney, Somerville maintains that home is an ideological construct, but rejects the view that the meaning of home is only established experientially. He writes that home is not just a matter of feelings and lived experience but also of cognition and intellectual construction. He continues that we cannot know what home 'really' is outside of these ideological structures (530). Wardhaugh, a phenomenologist, notes that while home may be located in space as a particular place, it is always more than this; it is physical space that is lived – a space that is an "expression of social meanings and identities" (95).

Saunders and Williams define home as "simultaneously and indivisibly a spatial and social unit of interaction" (82). It is the physical "setting through which basic forms of social relations and social institutions are constituted and reproduced" (82). As such, home is a 'socio-spatial system' that represents the fusion of the physical and social units. In this social constructionist formulation, home is "the crucible of the social system" representing the vital interface between the society and individual (85).

Home in Dickens' *Bleak House* seems to exemplify this concept. The novel indicts the inequities in Victorian society; it exposes the abuses of the court of Chancery and administrative incompetence. Also, Dickens criticizes slum housing, overcrowded urban graveyards, neglect of contagious diseases, election corruption, class divisions, and neglect of the educational needs of the poor. In short, one gets a picture of the Condition of England[4] from the novel, and it is well represented by Bleak house, the house of Mr. Jarndyce, the elderly relative of Richard Carstone and Ada Clare – the central characters in the novel. In Chapter 6 titled 'Quite at Home,' Dickens gives a vivid picture of Bleak house. When Esther, Richard and Ada arrive at Bleak house, they have many chances to form first impressions of places and people. They first see Bleak House in a distance. It is an old-fashioned house with three peaks in the roof in front and a circular sweep leading to the porch. It is a delightfully irregular house with illuminated windows, softened here and there by shadows of curtains, shining out upon the straight night. However, it is pictured as a gloomy edifice, and like the fog in the novel, it symbolizes the institutional oppression which penetrates into the segment of Victorian society.[5]

Wardhaugh asserts that the concept of home cannot exist without the concept of homelessness. Home and homelessness exist in a dynamic, dialectical relationship. They refer to "complex and shifting experiences and identities" that emerge and unfold in and through time (93).

It is clear that in Postcolonial theory, home and homelessness are often linked with human identity crisis. The idea of home among diaspora communities is elaborated by Salman Rushdie in his essay "Imaginary Homelands." In his view, the sense of loss for leaving home "is more concrete for him (a diaspora) by the physical fact of discontinuity, of his





will not be able to communicate to the dialect speakers and no political bond is formed. With no national-popular religion art or literature, the group in the island had the privilege of having realms where they communicated well—the myth, labour, survival and above all the horror and the trauma. Many of their practices were conservative and fatalistic but there were conceptions that enhanced development which were different from the false morality of the ruling class. The subaltern and subordinate elements grew into a broader cultural and political dynamism, without dismissing their distinctiveness.

This was not rebellion. Their aims were straightforward. They just wanted a little land to settle on. But for that they were willing to pit themselves against the government. They can be called revolutionary as they are distinct from classical working class movements that are no freer from the state. It was a peaceful revolution for existence, for not to be dispossessed once again; for not to become '*basthuharas*'.

'How does a revolution fail?' is a question asked by the thinking lot and though there are many answers to it related to the various revolutions, all agree to the fact that the revolutionary spirit shouldn't weaken after the win, it should continue to live. The lack of communication between the peasantry and the intellectuals is another reason. The state through ideological means and liberalism lead the subalterns and without their knowing they become weapons of the state. A ruling power/state ensures certain things which aims at winning their hearts and minds. The right to vote is bestowed on them as a privilege and they are even allowed to stand for elections. People are supposed to believe that they govern themselves. In this semi-conscious, collective behaviour people become dupes of the ruling powers.

But what if a subaltern society develops into a civil society? What if it can lead a hegemonic struggle itself and if needed will challenge the authority that disclaims it or the state that tries to demolish it and stand responsible? The society will become an autonomous power if it has autonomous economic power and also if it doesn't succumb to the same weapons used by the state for existence. It should also be aware that its growth never ends.

The settlers didn't come with any preconceived beliefs given to them by their religion. No traditional ideology given to them by their state gathered them together. They discovered themselves as citizens, sharing a life beyond their caste and creed. They understood that religion and beliefs are only weapons of the powerful to devastate the downtrodden. Together they decided to believe in the god of the inhabitants not considering that it is a Muslim God with Hindu rituals. The myth of Bon Bibi the Muslim goddess who saved their island from the demon Dokhin Rai held them together to fight nature.

In the island of Garjontola there was a shrine for the goddess—a large eyed female figure in a sari with a crouching tiger beside her (a reminder of Bengali Goddesses) whom they call Bon Bibi, daughter of Ibrahim the Prophet who send his daughter to save the tide country. The chant was 'Allah the powerful'. Every year a group of actors perform 'The Glory of Bon Bibi'. Kanai the translator from Delhi is surprised because the story began in Arabia with mosques and minarets in the background. The setting was Medina. The story proceeds with how the island was divided into two for the humans and demons. Everything went well until human greed intervened.

A free expression of their own beliefs, free development of productivity and laws encouraged them to work hard in cooperation. Even when things went wrong no one was blamed for they knew that they didn't have the capital to carry out their plans successfully. This togetherness which can be called an unsocialist socialism was not done as a protest against the state. They conducted their own class struggle discreetly without any moral outrage at being thrown out of one's own country. Khilnani observes, "It's a domestic political space. It has a host of requirements. In a civil society each individual is his own end, but he cannot accomplish it without the others. Independent development takes on the form of universality" (30). There is pluralism in working, producing and living yet a civil society goes forward in trust.

When the media stresses their strategy that dialect speaking children have no access to the national culture with its academic and bureaucratic system, an inequality prevails in the country. A person who speaks a dialect will know less about the world and the national language speaking group





present being in a different place from his past, of his being 'elsewhere' (12). Home for a diaspora thus becomes primarily a mental construct built from the incomplete odds and ends of memory that survive from the past. It exists in a fractured, discontinuous relationship with the present. Imagining home therefore brings fragmentation, discontinuity and displacement for the migrant.[6]

Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas* perhaps subsumes all these postcolonial ideas of home. The primary theme of the novel is a search for a stable sense of personal identity, symbolized by the house for which Mr. Biswas is continually searching. Until he attains his own house, a firm structure with which he can work out his own destiny, he is a faceless man, adrift on the tides of life. Mr. Biswas worries frequently about falling into a void, an abyss where there is no form, no support for living. Throughout the novel, inner and outer realities reflect each other. His startling realization that he is not whole, for example, shortly precedes the destruction of his house. This is because of the metaphorical value that the house possesses, as the external embodiment of an internal problem. This again explains why the houses in which Mr. Biswas lives are described in intricate detail throughout the novel.

Home as a thematic concern is visible across Morrison's novels including *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, *Song of Solomon* and also *Beloved*, where the Kentucky plantation is paradoxically named 'Sweet Home.' In her recent novel *Home* too, Morrison unearths another layer to what a home means. Here, it is represented by a war veteran's struggle to search for a sense of belonging he can reconcile with. Frank Money, the protagonist, sets for a journey to another battlefield back in America, his home country he has been fighting for. Home does not end on a positive note as Cee, Frank's sister, touches her brother's shoulder and tells: "Come on, brother. Let's go home" (121). Despite all odds and differences, there is indeed a home that is waiting for this pair of siblings to return to. Whatever home might be for Frank, it is not a place where war is absent, as he brings Korea along with him as he travels. If peace is thought of as an absence of war, it is a state that Morrison's character is unable to experience. War memories, psychological injury and loss have become a part of him that his wartime and peacetime selves have united. Home for him cannot be a place apart.

It is better seen as an exploration of the limits of understanding and neither a place of restoration nor the place of broken dreams. Also, it is the place we look for understanding but can never find.

Home in *Home* is not a land (as in homeland), or a front (as in homefront). It is tied to concrete physical spaces and to memories of their past meanings. At the same time, home is not a space of reunion. Instead, it is a place where individuals remain disconnected, able to see only the exterior of their most intimate human contacts. The siblings provide support for each other, but even at home, individuals do not fully know each other.

Morrison's concept of home in this novel can be connected to the idea of the birth family house which holds a symbolic power as a formative dwelling place, a place of origin and return, and a place from which to embark upon a journey. This house or dwelling accommodates home, but home is not necessarily confined to this place. The boundaries of home seemingly extend beyond its walls to the neighbourhood. Home is indeed a virtual place, a repository for memories of the lived spaces. It locates lived time and space, particularly intimate familial time and space. While memories of home are often nostalgic and sentimental, home is not simply recalled or experienced in positive ways. Morrison's novel displays the symbolic potency of the ideal or idealized home. Tucker suggests that most people spend their lives in search of home, at the gap between the natural home and the particular ideal home where they would be fully fulfilled. This may be a confused search, a sentimental and nostalgic journey for a lost time and space. Tucker adds that it may also be a religious pilgrimage or a search for a Promised Land (184). Writing from a phenomenological perspective, Jackson observes that home is always lived as a relationship, a tension. Like any word we use to cover a particular field of experience, home always begets its own negation. It may evoke security in one context and seem confining in another (122-3).

Tagore's novella *The Home and the World* deals with the experiences of three characters during the *Swadeshi* movement in India – Nikhil, a benevolent and progressive landlord, his childhood friend and a voluble, selfish but charismatic nationalist leader, Sandip, and Nikhil's wife Bimala. If the novella shows Tagore's disappointment with the *Swadeshi*





The women worked hard with determination. A trust was formed and Nilima now expected help from outside. It sprouted out to different branches—medical, paralegal, agricultural etc. A name was given—*Badabon*, the big forest. The women would assemble to discuss 'income generating projects'—knitting, sewing, dyeing yarn. It was also a place for them to give vent to their anger and grief. The society grew so much that people from the mainland came in search of employment and medical service. The hospital had a diagnostic lab, X-Ray room, dialysis machine and two resident doctors. The traffic gave way to employment—teashops, guest houses, repair houses all popped up in no time. Nilima was enjoying the success but Nirmal saw it only as social service which brought in products and profit but not the civil society he dreamed of as a communist.

The next rush of settlers came from Dhandakaranya and settled in Morichjhapi, a nearby island. The inhabitants protested but eventually welcomed the never ending incoming refugees. They joined hands in the prospect of a free land. Trees were cut down, huts made, fishing nets woven and a new settlement began to grow in perfect shape. There were Muslims, Hindus, untouchables, adivasis, and all of them had the same experience of being dispossessed twice. Neither did their homeland nor their religion help them. They spoke in different dialects but the trauma they had to go through helped them recognize each other to speak the same language. They realized that this island though a forest with marsh, tigers and snakes all around was their only hope. Out of this desperation and the fear of being dispossessed again, they build up a perfect democracy, a civil society.

Each man to his task, and there were no rulers. The island was divided into wards and each responsible for their productivity. Help, food, and care were equally distributed. Families were maintained. A fishing industry was built in no time. Tube wells brought in fresh water to drink. There were salt pans; water dammed for fish farming, bakery, workshops, pottery, ironsmith, nets, crab lines, markets, in short a civil society, a democracy, a Dalit nation, a safe haven for the oppressed. By the end of the year they had even taken a census; five zones, each family given five acres of land, one quarter of the island for people from outside.

organization Udbastu Unnayanshil Samiti also demanded The Sunderbans and declared that the place is fit for living.

In 1972 when the CPM won, the refugees began their exodus. But when the party had moved from opposition to governance, policies too had changed. The refugees were stopped at the railway station and send back by force. Some managed to sneak out and reached the Morichjhapi Island. Ghosh begins his novel here.

Years before, a Scotsman Sir Daniel Hamilton had landed in the tide country with the dream of a civil society. He couldn't do much because of the poor fertility of the soil. It never lost its salt. When he died in 1939 all that remained in the island of Lusibari were a couple of buildings, a school, a clinic and public works which were abandoned by the managers who were only interested in the fund that was left. His statues were garlanded and pujas conducted by the islanders. Obviously his idea too was welcomed.

The first rush of settlers came in 1942 as a result of the great famine in Bengal. With the inhabitants they fought for a living, with the poor crops condition. Hunger drove them to hunting and fishing where there were often fatal encounters with tigers and crocodiles. Years later when Nirmal, a Communist with revolution in his dreams, alighted with his wife Nilima in Lusibari, things were no better. Nirmal had come as the headmaster of a school where there were no learners. He read Lenin's pamphlets through and through for an answer. Nilima noticed that the women in the island were dressed as widows with no bangles on their wrists and vermillion on their forehead, as anticipation that their men who had gone fishing will not come back alive. She assembled these women under a class, a *sreni* to do something useful. But Nirmal was against this. As a communist he said he cannot support this, for workers as a whole formed a class, and another division is uncalled for. Anyhow Nilima was determined and a women's organization was formed. By the time zamindari was abolished in Bengal and what little was left of the Hamilton endeavor was confiscated by law suit. A set of rules began to rule the island. Boundary lines were drawn, permits issued and those who trespassed were either shot dead or imprisoned. The islanders were confused. They were accustomed to the wholeness of the place.





movement, one of its most remarkable characteristics is his treatment of the feminine character, Bimala. She is happy at the outset in her traditional role as a zamindar's wife, but later encouraged by her husband she steps out of home to better acquaint herself with the world and thus to find a new identity for woman. At the sight of Sandip, she emotionally trips, vacillates between him and her husband, until she returns home bruised and humiliated, but with a more mature understanding of both the home/self and the world.

One can safely assume that in Tagore's novella home is a symbol of self, especially of Bimala, the heroine. In her article, "House, as a Symbol of the Self" Clare Cooper refers to the relation between home and identity and/or the concept of the self. She draws on the Jungian concept of the collective unconscious which link people to their primitive past. Accordingly she speculates that one of the most fundamental archetypes, the free-standing house on the ground, is a frequent symbol of the self (56). Tucker also suggests that home may be an expression of a person's subjectivity in the world. He states that home is a space where people feel at ease and also where they express and fulfill their unique selves or identities (184).

Bimala in *The Home and the World* leaves home and returns with broader experiences of the world. To her, home is thus both origin and final destination. This concept of home in the novella can also be explained in the light of modern cultural studies and anthropological literature as well as sociological and psychological research on family formation and home-leaving which claim that ideas about staying, leaving and journeying are integrally associated with notions of home. 'Home,' which is defined as a dwelling, a homeland, or even a constellation of relationships, is represented as a spatial relational realm from which people venture into the world and to which they generally hope to return. It is a place of origin as well as a point of destination. For Ginsberg, home is less about "where you are from" and "more about where you are going" (35). This sentiment is also expressed by Tucker, who stresses that "home searching is a basic trait of human nature", one which arises out of the propensity of humans to migrate as a means of ensuring their survival (186).

The dissolution of *Naalukettu* or the *tharavadu*, the residential homes of prosperous Nair families which started in the middle of the

twentieth century in Kerala is the theme around which M.T.Vasudevan Nair's *Naalukettu* revolves. MT admits that he witnessed the last stages of the crumbling of the matrilineal system of inheritance. The background of *Naalukettu* is, however, not solely that of his own family. There are characters from his neighbourhood in it as well (qtd. in Akbar Kakkattil 288). Properties in the matrilineal system of inheritance passed down through the women. However, the lands and the income from them were administered by the eldest male member of the joint family, the *karanavar*. Ideally, the *karanavar* was selfless, devoted to the welfare of the family. But in reality, he could be greedy and self-seeking, more interested in amassing wealth for himself than in looking after his sisters and their children. Since he wielded considerable authority, he could impose his will on the younger members of the household – as it happens in the *Vadakkeppattu tharavad* in M. T.Vasudevan Nair's *Naalukettu*.

*Naalukettu*, the home in M.T. Vasudevan Nair's novel, is a witness to the period of drastic changes during the transition from feudalism to modernism in Kerala. The novel sensitively captures the traumas and psychological graph of Appunni, the protagonist, caught as he is in the throes of this transitional period in Malabar. Growing up without a father and away from the prestige and protection of the matrilineal home to which he belongs, Appunni spends his childhood in extreme social misery. Fascinated by accounts of the grand *Naalukettu tharavadu* of which he would have been a part, Appunni visits the house only to be rejected by the *karanavar* of the household. With vengeance boiling in his heart, Appunni claws his way up in life to finally buy *Naalukettu*, the symbol of his youthful aspiration and anguish. But he realizes to his dismay that *Naalukettu*, which has been a symbol of social status and personal prestige, has ceased to be so with the emergence of a new modern society. Home in M.T. Vasudevan Nair's novel appears to represent more the changing socio-political scenario in Kerala in the middle of the twentieth century than the personal pangs and agonies of the protagonist.





Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Hungry Tide* features a civil society which grew out of a trauma; a society that was suppressed by the state. The backdrop goes back to the 1947 partition of India and moves forward to the secession of Pakistan and the formation of Bangladesh. After 1947, refugees from East Bengal poured into West Bengal and it continued till the 60s. The Congress party then thrived on the support of the upper class Hindu landlords and hence the upper class Hindu refugees were given shelter in urban areas of Calcutta. By 1970 riots broke out in East Pakistan over a Muslim relic accused of being stolen by a Hindu; a communal riot, where both Hindus and Muslims were equally massacred. The Namasudra movement which had till then supported the Muslim untouchables fell weak. West Bengal was again filled with refugees. The state that was already populated with refugees refused shelter. The upper caste Hindus could again find cover whereas the Muslim untouchables and the Hindu lower castes were sent to refugee camps in Dhandakaranya. There they spend twelve years of torture from the barren dry land, the Adivasi inhabitants and the corrupt camp administrators and officials. Lack of food supplies, meagre wages, disease, insecure surroundings, and depression all made them rebel along with the lower administration staff that too was fed up with the officials.

The rebellion began in the Mana camp. The officers too persuaded them in order to teach the lower divisions staff a lesson. A 73 day hunger strike reached nowhere. The police opened fire and killed many. The refugees were becoming an unmanageable problem for the Right Front which questioned their very existence. The CPI (M) rose to the occasion and demanded a shelter for the refugees either in the uninhabited areas of Calcutta or The Sunderbans. 'One lets a man starve until he is fifty and finally notices him. In private life such behavior would warranty a good kicking. In the case of the state it appears to be a merit' (Gramsci 269). Similarly, the government tried to give the refugees an equipment to survive with and made sure that it is loudly acclaimed and trumpeted. Ram Chatterjee on behalf of the Left Front promised them the lush land in The Sunderbans in barter for their votes. This came as a secure base for the refugees after the trauma of being dispossessed and tortured. Unlike the upper Hindu refugees who had settled in Calcutta, they were illiterate and didn't know that Chatterjee was a leader of a small group in the Left coalition. The

## THE SILENCING OF A CIVIL SOCIETY: DISCUSSING 'RESISTANCE' IN AMITAV GHOSH'S NOVEL *THE HUNGRY TIDE*

**Dr. Geetha Krishnankutty**

The debate on civil society is a fertile yet unclear ground because different thinkers ascribe different meanings to it. Scholars, literary and political, keep on coming back to it making it all the more misleadingly universal. However, the term doesn't stand freely on its own. It is defined through its opposition of natural society, against political society or in contrast to community. It is not a social contract, in which rational human beings, out of insecurity, exchange their natural rights for civil rights given by a state, for an orderly society('natural' can also mean violence and disorder and political institutions exist by sticking on to the word 'order'). Gramsci says in his *Pre-Prison Writings*, "The word 'order' has a healing power; and the preservation of political institutions is entrusted, in great part, to this power" (19).

The mass fear changes and also affects the uncertainties it will bring forth. A Utopian idea or utter desperation of servitude or the mere question of survival can make a change and lead to a civil society. It encourages the economics and diversified productivity driven by sustenance and consumer wants at the same time. But this is also where individual autonomy and ethical differentiation are practiced. It cuts off the nostalgic traditional political activism and the state ideology. It is a state that stands above class conflicts, a political aspiration for a perfect democracy, with economic autonomy. If realized in its full perfection, it will make a conservative force. A state ruled by reason, civil society is a "special intimacy, uncontaminated by the government and located outside its regulation" (Khilnani 30).





**Endnotes**

1. In this paper, the terms 'home' and 'house' are interchangeably used. Joseph Rykwert, a famous historian, notes that the association between house and home was consolidated in English case law in the earlyseventeenth century by the Jacobean Judge, Sir Edward Coke. The judge declared that the house of everyman is to him "his castle and fortress, as well as his defense against injury and violence, for his repose" (53). Later simplified in the nineteenth century to 'The Englishmen's house is his castle' this phrase was popularly appropriated to define and describe home as a haven which comprises both house and surrounding land (53).

2. Though 'chronotope,' a term coined by Bakhtin, is used in literary theory to explain how different literary genres operated with different configurations of time and space, we can borrow it for literary criticism almost, but not entirely, as a metaphor representing the inseparability of space and space. In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought- out, concrete whole. In *The Dialogic Imagination* Bakhtin maintains that "The chronotope as a formally constitutive category determines to a significant degree the image of man in literature as well" (56). So, in the present discussion on home as a cultural construct application of this Bakhtin concept is appropriate.

3. This phrase appears in Vladimir Nabokov's lecture on *Bleak House* taken from his *Lectures on Literature*, quoted in the introduction to Dickens's *Bleak House* published by Bantam Dell in November 2006. (xv)

4. The term "Condition-of-England novels" refers to a body of narrative fiction, also known as industrial novels, social novels, or social problem novels, published in Victorian England during and after the period of the Hungry Forties. The term directly relates to the

famous "Condition of England Question" raised by Thomas Carlyle in "Chartism" (1839), although some of these narratives were published earlier. Condition-of-England novels sought to engage directly with the contemporary social and political issues with a focus on the representation of class, gender, and labour relations, as well as on social unrest and the growing antagonism between the rich and the poor in England. Even a cursory glance at the history of the early Victorian novel reveals that many writers shared a particular concern: the social consequences of the Industrial Revolution in England at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

5. Satis House in *Great Expectations* also seems to justify the concept of home as a social construct. Satis House is the home of Miss Havisham, a rich woman, heiress to her father's fortune who was abandoned by her intended husband on her wedding day. In Satis House, Dickens creates a magnificent Gothic setting whose various elements symbolize the protagonist Pip's romantic perception of the upper class. The brewery next to her house symbolizes the connection between commerce and wealth. Miss Havisham's fortune is not the product of an aristocratic birth but of recent success in industrial capitalism. Finally, the crumbling, dilapidated stones of the house, as well as the darkness and dust that pervade it, symbolize the general decadence of the lives of its inhabitants and the upper class as a whole. Throughout *Great Expectations*, Dickens explores the class system of Victorian England based on the post-Industrial revolution, and obviously, Satis House reflects the corruption, decay and fate of the upper class of the Victorian Period more than the fate of its own. As Terry Eagleton has noted, "Dickens sees his society as rotting, unraveling, so freighted with meaningless matter that it is sinking back gradually into some primeval slime" (40). Satis House, one of the most widely discussed homes in English literature, thus epitomizes the contemporary social and political issues of Dickens's time.





belief, but counters a culture of orthodoxy. She underlines the diversity and liberty in the path to the sublime spiritual destination. This new understanding seems to be gradually evolving in the present society and its relevance is highly commendable as there is always an alarming threat of the outbreak of a religious riot which can take place anywhere, anytime. In this sense the novel definitely stands as a doctrine of religious brotherhood. This is clearly evident from its publication in 1993, a year after the demolition of the Babari Masjid that took place in 1992.

She is the key to historical as well as genealogical knowledge. This understanding is necessary to rationalize many social as well as religious practices. *Beevi* stands for an enlightened figure, or rather becomes the watchword of a developed civilization to preserve the afore-mentioned cultural codes, and to negotiate all sorts of communal schisms. *Beevi* redefines all restrictions and prohibitions and seems to promote the ideology of harmony retaining at the same time the diversities inherent in each culture. She is the embodiment of universal motherhood. She sympathises and empathises with everyone. The ideology serves a harmonizing theme with due respect to the diversities. Here lies the significance of the collective imagination for the *Beevi* culture. She is the desire of the ages. In other words, for that matter any similar figure is a social mechanism meant to soothe warring social factions.

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However, the construction of the temple worsens the situation. There evolves a friction between the Hindu practice and the Muslim practice. Though it is not a problem for the native Muslim residents of Ponnani it causes a serious issue of schism for the religious priest, Sayed Mollakka from Chavakkadu. He persuades to dismantle the temple. What enrages him is that Karthy is already initiated to Islam; that is she has already broken her previous cultural codes. He conceives as anti-Islamic the present act of Karthy, her worshipping of the Hindu Goddess with offerings and *poojas*. Finally everyone who embraced a change is perished, or rather, reborn like the phoenix bird.

Karthy sinks into the water source in order to embrace a new subjecthood which leads to the birth of a new civilization. This is manifested as the *jarum* and signified as the *Beevi*. That is *Beevi* worship becomes a new cult and a new civilization. Such a figure is essential for communal harmony. *Beevi* emerges as a counter figure that stands beyond all immature and irrational religious practices. *Beevi* is essentially the female principle one who has genealogical links with Goddesses and mother deities all over the world. She symbolizes not religion but human psyche; its collective need and her worship which is beyond religious concerns and as a unifying figure of maternity becomes a new civilization. *Beevi* is not a superimposed figure but who remains latent (in a state of hibernation) in our own personal or collective memory.

Until the arrival of Karthy (*Beevi*) everyone had stable and rigid identities. But her very presence unsettles such firm perceptions and compels everyone to see the simple but forgotten fact that communal identities are transient i.e. the quarrelling groups were brothers until recently. The author substantiates this with the fact that she evolves to settle the chaos at a juncture of communal riot, she is herself justified as a mediating factor. This is evident from the worship of *jarum* that enfolds an extra-religious involvement. Though she ends as a *Beevi*, she does not limit herself as a *Beevi*; she is simultaneously the *Devi* as well as the *Beevi*. More precisely, she embodies maternity which is evident in the *Devi* and the *Beevi*. She vindicates the transcendental maternal love and care. She does not attempt or stand for religious fusion but still exists as an egalitarian who pleas for religious harmony. Thus in fact, she does not counter a religion or religious





6. This postcolonial idea of home is perhaps comparable to George Lukacs' philosophical term, "Transcendental homelessness" which he describes in his *Theory of the Novel* as "the urge to be at home everywhere." If home is a state of mind, and is a place of peace and belonging, being homeless represents a state of disharmony and disconnection.

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Karthy also gradually starts experiencing a longing for her old religion. Even after the religious transgression Karthy does not completely abandon her old religion and culture. Karthy's position is that of a conflicting soul tied between two cultures. Her longing is symbolically represented through her day-dream of the dancing deity. The depiction of the omnipotent dance of the deity, *Machile Bhagavathy*, is substantially the hysteric manifestation of Karthy's permuting and contravening psyche. Karthy's desire to return to her old Gods and old civilization reaches its zenith when she accidentally discovers an idol of Kali. Her urge continues as she discovers *Chithrakooda* stone, talisman and other religious accoutrements. This also suggests the excavation of an erased cultural memory. The other members in the family also experience abstract presence of unseen powers permeating the nook and corner of Musaliyarakom house. Such a collective experience brings to mind the fact that faith appeals to the personal aspect rather than the religious or political. It exemplifies a sort of flexible faith. Karthy conjures this spiritual accreditation, and enshrines it into a newly constructed temple. This act turns to be a prominent step in Karthy's spiritual as well as sexual quest. Here construction of the temple becomes more significant as a defence mechanism adopted by Karthy for her wish fulfillment.

The construction of the temple owes to the psychic defence adopted against two philosophical quests. When Karthy asks for her Mother Goddesses she is metaphorically putting across her repressed passions of sexuality and civilization. Karthy's subject position is highly commendable here. When she is initiated into the new religion and culture, her own religious codes are broken. Her longing for the former religious code is actually the longing for the former cultural code and this again could be understood as a longing for her infantile Oedipal experience. It becomes signified that Karthy longs for her Shankumama, rather than the nook and corner of Meleppullarathu House. It is the same collective imagination revealed in Avaru Musaliyar's conflict when he looks at Karthy's face. Karthy's act of temple construction is her attempt to remember her past culture and religion. Karthy remains unfathomable as an entity that gains relevance at multiple levels. Her attempts to remember her past is not only limited to the religious past. It is the past of a culture which was multi-religious but harmonious. This is what which gets signified through her act of recollecting the past without neglecting the present.

norms of social, cultural and moral codes. Karthy paddles her own canoe in the stream of intermixing cultures and civilizations. Pithan Mamootty, a merchant from the renowned Musaliyarakam veedu of Ponnani, becomes the agent for Karthy's cultural transgression. Bharathapuzha flows as a border dividing the two districts – Malappuram and Trichur. It is a storehouse of cultural memory. Bharathapuzha is the embodiment of Hindu civilization which holds mythical significance in Hindu epics and sacred texts. Thus Mamootty's crossing of the river from Ponnani to Trichur and Karthy performing the same act from Trichur to Ponnani equally signify the crossing into new civilizations. The two religions and two cultures diffuse through their relationship. Karthy's transgression to a new civilization is accomplished through her primary experience of cohabitation with Mamootty. This crossing is consequential for Karthy as she undergoes a transcendental travail to step into a new civilization. Karthy is initiated into Islam by Avaru Musaliyar, who is the religious priest of Ponnani. Even at the primary encounter with Karthy, Musaliyar experiences a *dejavu*. Musaliyar came with the same experience long before when he looked on the image of Chirakkal Bhagavathy during the procession. He realizes the element of divinity in Karthy. Hereafter Avaru Musaliyar falls into a psychic conflict of religio-cultural matrix. He starts developing faint memories about his alter ego, lord Kochunni. Here onwards the novel develops a rewinding narration. The incidents of forceful religious conversion in Malabar regions in 1780s during the age of Tippu Sultan are pointed out as a time marker. Even though Tippu was defeated in 1792 the psychological conflict of the converts that of lacking a proper religious subjecthood was not resolved. This collective psychological conflict is represented through Avaru Musaliyar whose grandparents have undergone this conversion. It is highly contradictory that one is inducted into a new religion and surprisingly, the one who initiates starts undergoing the predicament of being pulled by the collective memory of his old religion. Musaliyar becomes conscious that he shares a common space with Karthy which one can relate to the collective unconscious. His psyche is contravened by the thoughts of his religio-cultural provenance.

The spiritual trait which he attributes to Karthy reminds him the duality of Hindu-Muslim cultures. Avaru Musaliyar is seen to be undergoing the psychic conflict of fixing his subjecthood within the frames of religion.





## PERCEPTIONS OF FORESTS IN NATURE, LITERATURE AND CULTURE– AN ECOCRITICAL READING OF MANGROVES IN SARAH JOSEPH'S *GIFT IN-GREEN*

**Ms. Priya K.**

The earth does not argue,
Is not pathetic, has no arrangements,
Does not scream, haste, persuade,
Threaten, promise,
Makes no discriminations, has no
Conceivable failures
Closes nothing, refuses nothing, shuts none out.

(Walt Whitman 'A Song of the Rolling Earth')

### Introduction – Significance of Forests in Nature and Literature

The forests and its surrounds have drawn great attention of writers and students of society and history alike since past many centuries. Forests are one among the various landscapes in India today that have garnered so much discussion in terms of social, political and ecological conflicts. Critic Romila Thapar in her significant article "*Perceiving the Forest in Early India*" cites Gunter Dietz Sontheimer's suggestion of "a link between the forest and its settlements" and "attempts to understand the influences and responses of the 'grama' to the 'aranya' which existed in earlier times when the village constituted the settlement (105). With the emergence of urban centres there arose a growing dichotomy between the 'grama' and the 'nagara' – the village and the town respectively. Another dichotomy discussed in the context of ecology was that of the 'jangala' and the 'anupa' – the forest and the marshland" (105).

Epic literature is among the early compositions in India which depicts the dichotomy and the complimentarity of the 'vana' and 'kshetra'. In epics many forests are individualized nominally, suggesting that the forest was not an undifferentiated expanse but had its own identity. In every Indian epic forests constituted an imagined space which was central and crucial to the imagery and this central space signaled the presence of people whose appearances and customs could be alien and these were either viewed as worth emulating or were rejected through contempt or fear. Among the most romantic images of the forest are those which occur in the plays of Kalidasa, i.e. *Abhignana Sakuntalam* which adds yet another dimension to the perception of the forest. Sakunatala is essentially a woman of the forest and Dushyanta, a man of the court, suggesting again the bifurcation of nature and culture. Nature is usually considered as passive and culture as active which further leads to the projection of "nature' as feminine and 'culture' as masculine by the patriarchal ideologies.

Another perspective was proffered by the advisors and authorities like Kautilya who suggested that to extend agriculture, to support a growing population, Sudra peasants should be settled on wasteland or land which had been deserted. It is interesting to note that the author Sarah Joseph in the novel *Gift in Green* explicates how the people of Aathi came to live there for generations to come, through a mother's narration of their tragic story being passed on to her child. The readers are given a shock treatment when the mother sadly reminisces how her ancestors were forced to flee for their lives from their ancestral land being considered as untouchables and slaves and meted out ghastly treatment by the upper sections of the society in which they earlier lived. Thus the Indian past provides us with multiple perceptions of the forest and those who lived there.

When we come down to the early twentieth century, the conquest of the forest by the arable and nature by culture was recorded with sensitivity in Bandopadhyay's Aranyak, *or the Forest*. Around fifty years later Maheshwata Devi portrayed a mainstream developmental state at war with Adivasi (Scheduled Tribe) and other people dependent on forests as bauxite and other minerals attracted new economic interests into the forests. It is in this context where we have to situate the much acclaimed eco-novel *Gift in Green* (simultaneously published in Malayalam and in English)





The paper analyses the collective psychological need for a Mother Goddess leading to the collective worship of *Beevi*, which itself becomes a civilization. *Beevi* is represented throughout the novel simultaneously as a myth and as history that arises out of a projected psychological need. The need is for a guiding figure, a mother figure, which is successfully realized through the *Beevi*. She emerges as a mythical figure at the peak of unrest, which is simultaneously religious, cultural and moreover psychological. *Beevi* brings about the equalization of the native order. Many factors such as small-pox are seen emphasizing the egalitarian concept which is treated as a major theme in the novel. The outbreak of small-pox is a natural leveller; it spreads uniformly in the locality without any bias of caste and community. Even the natives who are not infected with the disease wait for it as if it is something from which they cannot escape. In this sense the epidemic itself becomes a collective need for it dismantles all sorts of religious and social discrimination. All become equals before this epidemic. It again attains mythical significance as small-pox was believed to be a disease caused by the wrath of the goddess.

The mythical history of the first *Beevi* becomes the plot of the narrative. Her birth is described as an assurance of heterosexuality and generational continuity. The novel is a narrative which emphasizes the mature female quest for her physical as well as spiritual quest. Karthy's maturation becomes an issue of concern for Shanku Menon, Karthy's uncle as well as the patriarchal figure of the house. Karthy's alluring grace is unfathomable that it confronts Shanku Menon and instills feelings of incest in him. This fear of incest remains latent in him and it affects the sexual union with his wife which gradually turns into Shanku Menon's castration anxiety.

Throughout the novel one could easily recognize a trend of deconstructing particularities. Every where there is intermixing of cultures - the *thiyyas* carry the corpse of a *Nair* lady even though the dead one dislikes it, the genital fluid of a Brahmin reaches the 'polluted hut' of the outcaste *karuvathi* and the most prominent ideology of the carnivalesque is encoded in the figure of the *Beevi*. *Beevi* is not purely an Islam, nor is she a pure Hindu. She is born into a Hindu family as Karthy and later imbibes a new name and new frame as the Beevi, perhaps, for the universal cause. Karthy stands as an embodiment of free will. She challenges accepted

Hindus worship the Devi and Muslims (not all) worship the *Beevi*. In Hinduism as well as Islam the spiritual offerings include incense stick and coconut oil. In both the religions there are tales of the collective need for a guiding figure and the need arises at the juncture of calamities or outbreak of epidemics. All these are dealt with some significance throughout the novel. It also brings to the fore the psyche-based understandings of spirituality, religion, and civilization. The paper undertakes the same concern. The author establishes the collective need of the natives through a mythical figure called the *Beevi*, created by the people to solve a conflict " a serious communal riot. *Beevi*, as a supernatural figure is an externalization of the frustrated and desperate 'collective self.' She is presented as an amalgamating maternal incarnation, intended to save the world from the communal chaos. She is represented through the *jarum.*

*Jarum* (tomb) stands as a symbol of communal harmony, since *jarum* worship is equally performed by Hindus and Muslims (not all), in Ponnani. The words of the Sufi imply it. "These Beevis are all yours, even though you are a Hindu and these Bhagavathys are all mine even though I am a Muslim" (trans by me 19). This stands as a counter-culture against the irrational and narrow-minded religious schisms. *Beevi*'s *jarum* attains spiritual significance as it is believed to have risen above from ground, indicating an element of supernaturalism. Here lies the mythical value of the theme.

It is evident that there was a glorious past of communal harmony which has been erased in the present. The schisms of religion and creed are so strong that the scene implies echoes of riots. It is at this juncture that the *Beevi* arises as a Guru and Mother.

*Beevi* attains significance as a discourse of motherhood. The collective emotion towards the *Beevi* is that of maternal security. *Beevi*, as a mother figure, brings into question the individual memory of one's pre-genital maternal ties. It is conveyed through the primary experience of a person who enters the *jarum.* "It was a sort of liquefied atmosphere inside the *jarum* with the blended aroma of coconut oil and incense stick. I felt myself as an embryo inside the warmth of my mother's womb" (trans by me 18). The experience at the *jarum* reminds him of the pre- genital security of the liquid medium inside the mother's womb.





by the eminent Malayalam author, political and environmental activist Prof. Sarah Joseph. Through the fictious place Aathi the author retells the life of the people of Valanthakad Island the unique mangrove system which was threatened by a move to set-up a high-tech society. Aathi's mangrove forests which is endearingly called by its native people "Pacchavala" or the Greenbangle, is what this paper focuses on.

**Mangrove Concerns in Nature, Politics and Literature**

Mangroves are unique salt tolerant trees with interlacing roots that grow in shallow, marine sediments. Their roots are breeding places for many fish species like shrimp and sea trouts. The stems and branches are nesting grounds for birds like pelicans, spoonbills and egrets. They are more effective in absorbing wave action than the concrete barriers (Rajagopalan 52). In India mangroves occur all along the Indian coast and is said to occupy seven percent of the world's total mangrove areas. Since 1985 till this day the world is said to have lost the majority of the mangroves. According to the official reports of Kerala Forest Research Institute conducted between 2005 and 2008, the extent of undisturbed mangroves is reduced to just opne hundred and fifty hectares though the potential area comes to around one thousand six hundred and seventy hectares in Kerala. The mangrove ecosystem is fast acquiring a threatening status due to anthropogenic threats like industrialization, unbridled developmental activities, commercial exploitation of raw materials, land reclamation for agriculture and housing. While the traditional mangrove ecosystem was self-contained following subsistence production of agriculture and fishing, today it is confined to export agriculture.

**Green bangle or *Pacchavala* in *Gift in Green***

The reader is made aware of the significance, marvel and wonder of Pacchavala which seems to be the beauty-incarnate when gleaned through the words of Noor Muhammad, one of the wandering story-tellers of the novel. To quote:

> When in Aathi he loved wandering its forests, especially the mangrove forest that the people of Aathi affectionately called the Greenbangle. It encircled Aathi, an enchanting world in itself,

> its water cool and serene. Sitting in that rare world of impregnable silence immune to the noise of men and machines Noor Mohammed would listen to the subtle voices of the cosmos and enjoy their variety and the soothing sweetness of their harmony. Watching the sallow leaves fall noiselessly on the water, then float towards and accumulate on the bank he would weave the tapestry of his life-interpretations. He would listen to the blossoming's of flowers, watch the moss dance, the glow worms emerge from their hide-outs and read the trails of tiny worms. His mind would clear, his lung fill with a new vitality and his stomach with heavenly happiness. 'Rejoice, O my heart', he would tell himself. (25)

These sublime and bountiful landscapes is lost on the sly and corrupt Kumaran for whom nature matters only for its instrumental value and is bent upon ruining the lives and livelihood of the people of Aathi with his ecocidal intentions. "Kumaran's plan was to start construction work on the government land, which he had already encroached upon to fence off fifty acres. There was no one to stop him. Before he started fencing the encroached land, Kumaran had securely gagged the mouths of those who should have asked questions…" (173). This is an overt reference made by the author about the corrupt network of government and democracy prevailing in our country today.

Further, Kunjimathus's (one of the significant female characters in the novel jilted in love by Kumaran years back) words filled with angst speaks volumes about the oneness felt by the natives of Aathi like her towards the dying 'pacchavala', brutally violated by Kumaran. In this context both Kunjimathu and Pachavala stand on the same footing, being ruthlessly exploited at the same hands—Kumaran's. Though she silent suffered his violation on her mind and body she has zero tolerance towards the inhuman attack of the mangrove forests and opposes vehemently "the new way that involves spraying pesticides, mixing quicklime, spreading various potions and powders…" (177).

The inhuman and whip yielding master Kumaran stands in stark contrast to the Eco spiritual "desiccated men and women" of Aathi who cry out to the birds, the fish and Thampuran : without you, how can we be?"(180)





Any religion ought to be understood as a discourse which is multi-faceted maintaining a hybrid tradition.

*Sufi Paranja Katha* attains its relevance in the postmodern realm as a tool of resistance against the cosmopolitan trend of religious schisms or communal polarization. The novel propounds the main issue of religious riots disrupting the harmony within different religious majorities and minorities. The resistance is brought forth through the introduction of myths, leitmotifs and other signifiers such as *jarum* (tomb) and *chithrodakkallu*, which hold material as well as transcendental significations in psycho- social and religio-cultural realms. Gokuldas Prabhu, who has translated the work into Konkani, in his article "Visitations from the Past" says, "I was taken in by the refreshing use of a marvellous myth to put forward the idea of human relations outside the gamut of religious affiliations." He regards *Sufi Paranja Katha* as a "literary oasis" in this extremely intense communal scenario (*Upadhwani* 177).

As the title suggests, the plot of the novel is narrated by an Islam prophet (religiously titled Sufi), to a young writer. The writer is in search of anything and everything related to the *Beevi*, the Universal Mother and as a predestined fate he accidentally falls under the divine influence of the Sufi. It is the Sufi who helps him to learn more about the origin of the *Beevi*. The author has incorporated time-markers in order to substantiate the historical relevance. The story takes place during the colonial regime. There are references to land reforms. It is also evident that the local communal identities were consolidated because of colonial interventions and statistical operations. The plot develops to wild heights from the thread of a real incident in history and it traces the life of the female protagonist from birth to death. Thus the novel extends to the local tales and religious practices as spirituality and religious expressions are often non-textual.

The metaphor of Hindu-Muslim bonding is highly significant in the realm of fixing or worshipping saints and sacred figures in local village communities. One can note the commonalities in the spiritual aspects of Hinduism and Islam, which also become a major theme of the novel. Hinduism and Islam share similar spiritual themes such as *samadhi* or the symbolic death. It is the state of the highly enlightened souls, in Hinduism and the idea of *jarum* which is taken up by many people among Islam.

all about the female protagonist, Karthy, who is in her sexual quest for socio-cultural and spiritual perfection. She is observed as a subject, a tripartite subject – psychological, sociological and cultural.

The author's obsession with the 'glorious past' is best revealed in his treatment of traditional beliefs which hold the aroma of pre-genital happiness. This becomes a leitmotif in Ramanunni's works. Religion, politics, culture, inter and intra-national spirits, woman empowerment, psychoanalysis and body science are other recurrent themes. *Sufi Paranja Katha* has been adapted into film in 2010 for which Ramanunni has done the scripting. The film adaptation which has been done seventeen years after the publication of the work re-establishes the significance of the theme beyond spatio-temporal concerns.

The term 'social' has great relevance with reference to K. P. Ramanunni's literary output as all of them at a glance reveal a high sense of social commitment. Indeed, all social ideologies spring from the personal. It is highly commendable that Ramanunni shows a special skill in projecting the personal conflicts into the universal arena. It is not astonishing that every literary as well as artistic output has its ideological fixation in one's personality, regionalism and nationality. Even though his works are filled with psychic, social, communal, and spiritual tensions, they do not overpower or blur the aesthetic essence and the perceptive clarity of the work. Through this work Ramanunni provides a true depiction of spiritual sublimation of a woman from her sexually omnipotent subject-hood to the canonized state of Universal Mother-hood called the *Beevi*. The novel utilizes the locale of Ponnani, which belongs to the district of Malappuram in Kerala.

Secularism prevails throughout the novel as a wholehearted striving from the author's side as an answer to communal chaos. What he projects is the spiritual ideology which is not deprived of religious overtones. At the same time, it has to be taken note of that he opposes every kind of personal and socio-cultural hegemony which makes attempts to negotiate religious diversities. He puts forward the necessity of a social arena where everyone lives in a state of communal harmony; totally being aware of one's religious concerns. He espouses that religion and religious harmony is fundamental for human existence in the social medium; but at the same time he advocates the need for a cosmic alarm whenever this religious harmony is disturbed.





The direct and straightforward speech made by the naïve Thankkechi who functions as a chorus in the novel, pierces though the readers' hearts:

> I have given up searching among the roots and hollows of the mangrove trees. Where have all the prawns gone? The roots are crushed by the concrete piles driven among them. The little mangrove trees have started dying from their roots up. The prawns and karimeen have gone elsewhere, looking for safe places to breed. Bridges should not be built where they breed. That'll be the end of fishing. (142)

Further, the flip side of tourism (it is to be noted here that Kerala is one of the hot spots of tourism in India and the world) which is a major source of revenue for the Government at the state and the centre, is critiqued by the author when she puts these words into the mouth of her character, Shailaja:

> A horde of strangers and the inscrutability that surround their coming: Crowds could be seen everywhere: at the ferry bank, in the boat, near the remains of the Thamburan's shrine,, in the mangrove forests all of them bashly indifferent to the spirit of Aathi. They broke boisterously into the greenbangle terrifying the birds and outraging the sanctity of the meditative tranquility. (151)

The author's matrifocal approach towards life and nature is made clear, when the female characters are designated as the guardians and custodians of the Pacchavala and its entire surroundings.

The colonizer and oppressor Kumaran's callous order to Prakashan to burn the bangle followed by his egotistical proclamation, "If Kumaran wills even water will burn and bring forth light" leaves one aghast (200). To cite the passage from the novel:

> Then suddenly the forest exploded in a raring blaze. Gigantic tongues of flame leapt high enough to lick the sky. Water boiled, bubbled, groaned, gurgled. The green crabs and frogs, trying to scurry to safety, were charred to death. 'Truck in earth tonight. Bury the damned bangle, Kumaran ordered. Light from the green

bangle fell on young men's faces. There was fear in their eyes. (210)

The author successfully makes the reader experience the agony borne by the bangle.

The author, in the interview with Valson Thampu, in the section *Speaking of Aathi* appendixed to the novel says, "In the spiritual vision native to our country, there is no discontinuity between human being and nature … Embedded in the poetic tradition of India is a worldview in which human beings live sheltered and sustained by nature" (211). In a similar strain, environmentalist Rich Freeman further explicates how the religious values and institutions of Hinduism and its folk variants are supposed to have somehow encoded and transmitted this ecological wisdom across the generations. The people of Kerala lived in dependence on forest resources as reflected in their personal memories and collective religious institutions and one of its main examples is the institution of the sacred 'Groves' which is termed as 'kavu' in Malayalam. Keralites viewed the forest as repositories of sacred power.

**Conclusion**

Today the modern world stands in stark contrast to what existed in the past in relation to the sheer scale and extent of human induced changes in the landscapes and waterscapes. The demographic and economic expansion has combined to end a scarcity of labor but has given rise to a paucity of cultivated arable land which is quite unprecedented in Kerala, India and world at large. She poignantly sketches the dangers immanent in man's foolish attempts at conquering nature by cutting off "the umbilical cord that connects the human to the earth." The imperativeness and urgency of nature conservation was realized only after the UN Conference held at Stockholm (Sweden) in 1972. Keeping in view the need for environmental protection, the Forest Conservation Act 1980 was passed by the Indian Parliament. This Act ensures that reserved forests shall not be diverted or dereserved without the prior permission of the Central Government and should not be used for non- forest purposes. But unfortunately majority of the legislative measures are not implemented and India cannot boast of many a Grace Chali like that of in the novel who are really bothered about other lives and livelihood on earth.





## NECESSITY OF THE MATERNAL FEMININE: A SOCIO-CULTURAL READING OF *SUFI PARANJA KATHA* WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE *BEEVI* IDEOLOGY

**Arya K G.**

One might assert that myths which are at times counter narratives play a non-negotiable role in the evolution of civilizations. Myths by engendering rituals enrich civilization which embodies a collective psychological need to find a better solution to much socio-cultural despair which has its root in the collective psyche. However, much of the theme of female deification could be read as an element of collective social reparation towards the neglected female psyche. Religious history of South India offers plenty of instances in support of this. The female deities like Lingamma and Bukkamma are believed to have lived in Andhra Pradesh and they are still worshipped as the incarnations of Sakti, the Eternal Feminine. Kuriyedathu Tatri is another historically relevant figure who is now deified. Mamburam Thangal, Kanjiramattam Shaikh Fhareedudheen, *Beevi* of Beemappally and the like are the others who represent the same theme.

This is a trend seen not only in India. World history exemplifies more such figures who share historical as well as mythical relevance. For instance, Isis who ruled Dedet in Egypt about 3000 B.C. was later deified as the Mother Goddess of Egypt. Al Manath, Al Usa, and Al Lath are worshipped in Arabia as Mother Goddesses and they are historically relevant figures too. The analysis of such figures across the world strengthens the hypothesis that such figures are the externalized collective desire(s) of human beings.

The paper aspires to analyze a similar myth through a re-reading of K. P. Ramanunni's award-winning Malayalam fiction *Sufi Paranja Kadha* (1993) focusing on the needs and deeds of the female protagonist, Karthy, who stands as the essence of femininity throughout the work. The novel is

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In the pre-modern era self-governing local communities are seen as having control over the natural resources. The past should not be dismissed as a tabula rasa rather we should probe deeper into the when, where, why and how these shifts took place. Of course the past was not very utopian but it would definitely enrich our perspectives though it may be incapable of giving easy ready-made answers to our own predicament of nature. It is high time we realize, that the high-tech advancements of science and technology have the capacity to annihilate our entire environ in just a matter of seconds. The eco-spiritual author of the novel Sarah Joseph as an altruistic political and environmental activist in her canvas of 'Pacchavala'seems to document all these questions posed by the environmental historian Ravi Rajan and nails down these questions into the minds of the reader to make them come out of their complacency and act at war–footing before it is too late thus turning the novel *Gift in Green* into a jeremiad.

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## VOICING THE MARGINALIZED: THE POEMS OF MEENA KANDASAMY

**Aparna Singh**

Being a Dalit and a female Meena Kandasamy is one of those who have been historically oppressed and marginalized. Through her social activism and her inflammatory writing, in verse and prose Kandasamy constructs a counter-discourse to the cherished notions of class and caste in Indian society. For Dalit women, oppression often means sexual subjugation too. Kandasamy's poems are informed by a sense of gender relations that suggest being a woman, in a largely patriarchal society is another form of being lower caste. In her poems, it's her identity as a woman that she engages with most explicitly. Kandasamy's women, like female figures in a lot of feminist literature, makes unbridled sexuality the main weapon of their social militancy.

In her poems, she addresses issues of caste and untouchability—something that stems from her being a Dalit, considered the lowest and most oppressed of India's castes and formerly known as "untouchables". One of Kandasamy's top targets is Hindu society and in her poems she repeatedly goes back to Hindu and Tamil myths—which she seeks to debunk.

The Indian social landscape provides intertwined layers of patriarchy, caste, class and poverty to give Dalit women some of the worst kinds of discrimination seen anywhere on the planet. While there have been instances of meteoric rise of some Dalit women to corridors of power, authority and decision making, the overwhelming majority of Dalit women live subhuman lives. Carrying of night soil, toiling as bonded labour, dancing in temples as 'servants of god', working endlessly - doing the most menial jobs as agricultural labour, working practically with no wages in factories, toiling in





> Rarely do fictional texts concerned with India's partition speak about abstract entities called Hindus and Muslims and Sikhs whose economic and social rights needed to be legally and politically defined, and whose religiously- informed identities needed, as if they were some endangered species, special enclaves of protection from other religious predators. Instead, partition narratives give a human shape and a human voice to those in whose name, and for whose benefit, the sordid politics of the religious division of the subcontinent was enacted. They are important witness to and chroniclers of a sad time when a stable civilization, proud of its interdependent religious faiths and its cultural cosmopolitanism, suddenly, unexpectedly, and without a clear and sufficient historical cause, allowed its public and private realm to be hijacked by armed thugs, egoistical politicians, illiterate priests, moral zealots, bigoted nationalists and other minions of hell. (xi)

Manto's short stories refuse to become dated. They are instances of his ability to reinvent the short story as a "self-reflexive mode of fictive testimony" which captures both the direct impact of the brutal forms of collective violence as well as the persistent after-effects of this historical trauma (Saint 53). Our memories as history, genealogy, archive and gossip are impregnated by partition. "Partition is the price that religious hostility asked us to pay and it was excessive to the extent that one million dead and another 26 million displaced" (Viswanathan 263). We live with this legacy of hate.

When independence is bloodied by partition, new experiments in nationhood are stained for many years. The trauma and the animosity of parting can last long. In a time of national exaltation, Manto wrote not about the glories of independence and the fruits of sovereignty but about the ambiguities and the debris. For that reason (as well as for his sexual themes) Manto was controversial in his time. But Pakistanis and Indians born after partition should respond to his prose, for it casts light upon their society, and upon the price of what they have inherited.

describes his daughter to them, and they promise to find her. They do find her. But Manto does not tell what happens next. Instead he returns us to the father, waiting in the camp, praying for the success of the young men. Finally he sees them; but they merely reply again that they will find her and go off. That same evening an unconscious young woman is carried into the camp hospital. The old man recognizes his daughter. And again Manto delivers the climactic truth. When the doctor says, "the window, open it", the girl rises slowly, in agony; loosens, then drops her trousers and opens her thighs. The senselessness of her fate is almost impossible to bear. We are left only with her father shouting with joy, "She is alive! My daughter is alive!" (Manto 54).

The girl is raped by the group of eight men who are entrusted by her father to rescue her. Whenever the aged father approaches the men, they assure him that Zakina will be saved by them; meanwhile one of them would be devouring the helpless girl somewhere else. This cruelty that blighted the whole society, even the youth, is ascribed to the horrors put forth by partition when men forgot their humanity letting out their cannibalistic instincts as mere flesh eaters. Here the psychic state of dissociation is the heavy price paid by a victim whose recovery is by no means certain.

The partition took away the sanity of human beings. It dehumanized them to the extent that an old neighbour or family friend who belongs to another religion will be neglected over the calls of nationalism. The panhuman identities become mired by the communal identities that emerged out of partition. But above all they represent the actions of a colonial narration that attempts to exorcise, by means of separation, an absolute identity from the dimensions of the same Otherness it institutes.

Alok Bhalla, a scholar on partition narratives, remarks that fictional narratives should be read, not as raw materials for the writing of history, but should be placed beside historical accounts, political documents, police reports, religious pamphlets or personal memoirs. For him, novels offer a testimony that is different in kind from the politically and socially inflected archives which the historians primarily use. Bhalla, in the preface to his work *Partition Dialogues: Memories of Lost Home* remarks:





brick kilns, working as domestic helps to ensure that urban India's 'economic super engines' function smoothly, facing endless bouts of domestic and other violence, facing sexual exploitation of the worst kinds, being 'witch hunted' and killed, facing starvation, being forced to live on a diet of rats etc., are some aspects that are frequent excerpts from the work and life sagas of Dalit women in India.

**The Politics of Re-presentation**

The issue of representing Dalit women, both at the level of theory and politics, has erupted time and again in the discourse on Dalit women reflected in the confusion between generating knowledge from the experience of the oppressed as opposed to generating knowledge from the subjectivities of the oppressed (Mann and Kelly 1997). The focus of the feminist discourses according to Sharmila Rege needs to shift from 'difference' and multiple voices to the social relations which convert difference into oppression. Initially, several factors played a constitutive role in the processes that brought the category of 'difference' to the forefront; a focus on language, culture and discourse to the exclusion of political economy, a rejection of universalism in favour of difference, an insistence on fluid and fragmented human subject rather than collectivities, a celebration of the marginal and denial of all causal analysis (Wood 1996). As Rege further elaborates, this shift in perspective has been aided in different ways by the following key factors.

The collapse of actually existing socialisms, and the loss of prestige that this brought about for Marxism in the Anglo-American academies led to an enormous and continued political interrogation of white, middle class feminism by black and third world feminists. This was welcome and had at one level led to micro-level analyses of the complex interplay of different axes of inequality. For e g, black feminists questioned the sex/class debate of the 1970s arguing that the complex interplay between sex, class, and race needed to be underlined. But at another level – these interrogations took a more cultural path; i.e, the 'different voices of black, Afro- American, Chicana, Asian women, etc, came to be celebrated.

Dalit women justify the need to talk differently to counter the homogenizing non-Dalit discourses and the patriarchal domination within the Dalits. Beneath the call for women's solidarity the identity of the Dalit woman as 'Dalit' gets whitewashed and allows a 'non-Dalit' woman to speak on her behalf. It is against this background that Dalit woman have of late protested against their guest appearances in a text or a speech of a non-Dalit woman. According to Gopal Guru the autonomous mobilisation of the Dalit women can also be understood from an epistemological position. This perspective maintains that the less powerful members of a society have a more encompassing view of social reality than others because their disadvantaged position grants them a certain epistemic privilege over others. It has been noted that though there are some non-Dalit women activists sensitive to the caste dimensions of women's exploitation, their stand has remained ambivalent regarding the critique of caste.

Kancha Ilaiah, in a passionate volume entitled *Why I am not a Hindu*, a book that has been compared to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, writes as one of the 'dalitbahujans' , whom he defines as 'people and castes who form the exploited and suppressed majority' in India (ix). The caste excluded as 'backward' or 'untouchable' by Hinduism are alienated not merely from the colonial or neo-colonial Western culture, but also from the dominant postcolonial 'Indian' one (that reflects the upper-caste Hindu culture and interests). The line between oppressor and oppressed is, however, drawn by caste and not colonial oppression. The radical historiographies of colonial India, though they emphasised the autonomous role of peasant, labour and other subaltern groups, equated the historiography of colonial India with that of Indian nationalism (Sarkar 1997). The non-brahminical re-constructions of historiography of modern India in the works of Omvedt (1976, 1993, 1994 ), Patil (1982) and Alyosius ( 1997) have underlined the histories of anti-hierarchical, pro-democratising collective aspirations of the lower caste masses which are not easily within the histories of anti-colonial nationalism. Feminist historiography made radical breakthroughs in teasing out the redefinitions of gender and patriarchies, ie, to say in "pulling out the hidden history swept under the liberal carpet of reforms" (Vaid and Sangari 45). Tarabai Shinde's 'Stree Purush Tulana' (1882), a text against women's subordination was written from within the





with independent emotions and an undamaged mind"(186). In story after story, Manto links their fate to sexual vulnerability. "His women suffer sexual humiliation, seduction, domination, rape, pregnancy, abandonment, prostitution, murder. They are almost always victims, with the power only to occasion their own destruction" (Ispahani 186).

In "The Gift" perhaps his most impressive tale of prostitution, Manto evokes in poignant detail the physical surroundings, lonely days and frantic imaginings of a prostitute whose business is failing. In her straitened circumstances, Sultana is concerned less about jewelry, food or shelter than about being unable to afford black salwar for Muharram, the religious month of mourning. Thus Manto often tied the failed universe of the prostitute to the failed universe of religion. Manto depicts Sultana's request to her helper and business partner Khuda Bux for a piece of black cloth as follows:

> I beg you, get me a length of black cloth for a salwar. I have a white satin shirt which I'll have dyed black. I also still have the white chiffon duppatta you brought me in Ambala at Diwali. That can be dyed too. All I am missing is a black salwar. I don't care whether you steal it; I want that salwar. Swear on my head that you'll get it for me, and if you don't may I die .(52)

Many of Manto's stories are about how men and women crack, spiritually and morally, in a time of evil unrestrained. The events of the 1940s and after led Manto to find evil not only in power but in weakness; he saw how reality is mixed up with illusion, how monstrousness can grow in the breast of the most mundane man. Manto painted a world of almost intolerable complexity, a world in which everybody was capable of both good and evil. One of his most powerful tales "Khol Do" depicts the plight of a young girl and her father.

The story opens with an aging father regaining consciousness in a refugee camp after a train journey from Amritsar to Lahore. The man slowly recalls the manner of his wife's death, and then suddenly realizes that his daughter, whose death he cannot recall, is missing too. He wanders around the refugee camp, searching; and comes upon a group of armed young Muslim men whose mission is to cross the bloodied new border to recover Muslim women and children stranded on the other side. The father

say if both India and Pakistan might not entirely vanish from the map of the world one day? (71-74).

Manto wrote often about the haphazard relationship between great events and small people. While historical texts often recounted the events related to great, well-known figures like Lord Mountbatten, Jinnah, Gandhi and Nehru, Manto observed and retold the tales of servants, prostitutes, beggars, peasants, lunatics and common people from Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Jewish communities, all who were whirling about in the net of partition, struggling to make sense of a tossed political sea. Manto took no sides in the religious and political wars being fought around him. In his partition stories, he reflects not on politics or history but on the meanings of loyalty and dishonor, sanity and insanity, good and evil, in a time when Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs killed an estimated half million people in their wars against one another.

In "The Assignment", for example, a Muslim family-an ailing father, his daughter and son-stays on in a place that other Muslims have abandoned. The father is a judge, a rational man. He is convinced that the communal killing will soon stop, as it always does in India. But this time it does not stop. One night a young Sikh man knocks at the door. The daughter is terrified. The man identifies himself as the son of an old friend of her father's, a Sikh who was in her father's debt. She is relieved, and unbolts the door. The boy enters with a gift, announcing that he had promised his father on his deathbed that he would continue the tradition of taking a yearly gift to the judge. And even in the middle of all the trouble, he is here to fulfill his duty to his father, to thank the judge for his kindness. His present is accepted and the Sikh boy leaves. Turning the corner, the good son encounters four masked Sikhs, carrying torches, kerosene and explosives. Here Manto makes his characteristic, demonic, utterly truthful twist. One of the men asks the boy "Sardar ji, have you completed your assignment?" The young man nodded. "Should we then proceed with ours?" "If you like", the young man replied and walked away" (31).

Manto's prose is obsessed with the trauma of women. In his female characters, Manto most starkly evokes the physical and psychological degradation of the losers and the poor. Mahnaz Ispahani points out in his essay on Manto that his emphasis on "the disfigurement of women's spirits and bodies is rarely relieved by a portrait of a woman of whole character,





Satyashodhak tradition. This text launched an attack not only on brahminical patriarchy but also the patriarchies among the non-Brahmin castes. Going beyond a mere comparison between men and women, Tarabai draws linkages between issues of de-industrialization, colonialism and the commodification of women's bodies (Bhagwat 83).

Kandasamy through her poems constructs a discourse of resistance through representation. The 'untouchable' bodies which often bear the brunt of marginalization speak out uninhibitedly re-writing the Brahminized (class conscious) canon that we have in India.

In the poem "Narration", first published in *Kritya*, Kandasamy speaks of the atrocity inflicted on a Dalit woman, enunciated by the victim herself. The poem questions the masks that one wears in a caste-ridden society. The landlord who mostly wears the mask of respectability intrepidly rips it apart to reveal the naked reality of being a rapist and a hypocrite. He ceases to be the high-caste guardian of social proprieties when the untouchable woman ignites his wanton lust. Even the priest engages in an 'unpriestly' act defiling the norms of the well-guarded corridors of powers. The poem ultimately voices the muted cries of the women who resort to silence as the only escape from the cacophony of abuse and humiliation that envelopes them. The incoherencies that the poem ends with decipher the trauma that these untouchable women suffer; ironically, with their bruised, violated bodies:

'll weep to you about
My landlord, and with
My mature gestures—
You will understand:
The torn sari, dishevelled hair
Stifled cries and meek submission.
*I was not an untouchable then.*
I'll curse the skies,
And shout: scream to you
Words that incite wrath and

You will definitely know:
The priest, his lecherous eyes,
Glances that disrobed, defiled.
*I was not polluting at four feet.*
How can I say
Anything, anything
Against my own man?
*How?*
So I take shelter in silence
Wear it like a mask.
When alone, I stumble
Into a flood of incoherencies….(1-22)

The Dalit man is complicit in the act of abuse which makes her experience specifically female and justifies the need for a separate discourse - addressing the needs of battered Dalit women – within the mainstream Dalit discourses. The poem candidly expresses the trauma of the oppressed but refrains from structuring it as a protest narrative. It is cloaked in an overwhelming sense of betrayal and self-defeat.

The poem "One-Eyed" (excerpted from *Ms Militancy*), contextualizes the innocent act of a girl drinking water from a pot within the hierarchically segregated society. The pot, the glass, and the water are unaffected by the girl's caste status and admit her presence ungrudgingly. The necessity of quenching one's thirst takes priority over all other preconditions, even for the lifeless objects. However, the poet is appalled by the educated intelligentsia (teacher, doctor, school, press) who address the simple act of drinking water with vengeance:

the pot sees just another noisy child
the glass sees an eager and clumsy hand
the water sees a parched throat slaking thirst
but the teacher sees a girl breaking the rule
the doctor sees a medical emergency





Manto gives a vivid portrayal of the trauma endured by women and the great variety of meanings they attached to the upheaval in and around their homes, fields and factories. Mushirul Hasan points out the hollowness of partition when he says, "Indeed, though such people were repeatedly fed with ill-informed and biased views and interpretations about the other, they were neither committed to the land of Aryavarta nor the dar-al-Islam" (2666). They had no destination in their minds to reach. Even though the trains had started carrying people to their death-traps, they were unclear whether Lahore, "with its splendid Mughal monuments and beautiful gardens would be part of India or Pakistan" (Hasan 2666). Moreover, did they know whether Delhi would remain in Gandhi's India or Jinnah's Pakistan.

Manto captures the mood in his brilliant story "Toba Tek Singh" who is a character from the lunatic asylum. This story, perhaps Manto's most famous short piece, is an allegory. "Toba Tek Singh" is a tale about identity. It is about the inmates of a lunatic asylum located inside Pakistan. The asylum represents the subcontinent. It houses a Hindu lawyer, a Sikh landowner, a Muslim political party worker, parted lovers and criminals. It takes place after a few years after partition and the Indian and Pakistani governments have decided upon a mutual exchange of their Hindu, Muslim and Sikh lunatic populations. Manto records, with compassionate humor, the odd, often astute responses of the lunatics to the news about their imminent displacement, notes Mahnaz Ispahani. Prisoners of a natural confusion, they are not quite sure where India is, or where Pakistan is, or where the asylum itself is. This is what he writes:

> As to where Pakistan was located, the inmates knew nothing. That was why both the mad and the partially mad were unable to decide whether they were now in India or in Pakistan. If they were in India where on earth was Pakistan? And if they were in Pakistan, then how come that until only the other day it was India?...Those who had tried to solve this mystery had become utterly confused when told that Sialkot, which used to be in India, was now in Pakistan. It was anybody's guess what was going to happen to Lahore, which was currently in Pakistan, but could slide into India any moment. It was still possible that the entire subcontinent of India might become Pakistan. And who could

witness who must now share the pain, the blame, the guilt" (Bernard 14) with those who lived through Partition.

Current trends in India suggest that the logic of partition - the tensions between multiple identities and the search for moral community which was the heart of partition, continues to tear apart the fabric of Indian society. The way in which representations of collective pasts are transmitted across generations and have contributed to the construction of violence in India evidences this. Albeit people address caste, class and gender inequalities through reservations, academic scholarships and the like, communal violence continues to be a constant phenomenon in the Indian situation. Recent researches into riots have shown that their violence deepens distrust between Hindus and Muslims. As Amrita Basu comments, the way partition violence has been understood in the subcontinent tends to see these riots as the unplanned action of crowds and as conflagrations ignited by a "spark upon a bed of combustible material" (qtd. in Jassal and Ben-Ari 2218). This approach hardly focuses on the zing of riots and factors such as "historical timing and the roles of individuals and groups that contribute to converting events into full-scale riots" (Jassal and Ben-Ari 2218). The perpetuation of communal disharmony and maintenance of the very conditions that ensure the persistence of riots by vested interests; most importantly, the seeming inability of the judicial system to identify culprits and deliver justice, parallels the horrific events of 1947 and their aftermath. In this manner, periodic riots mimic partition riots and the separation of Pakistan from India continues to reverberate through Indian society.

No writer has been able to convey the violent ambiguities of communal conflict with as much force and conviction as Saadat Hasan Manto. Many of his short stories focus on the sense of despair and dislocation caused by the partition of Pakistan and India in 1947. Manto vividly recreates the anger and horrors of this period. He exposes the trauma of the refugees uprooted and victimized by the marking of arbitrary borders. In this connection Alter says, "As the characters in Manto's stories confront the ruthless inhumanity of Hindu-Muslim violence- murder, rape and mutilation-their only conceivable response is madness, which defined the entire Indian atmosphere during partition times" (91).





the school sees a potential embarrassment
the press sees a headline and a photo feature
dhanam sees a world torn in half.
her left eye, lid open but light slapped away,
the price for a taste of that touchable water. (1-10)

The child bears the brunt of the society for this unpardonable act of transgression by losing her left eye. Once again we find the Dalit girls' body being brutalized to enforce the inviolable codes of conduct.

The idea of suicide which the poem "Aftermath"(*first published in Cerebrations*), deals with is a probing comment on the incriminating gossips maligning the marginalized. The poem also talks about the girl coming first in English as a significant moment of change in her life. The poet mentions how her life is irrevocably altered when she suffers from morning sickness provoking insinuating charges, demanding an unconditional acceptance of her sins. Her fame as the highest scorer of English however is drowned in the hue and cry over speculations of a socially condemned pregnancy:

(to consuming six glasses of orange juice)
the next morning in school during your
english exam you take permission to go to
the toilet where you throw up all the white
and creamy breakfast milk. only it tastes
sour and looks like bits of maggoty curd.
weeks later, you get to know two things
one of which will change your life for ever.
first, you scored the highest in the english
exam. second, you became a gossip item.
you still don't know what affects you more.
…
even best-friends seek answers as the
rumours inflame. your anger is mistaken

to be toward a crude imagined lover who
disowned you. you know the nauseous
truth of your thighs: you are virgin. But
evidence will not be revenge, for, so many
smoky eyes implore you to supplicate, to
admit alleged truths. impeaching faces lay
down rules: don't shout or scream, but
swallow the shame. next, confess the sin.
sin yes they will shred your innocent life to
...
tethered dreams yes something breaks in
you yes dear yes you start the brute search
for sleeping pills and chaste suicide ideas. (1-11, 22-31, 32, 39-41)

Being a Dalit writer Kandasamy draws attention to the unnecessary leverage accorded to the private life of the marginalized. This annihilates the creative genius in a young girl who could have blossomed into a great writer. The poet highlights the need for social solidarity, a necessary prerequisite for creative endeavours. The girl resorts to self-obliteration which for her is the only way to escape the shame of being born a Dalit woman.

Writing poems for Kandasamy is a direct outcome of a violent past emanating from a shared history of murder and revenge. The poet in "Their Daughters" (first published in *Quarterly Literary Review,* Singapore), contextualises her need to write by placing it within a shared need to voice ones resistance to the unmitigated violence faced by women for generations. The poet represents the women who have, within their capacity protested with violent rebuttals; braving social censure the poet too partakes the journey embarked by her grandmothers. The initial silence of the women showcases their vulnerability. They gradually transform into murderers seeking psychic emancipation through violence. Establishing an emotional solidarity with her female past Kandasamy situates her personal experience within a socio cultural context of female oppression:





Women who were recovered from the abductors and returned to their families or who were converted to the other religion and made new lives in the homes of their abductors hardly ever find a place in these narratives, although they occur frequently in literary representations.

The common images evoked by partition are "trauma", "disaster" and "catastrophe" (Jassal and Ben-Ari 2214). These characterizations are used to refer to partition both as an outcome and as cause. Such usages are found in the characterization of partition as rupture or adversity since partition is seen as the outcome of certain historical, political and social forces. In postcolonial India, the nationalist discourse aimed at creating a singular narrative. It ended up silencing other voices except those with a majoritarian orientation, thus, marginalizing the Muslims and Dalits.

In India, partition lingers in the collective unconscious of Indian and Pakistani multitudes. It has shaped discourses of nation-building and secularism, caste and religious identities, ideas about majority-minority relations, and a range of issues touching upon refugees and trans-border migrations. B N Tiwari finds that the "processes of 'othering' at the societal level - Hindu vs. its Other, the Muslim; the forward castes vs. the backward castes - have acquired normative status, legitimized in society's conscience collective, in part, by the 'event' of partition. The spatial separation of Hindus and Muslims carries over today the phenomenon of 'mini-Pakistan', a 'hostile' Hindu term for Muslim neighborhoods, particularly in the riot-affected towns of the country" (qtd. in Jassal and Ben-Ari 2216). Partition is a phenomenon that has the ability to describe the entire Indian scenario even in the present times. The event remains in the collective unconscious of all Indians and Pakistanis, of all Hindus and Muslims.

Partition literature is best read as a "counter-nationalist document of suffering" (Bernard 12). While historical records are about elite personas or heroes like Gandhi, Nehru, Jinnah and so on, partition fiction is regularly described as a means of filling in the gaps in the official historical record, like subaltern testimony, it is seen to serve as one of the "small voices" of history. Literature, in the words of Radha Kumar, is understood as an "eloquent witness, and perhaps the only witness, to an unspeakable and inarticulable history" (qtd. in Bernard 14). The reader is seen as "a belated

## COMPLEMENTING HISTORY: SAADAT HASSAN MANTO'S SHORT STORIES AS A LITERARY BUTTRESSING TO SOCIOHISTORICAL TRAUMA

**Nisa Treesa John**

Partition was the defining event of modern, independent India and Pakistan. Partition continues to be the defining event of these two nations. Moreover, it was and is profoundly a religious event for both sides. Most of the anguish over religion throughout the South Asian region is to a large extent traceable to it. Partition is at the heart not only of the great regional conflicts, but it is also an important component or factor in a whole series of religious and political conflicts reaching down to the present times. "Partition commonly understood as the violent territorial and political separation of groups also conjures up images of forced evictions and migrations of populations at immense communal and personal cost. While the governing imagery of partition draws upon the specific context of India and Pakistan, it has been the organizational basis for many other contemporary societies as well, eg, Israel-Palestine and Germany" (Jassal and Ben-Ari 2213).

Partition, as a defining religious event, is not the only event or condition for an appropriate analysis and explanation of the great religious controversies currently tearing the fabric of India's cultural life. But it is indeed, one of the necessary and central events for understanding India's current agony over religion. In many ways, it is the core plot in unfolding the narrative of modern, independent India. In the Indian case, silence was a case of "active forgetting" (Jassal and Ben-Ari 2214). Women also suffered great violence during the times of partition. Family narratives are mainly about men who were compelled to kill their women to save their honour. Such sacrificial deaths of men are canonized in family narratives.





Paracetamol legends I know
For rising fevers, as pain-relievers—
Of my people—father's father's mother's
Mother, dark lush hair caressing her ankles
Sometimes, sweeping earth, deep-honey skin,
Amber eyes—not beauty alone they say—she
Married a man who murdered thirteen men and one
Lonely summer afternoon her rice-white teeth tore
Through layers of khaki, and golden white skin to spill
The bloodied guts of a British soldier who tried to colonize her..
Of my land—uniform blue open skies,
Mad-artist palettes of green lands and lily-filled lakes that
Mirror all—not peace or tranquil alone, he shudders—some
Young woman near my father's home, with a drunken husband
Who never changed; she bore his beatings everyday until on one
Stormy night, in fury, she killed him by stomping his seedbags...
We: their daughters.
We: the daughters of their soil.
We, mostly, write. (1-19)

The 'We' in the last line is a resounding affirmation of her alignment with her mothers and grandmothers who refused to be silenced. Poetry for Kandasamy becomes a means of social retribution. Unlike the submissive tone in poems like "Aftermath" and "Narration", "Their Daughters" is a bold step towards self-structuring through enunciation.

The feeling of being a woman in love has been transformed into an exquisite experience of making the evening tea for her lover in "Storming in Tea-Cups". The poem transfers the thrust of her feelings to the act of making tea, an exclusively female experience. The lady meticulously works at the perfect colour, a perfect concoction of her love and desires for motherhood. Kandasamy delineates female psychology with sensitivity and places the so called dispensable tea making process within a shared female experience.

The memories keep coming back to remind one of painful moments in the past in "Amnesia, Selective". The poem counters the healing notions of time as images from the past crowd in inadvertently:

> When memory decides
> To no longer bear the burdens—
> Of pain, or even plain indifference
> She has her winsome wicked ways.
>
> Some day, years later,
> Life requires you to unearth
> Some event long past and you
> Set about browsing your brain
> Like a desk-full of office files and then—
> Come across a resounding emptiness. (1-10)

As memory reminds one of bygone things, the self seeks to unravel these forgotten pains unsuccessfully. The remnants delude endlessly as they display nothing worthwhile. The idea of a redemptive past has been permanently erased by other narratives or simply subordinated to oblivion.

Mascara, a cosmetic adornment for women becomes self-imposed exile for a Devadasi. The act of self-beautification which a woman engages in to enhance her self-image imprisons the Devadasi in an objectifying male gaze. Her attempts to extricate herself from the putrefying social censure are washed away by the symbolic darkness of the mascara in the poem "Mascara" (first published in *Indian Horizon*):

> The last thing she does
> before she gets ready to die
> once more, of violation,
> she applies the mascara.
>
> …
>
> With eye-catching eyes
> she stops to shudder.





> HAWES: ... I guess that's all a man can do is try. Just try and try and try. (*The Chase* 110-111)

*The Chase* ends with a moral note that human life in this world is keep on undergoing various changes and one who lives here have to learn to accept the change. It also insists that anything may happen in life but one should not lose hope.

Foote has beautifully proved his excellence in characterisation through this play. His characterisation reveals the impact of one's personality factor in life. It proves that whatever the situation may be, the presence and absence of traits decide one's behaviour which forms a whole personality as good or bad. Thus the factors agreeableness and neuroticism dominates and shapes the personalities of Sheriff Hawes' and Bubber Reeves' in this play respectively. Foote has not only presented the impact of neuroticism in Bubber alone but also in most of Richmond people, who madly wants Bubber to be killed. They represent the whole society of Texas in Foote's time. *The Chase* proves to be an excellent piece for trait based approaches. It gives a clear knowledge about the domination and function of traits on individual and as well as on the society.

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but we're goin' to get out our dogs and run the bottom till we find him, and when we do we'll tear him to pieces and we'll tear you to pieces if you get in our way" (*The Chace* 102).

Neuroticism is sometimes called emotional instability. The person who have problems in emotional regulation used to lose the power of clear thinking, decision making and effectively coping with stress. These are the major problems of Bubber Reeves in this play. He never tried to be calm and think; instead he wants everything to be done immediately by violence. At any circumstance he is not ready to lend his ear to anyone of his well-wishers, even to his mother who tried utmost to save him from being killed by the angry men of Richmond.

Foote has successfully presented two contradictory personalities in this play. When Sheriff Hawes finds peace in saving Bubber's life, Bubber finds peace in killing the Sheriff, who tries to save him. Sheriff never wants this man hunt to be continued in his county and prays to end up the chase. He longs to bring back a harmonious life to himself as well as to the society he is in charge. He said that, "I want to live in peace with my wife and baby an' let other people live in peace" (*The Chase* 70). But Bubber never cared for others lives. His mind is stuffed with thoughts of revenge and killing. The following dialogue by him proves it, "If I just could kill that devil, I could rest. If I just could kill that devil, I could rest" (*The Chase* 96).

At the end of this play Sheriff Hawes accidently shot and killed Bubber, when he tried to capture him. Even though he killed a criminal he felt that it is his failure and worried about it. His wife Ruby consoled him and tried to bring back his hope by explaining the reality of life. The Sheriff understands it, accepts and got his hope in life once again.

> HAWES: Why couldn't I have saved him, Ruby? Why couldn't I have saved him, Ruby?
>
> RUBY: I don't know that, Hawes. All I know is you did your best. You tried. That's all we can ask. All right, he's dead, but you can't change that now. You've got to go on and keep goin, on, even if you fail. This chase didn't start tonight. It didn't end tonight. Don't run away, Hawes. Keep on livin'. Keep on tryin'.





Maybe, the dyed eyes
mourn her body's sins.

…

Silently she cries.
Her tears are black.
Like her.

Somewhere
Long Ago
in an
untraceable
mangled
matrilineal
family tree
of temple prostitutes,
her solace was sought.

It has happened for centuries. . .
"Empty consolations soothe
violated bodies."

Sex clings to her devadasi skin,
assumed superficialities don't wear off,
Deliverance doesn't arrive.
Unknown Legacies of
Love made to Gods
haven't been ceremoniously accounted
as karma.

But still she prays.
Her prayer words

desperately provoke Answers.
Fighting her case,
Providence lost his pride.
Her helplessness doesn't
Seduce the Gods.
And they too
never learn
the Depth of her Dreams.

…

When she dons the mascara
The Heavens have heard her whisper,
Kali, you wear this too.... (1-4, 8-11, 18 -49, 55-57)

The idea of appeasing the Gods has not redeemed her as she vainly prays for their intervention. Gods too prove ineffectual in conferring respectability to the Devadasi and she continues to exist violated, both physically and spiritually. All the metanarratives which keep the high caste well insulated fail to shield the temple girl from humiliations. The diabolism of religious vanguards comes under serious criticism in the poem.

The import of a foreign language comes with its share of cultural prefixes. Meena Kandasamy speaks with candour, not unknown in Indian Writing in English, of the linguistic foreignness of English which needs to be eliminated in "Mulligatawny Dreams" (first published in *Kavya Bharati)*. This elimination requires a conscious restructuring and re-imagining of the language, entailing a deliberate indigenization. The argument goes back to the Foreword by Raja Rao in Kanthapura which foregrounded the need to empty the English language of its foreignness. The need to remodel the language to suit our emotional set-up and not just our intellectual make-up feeds the collective unconscious of Indian Writers writing in English. The fact that the issues of language still occupy a sustainable discourse is proof enough of its longstanding viability as contentious narrative:





first scene through the following words when he was speaking with his assistant named Rip.

> HAWES: ... A sheriff is a public servant. The public elects him, they pay his salary, an' they have a right to call on him for anything they want, day or night. Least, that's how I feel about it. And while you're out that way, check on Miss Lydie's cow-lot an' see if she's cut down that ragweed like I asked her to. If she expects people to turn down the radios on account of her migraine, she's gonna have to keep the rag weed cut for the hay fever sufferers. (*The Chase* 65)

The escapee, Bubber Reeves nature is just opposite to Sherif's. He never agrees with anyone's ideas and suggestions and always used to be in a state of anxiety and angry mood. His character reflects the domination of Neuroticism in his personality. Neuroticism is the tendency to experience negative emotions such as anger, anxiety or depression. He has never been optimistic in his opinion about life and people around him. He behaves very rudely with all and never had a soft heart even for his mother Mrs. Reeves. Bubber is not a peace lover like Hawes but he creates a small conflicting situation into more frustrating one. Even after escaped from the county jail at Richmond he did not try to live a peaceful life; instead he wants to kills the Sheriff. He is never ready to listen to anyone or understands his critical situation. When his mother begs him to not try to kill the Sheriff and wants him to leave their native county for good, he just ignored it and warned his mother to keep out of his way. Instead of rectifying his mistakes he tries to do more problems out of his anger and emotional instability. He said that, "I'm not leaving town until I kill Hawes" (*The Chace* 75).

Agreeable people used to sympathise with others feelings and they possess the soft heart for feeling others' emotions. In *The Chase*, Sheriff Hawes knows very well that the escapee Bubber will come back for him to kill him. In addition to these Hawes knows that the people of Richmond town were all furious about Bubber's escape and they want him to be killed. At one stage the whole town forces the Sheriff to kill Bubber but when he refused to do so, they threatened him to stay away from their way. The leader of Richmond, Damon said to Hawes, "All right, I'll go-

authentic human beings with flaws and virtues alike, he provides gentle insight into their misdirected lives to elicit sympathy and hope. He has spoken about his choice of characters as follows: “I felt that I had not chosen the characters and the stories of my plays so much as they had chosen me. These are my people and my stories, and the plays I want to write” (Foote 59).

Foote’s plays are outstanding. His characterisation in the play *The Chase* is an excellent portrait of human personality. Unlike his other plays he has focused on many characters in this play. His focus on various men not only represents individuals but also the larger group of Texasians. He has picturised both virtues and flaws of his characters in this play as a real one.

*The Chase* deals with a major subject in an original way. It concentrates on the inner emotions of the two central figures. One is the escapee from justice named Bubber Reeves who wants to kill the sheriff named Hawes, who captured him and sent him to jail previously. Another one is his compassionate chaser Sheriff Hawes, who wants to capture the escapee again without killing him and being killed by the natives. For the first time in his career as playwright Foote has given equal importance to a negative character in his play. The whole story revolves around the Sheriff and Bubber.

Sheriff Hawes seeks to end the chase after capturing the escapee, which started when he was a boy at risk and continues now. Sheriff’s attitude is that killing the escaped prisoner will not end the chase for others like him but it will only continue. His attitude clearly shows that he possess the trait of agreeableness, which is a tendency to be compassionate and cooperative rather than suspicious and antagonistic towards others. He gives preference to the peace rather than violence. The person whose personality is being dominated by the factor of agreeableness is generally considerate, friendly, generous, helpful and willing to compromise with others. Sheriff Hawes is such a person who never been unfriendly and uncooperative with others. Even when his town people call him for small reasons all the time, he has never been unconcerned with their problems. His dutifulness and concern for others wellbeing is revealed in the very





anaconda. candy. cash. catamaran.
cheroot. coolie. corundum. curry.
ginger. mango. mulligatawny.
patchouli. poppadom. rice.
tatty. teak. vetiver.
i dream of an english
full of the words of my language.
an english in small letters
an english that shall tire a white man’s tongue
an english where small children practice with smooth round
pebbles in their mouth to the spell the right zha
an english where a pregnant woman is simply stomach-child-lady
an english where the magic of black eyes and brown bodies
replaces the glamour of eyes in dishwater blue shades and
the airbrush romance of pink white cherry blossom skins
an english where love means only the strange frenzy between a
man and his beloved, not between him and his car
an english without the privacy of its many rooms
an english with suffixes for respect
an english with more than thirty six words to call the sea
an english that doesn’t belittle brown or black men and women
an english of tasting with five fingers
an english of talking love with eyes alone
and i dream of an english
where men
of that spiky, crunchy tongue
buy flower-garlands of jasmine
to take home to their coy wives
for the silent demand of a night of wordless whispered love . . .
(1-29)

The poet dreams of a language which happily incorporates the Indian lexicon. The Indian words which the poem begins with are not alien to the Indian English widely popular with the English speaking Indians. The poet envisages a discourse redirected toward the native English speaker. She purports a language for the colonizer, reversing the subject positions of the teacher and the taught. The poem becomes a bold statement on the need to redefine linguistic boundaries of identity paradigms. Language being a major cultural index, the poem addresses the need to re-construct it from the 'others' perspective.

Even in a poem like *Mohandas Karamchand*, (first published in *The Little Magazine*) written after reading Sylvia Plath's "Daddy," the poet unapologetically deconstructs the hallowed reception of Gandhi as the father of the Nation:

> "Generations to come will scarcely
> believe that such a one as this walked
> the earth in flesh and blood."
> —Albert Einstein
> Who? Who? Who?
> Mahatma. Sorry no.
> Truth.Non-violence.
> Stop it. Enough taboo.
> That trash is long overdue.
> You need a thorough review.
> Your tax-free salt stimulated our wounds
> We gonna sue you, the Congress shoe. (1-11)
> ….

Her politically charged statements unearth the myopic political underpinnings of the post-independence nation building. The political masquerade of great political leaders has been ruthlessly ripped apart by the poet in the bitterness of her verse bordering on cynicism.





## AGREEABLENESS AND NEUROTICISM: THE CHASE OF TWO CONTRASTING TRAITS IN HORTON FOOTE'S *THE CHASE*

**S.Boopathi**

The word 'chase' is not a new one to this world and its role in everyone's life is inevitable. Everyone has goals, and to attain it what they do is 'the chase'. The first and prime chase in life is chasing time. One chases time always and it is like 24x7 but it differs from person to person on purpose. When millionaires chase for million dollar business in few minutes, the beggars chase from morning till night to get pennies for food. The way of chasing business differs from person to person as per their personality traits and environment. Sometimes whatever the situation may be, it is the personality factors that lead a person to what and how to chase their goals. It determines the positive or negative way of approach in chasing.

With regarding to the personality traits The Big Five Model always stands independent. Each factor in Big Five have cluster of personality traits in which almost all sort of human behaviour can be classified. It is used in the contemporary psychology to describe human personality in five broad domains or dimensions of personality. The Big five factors are openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Among them Agreeableness and Neuroticism are taken for this study.

In the task of exploring human personality numerous literary pieces has made tremendous attempt in one way or other. National Medal of the Arts recipient and Pulitzer Prize winner Horton Foote continues to enrich American dramatic literature through his poignant yet painfully honest explorations of the human condition. As an active artist for over fifty years, much of this Texas playwright's work challenges audience to examine the intricate inner-workings of his characters. Although he portrays them as

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The poems vacillate between the private and the public, incorporating the collective unconscious of the Dalit community. From the incriminating collapse of boundaries between the public and the private, in the poem "Aftermath," Kanadasamy takes on a political virtuoso like Mahatma Gandhi with an intimidating robustness in "Mohandas Karamchand". The poems reflect her seething anger poured out in vitriolic diatribes against the Indian society. The poem "Mulligatawny Dreams" focuses on the issues of language and hence consciously disengages itself from Dalit issues. The poem speaks for a distinctive Indianised English which does not ignore the regional language nuances. The theme of marginalization runs as leitmotif in all her poems. The poems complicate the simple binaries of the oppressor versus oppressed by producing a discourse of resistance. Dalit narratives are often autobiographical as their lives itself mirroruntold atrocities. In the poems of Kandasamy, representation narrativises the oppressed without resorting to propaganda.

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'Ram Leela' portrays 'Saneda' as a dominant community of Gujarat which is based on a notion of culture and shared values. These dominant discourses are linked with myth and ideology. Myths function as ideological meanings which legitimize the status quo and serve the interests of those in power (Kress and Van Leeuwen 97). The filmmaker has also taken cinematic liberty to make sure nothing disrupts the flow of the narrative. Film no longer remains within the setting of rural Kutch after Ram and Leela elope and get married but become a modified extension of Bhansali films and start following the archetypical of ideal woman and man 'raam – seeta'. Leela who is aggressive in first half become an obedient daughter who runs the show when her mother goes through health crisis.

***Conclusion***

Sanjay Leela Bhansali tries to present imagery of Gujarat and takes cinematic liberty to appeal to pan Indian audience by weaving a Gujarati fabric taking thread from different parts of Gujarat. He moulds the story in a way that it appears to be the 'real' representation of one Gujarat or one dominant community. Though the film does have a box office success yet it fails to bring on screen the authentic Gujarat.

**Endnotes**

1. Kasaba a small town or group of villages.
2. Last Indian village, Indo- Pak border in Rann of Kutch, Gujarat.
3. After at least four multiplexes were vandalized during the protests in Bhavnagar, Jamnagar, Rajkot and Gandhidham in Gujarat with regard to Rabari and Jadeja community being projected as loud and bad mouth in Ram leela, the royal families of Gondal (Yuvraj Himanshusinh Jadeja) and Rajkot (Yuvraj Mandhatasinh Jadeja) had to intervene to bring an end to the controversy, the mediators convinced Bhansali to issue apology and make changes in the caste names and replaced 'Jadeja' with 'Saneda' and 'Rabari' with 'Rajadi'. Bhansali's film trailers were also challenged in the Gujarat High Court.
4. People belonging to the region of Kutchch are known as Kutchchi.

phones, internet café, video parlor and a foreign return potential son-in-law to establish that it is set in contemporary times.

The accommodation of culture is restricted to only two dominant class and community of Kutch yet it portrays them as the only dominant groups in Gujarati society and inevitably excluding other sub communities or groups. This is mainly because film is a cultural production viewed within the constraints, imagination, and signification of the society in which it operates. There can be no absolute representations because we live in a dynamic, ever-changing society (Rekhari n.pag). The representations are made within the given framework of the imagination, limitation and signification which become a problem since Rajadis and the Sanedas are depicted as communities who are gender biased and are not ready to accept a young woman as their leader who is at the helm of their affairs. They refuse to understand the language of humanity or compassion and are only driven by the urge to resolve matter through violence, something Ram cannot really fathom. This stands as a stark contrast to the common belief about Gujarat as a land of Gandhi and therefore practice of non-violence.

The character of Ram therefore tries to symbolize that image of peace loving Gujarat which often has been blamed for riots. He attempts to put an end to bloodshed but comes across Leela at her abode, a place where he quietly sneaks in along with his friends for fun and ends up leaving his heart with her. The character of mukhiya of Saneda, Supriya Pathak who is portrayed as a ruthless woman, who does not refrain from breaking her own daughter's finger by using a Betel nut cracker, suddenly realizes her love for her only daughter Leela a few days later on seeing her injury.

Here director Sanjay Leela Bhansali treats the theme of Romeo and Juliet in a way that it allows the audience to identify with the protagonist and portrays it as a universal experience and thus ensures commercial success of the film. The film relies on the audience engagement with the storytelling which needs to be intense for their experience and in making it as a process of identification and relation. Scholars like Ruoff have argued that many of these collections of images do not provide an accurate representation of the material they intended to preserve for readers. By failing to take into account the dynamics of the region or the cultural significance of the story, much of the original or authenticity itself is lost.





## READING TONI MORRISON'S *THE BLUEST EYE:* A TALE OF THE THREE DIMENSIONAL SUPPRESSION OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN

**Debabrata Banerjee**

Simone de Beauvoir, in her famous treatise *The Second Sex*, on the marginalization of women in a patriarchal society, has concluded that that woman is, "…the inessential who never goes back to being essential…the absolute Other, without reciprocity"(159). While her assertion fits for women in almost all communities irrespective of being rich or poor, developed or under-developed; this stigma of being "inessential" is further aggravated in case of the black American women. For centuries the African-American women have come to be identified as a mere third in a society that customarily reduces woman to the "other", since its idea of femininity is restricted to the blonde-haired, pale-skinned, rosy-lipped and blue-eyed Barbie or Shirley Temple.

The African-Americans brought to America from their native lands in Africa as slaves were subordinated by the Whites as commodities, bringing them down to the level of subhuman beings. They became victims of racism, and served the needs of white capitalist masters. Already scorching under the flare of racism, the African-American community entailed upon its women, the blight of sexism, making their position doubly difficult. Besides being humiliated for their race and being discriminated against in social and political privileges, the black women have faced discrimination within their own community for 'being women'. Conventionally visualized in their archetypal image as a wife supporting her man, giving birth to and bringing up his children at home or becoming an ideal servant or nurse in the white households, the black women are thereby dehumanized as merely the "womb", the "ovary", sans individuality

or intellect, testifying de Beauvoir's claim on the devaluation of women as the "second sex". Their vigorous support to the Civil Rights Movement of the Sixties and the ensuing suffering, have grossly been ignored in the compilations of the black history, written by male hands. A third dimension is further added to their predicament by the vicious cycle of poverty that has engulfed a major section their creed since the Emancipation. The long tenure of slavery and after its formal abolition, the age of wage slavery has rendered the black community economically devastated making the black female—triply other—rendering them almost without any social position in the racist, sexist and capitalist American society which defines them as inferior, outsiders and failures. Speaking about the status of African-American women, Dr. Julianne Malveaux says:

> The intersection of race and gender, additionally create a third burden for African-American women…. A most stunning example of this third burden is evident in the labor market, where both African-American men and women experience unemployment rates that are higher than those for the overall population….The male and female unemployment that results from the deindustrialization of our nation's cities, and the policy failure to develop jobs policies especially disadvantages African-American men and places the family survival burden on African-American women. ("Perspectives")

It is hard to reconcile with a long enduring stigma of socio-economic exploitation, despite the passage of centuries and the dawn of black renaissance in America. Yet, infinite mental and physical strength initiated the black women to fight against pernicious social and economic pressures. A social consciousness born out of their triple oppression compelled them to assert their identity by talking back in their own voices, by penning down how they felt, through generations on being poor, black and woman. Eventually the African-American women writers have set themselves upon the task of highlighting the impact of the established doctrine of racism and cultural authority of the whites, strengthened by the inferiority complex of the poverty stricken black men upon their lives, in their literary creations.





better as someone who can meet the unfathomable requirements of a Bhansali movie. Deepika Padukone who plays Leela on the other hand is a bold, full of oomph, gorgeous and independent women who challenges the very notion of conventional woman in the first half of the film but abruptly becomes docile and responsible in the second half.

The image of woman portrayed in this film is not of someone who is submissive or ideal Indian woman neither in role of protagonist, mother, daughter-in-law or the opponent. For example *Leela* as a protagonist is in control of the situation, has power over the man who is more vulnerable than her. Within the film 'Ram leela' are celebrated images and subject positions of woman as 'mother', 'daughter', 'housewife', 'sexually attractive woman', a 'widow' and so on, which the film, embroil us in the process of signification. A woman is nothing more than the commodities she wears: the lipstick, the tights, the clothes and so on are 'woman' (Hall, Hobson, Lowe, and Willis n.pag).

Film brings together various images which are visually pleasing and convincing narratives to its viewers at the same time. The flow of the story is smooth and filming of the mise-en-scene is flawless which makes it natural for audiences to get involved in this process of representation. It is possible for films to do so since the medium itself has the ability to source material and bring 'reality' on screen. "When a story demands then, the filmmaker has to shoot and adopt cultures and their stereotypical styles. Cultures and ethnicity are greatly involved in the process of filmmaking in India," opines trade expert Taran Adarsh. Narrative is such an automatic choice for representing events that it seems unproblematic and 'natural'. The use of a familiar narrative structure serves "to naturalize the content of the narrative itself" (Kress and Leeuwen n.pag). In this film, 'Gujarati' shares 'Kutchchi'[4] interests, beliefs and lifestyle for it to become pan Gujarat representation for other non Guajarati audience.

The narrative structure of the film also sets it as a typical Bhansali love story which captures, romance, conflict, grandeur, garba and sensuality. The tension in this film is built by infusing high melodrama and action which succeeds in getting a sympathetic response from the viewers. The film does not specifically follow any epoch except for the fact that it uses mobile

***Representation of Gujarat and Authenticity***

Kutch is the biggest district of Gujarat which has its own identity, culture and topography. Similar is the case with Saurashtra which comprises of the western costal district of Gujarat till Gulf of Khambhat. In fact each region of Gujarat has its own distinct cultural identity which is unique to that specific region. In representing culture and people on screen, language plays a powerful and vital role. Some people regard culture as purely a matter of intellectual and spiritual values, in the sense of religion, philosophy, legal systems, literature, art, music, and the like. Sometimes this is extended to include refinements in the manners of the ruling class (Kosambi n.p.).

Visuals in the form of either moving images or photographs use media as a tool to construct reality. Film also becomes a wider marker of culture when it is traced as "a recorder of reality - and hence a valuable tool" (Miller n.pag). Sanjay Leela Bhansali in his film 'Ram Leela' tries to bring on screen a true representation of Gujarat/Kutch by using the ethos of dominant Jadeja and Rabari community of this region, but fails in doing so. The issue here is that to accommodate cinematic requirement, 'Ram Leela' blends Kutch and Saurashtra for its premise, rather than just staying with Kutch as back drop, therefore lacks any kind of authentic representation. This also could be understood in terms of the fact that there is no other dominant element of Kutch in the film except the accent or dialogue delivery, costume and body tattoos which can be associated with Gujarat or very specific Kutch. The film also uses Mud work which is specific artwork of Kutch in the interiors of the sets to represent Kutch.

Ethnic Gujarati culture with its rich traditions and colourful festivals and rituals would naturally lend to a Bollywood backdrop, but Hindi cinema rarely tapped the idea till Bhansali tapped this ethnic vein earlier in Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam and now in Ram- leela. The cosmetic makeover is tapped to the maximum in order to rehash the familiar Romeo- Juliet story amid a backdrop of violence and plush Gujarati set up (Mankermi n.pag).

The protagonists of this film *Ram* and *Leela* belong to the rival communities and therefore even though they are in the same town both resides in two separate localities. Ranveer who plays Ram in this film is depicted as a character with jaw dropping physique, typical playboy, even





Toni Morrison's success as a black woman writer is a landmark in the struggle of the black women to assert their racial and sexual identity. As Asha S. Kanwar puts it, "…it has been a 'long and winding road' from the cotton fields of the American South to the chandeliered halls in Stockholm, as Toni Morrison steps forward to accept her award" (82). Being an artist and an academician, Morrison was obligated to write books that she had desired to read. Her accountability as a black feminist writer was not merely to voice aspirations of the women of her community and create a black "feminist poetics" but even more to challenge the image of the black women as victimizers since "critics with orientations towards race based ideology upheld images which placed black males in positions of victims while women were seen as victimizers" (Sethi 2). Working under this ideology, Morrison developed one of her most popularly received and critically acclaimed novel—*The Bluest Eye*, to depict the impact of the three layered domination of the capitalists, whites and the males over the Breedlove family, a microcosm of that section of the African-American community who tried to adopt themselves to the white standards of life, with the desire to be accepted in the main stream of the society. It is the story of Pecola, the "black and poor" and therefore "ugly" child-protagonist of the novel, who under the claustrophobic authority of white standards of beauty loses her sanity due to the gradual erosion of her persona, "A little black girl yearns for the blue eyes of a little white girl, and the horror at her heart of her yearning is exceeded only by the evil of fulfillment…The damage done was total." (Morrison 204)

Pecola Breedlove vainly prays to God for a pair of blue eyes, which for her are the vital obligation of beauty. The story of *The Bluest Eye* is narrated by another black girl, Pecola's friend Claudia MacTeer, Morrison's alter-ego in the novel. Through this confident and non-conformist narrator of the novel, the author sets forth to examine the appalling events in Pecola's life and tries to comprehend the root cause of her doom. Born in an extremely poor black family in Ohio, Pecola, from the very beginning of her life was made to believe that she was ugly as she was black and thus not to be adored by anyone: "They live there because they were poor and black and they stayed there because they believed they were ugly" (34). Eventually she tutored herself to survive with her blackness and endure

the ridicules of the whites, the comparatively richer browns and the black males, by keeping herself in a cocoon of inferiority complex. But her apparently bland life took a wretched turn when her father Cholly Breedlove, in a sheer fit of insanity, raped her. What followed was a desertion by her community and even her own mother. Unable to bear the pressure of social humiliation at such a young age and having no shoulder to cry on, Pecola degenerated into insanity. The novel contrasts the life of Pecola to that of the MacTeer sisters, Frieda and Claudia, and tries to comprehend how they could endure the struggle of existence in the black community, whereas Pecola could not.

Pecola's desire for blue eyes can be interpreted as the throbbing desire of a black girl to be accepted in a world that does not want her, incited by the images of racist ideology because "Adults, older girls, shops, magazines, newspapers, window signs – all the world had agreed that a blue-eyed, yellow-haired, pink-skinned doll was what every girl child treasured" (15). Through this symbolic urge of Pecola to get the most beautiful and bluest eyes to draw admiration of those who have loathed her, Morrison unveils a major aspiration latent in nearly all black women: to get a respectable social position and acceptance. To obtain an equal status in the society of the whites, some black women thus, readily compromises with their racial identity. The text provides ample evidences to testify the truth that even in the eyes of the blacks, white is beautiful. The young black girls' love for the blonde haired, fair skinned, blue eyed Shirley Temple or black skinned Pauline Breedlove's preference to spend her life in serving a white child, ignoring her own children, may be considered as evidences of the self hatred of the blacks.

The blue eyes as an agent of white racism are the most dominating influence that drives Pecola to insanity, yet there are myriad other instances that reveal the odds of racism in the novel. Pecola's experience at the candy shop may be analysed as an example of the depressing attitude of the "blue" eyed whites, who regard the blacks as horrifying objects, to an extent that even the eleven year old Pecola could sense the disgust of the shopkeeper at her appearance, even avoiding to looking at her eyes:





as many people migrated to other parts of Gujarat and country. Lack of employment opportunities during this time gave air to many illegal and anti social activities including those related to cross border.

Things did improve with investments coming in during 'Vibrant Gujarat' and Kutch slowly started rising from the debris of earthquake and thus measured repopulation began. Kutch is the largest district in Gujarat has a population which is mostly nomadic or artisan groups. Kutch district is inhabited by various communities who have reached this region after centuries of migration from neighbouring regions of Marwar (Western Rajasthan), Sindh, Afghanistan and further.

Film 'Ram Leela' which is an adaptation of Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet' establishes 'Nakhtrana[2]' which houses the dominant community of Jadeja and Rabari as the location where the story unfolds. For almost four hundred years, Kutch was ruled by the Jadeja dynasty till its merger with the Indian Union in 1948. For almost one thousand years, the Rabari have roamed the deserts and plains of what is today western India. Rabari's on the other hand are mostly the cattle owner or local merchants or blacksmith artists of Kutch. It is believed that this tribe, with a peculiar Persian physiognomy, migrated from the Iranian plateau more than a millennium ago (Verma). Rabari's dominate the landscape of Kutch region whose main source of income is from livestock, dairy, wool, leather and handicrafts. Rabari women are independent, strong willed, self sufficient and often handle the money matter of the house since men most of the time are out grazing cattles. The Rabari women also have dexterity in embroidery and hand crafted textile tradition of 'Bandhani' 'Ram leela', talks about these two partitioned community Saneda (Jadeja) and Rajadi (Rabari).[3]

The character of Supriya Pathak who belongs to Saneda community the in the film is inspired by the real life character of Santokba Jadeja who rose to notoriety with her underworld gang in the 1980s. She started her gang in Porbandar which is part of Saurashtra, seeking revenge for the murder of her husband who was a mill worker. Slowly her gang and its terror expanded as she extended control over illegal limestone, mining and transport businesses in the area.

films in the past, Sanjay Leela Bhansali has grandly exploited this formula. Amid the overwhelming Punjabi presence in Bollywood of the late nineties, he brought alive the essence of the state in Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam in 1999 (Mankermi n.pag).

This paper shall attempt to do a case study of representation of Gujarat in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's film 'Ram Leela' since it is a recent film and the issue of generalization of Gujarati is more problematic here. This paper also looks into the fact that does representation of one particular region or community work as a premise for the narrative of the film or does the cinematic requirement lead to misrepresentation of the community or the region.

***Premise of 'Ram Leela'***

It is common to see in Indian scenario that in villages and 'kasaba[1] division of society is based on the caste where elite caste will not share any common space or housing area with lower caste members / group. In such community inter caste marriage is almost unthinkable especially if that caste has rigid hierarchy, even though they might have legal freedom to do so. This is true for most of the regions across India; here for instance Kutch region which is the desert region of Gujarat and is the premise of the film 'Ram-Leela' is a traditional region which is not very up to date in terms of its culture and social engagements unlike the rest of the state or country.

Globalisation arrived in Gujarat almost a decade later than it entered Indian markets. Kutch a drought prone region of the state did not receive any fruits of globalisation until 2005, when Adani group of industries acquired seven thousand three hundred and fifty hectares from the government in an area called Mundra in the Gulf of Kutch and started an array of industries including India's largest private port in Mundra and a four t5housand six hundred and twenty -megawatt coal-fired power plant which has been surrounded by controversies. This region unlike rest of the Gujarat did not receive the benefits of 'globalisation' and development, also primarily because it is a desert area and has no financial strong hold except handicraft industry as the source of livelihood. Besides this what aggravated the situation was the 2002 earthquake which shook this region and affected the means of income of the people. Kutch underwent a gradual depopulation





> She has seen it in the lurking eyes of all white people.So, the distaste must be for her, her blackness. All things in her are flux and anticipation. But her blackness is static and dread. And it is the blackness that accounts for, that creates, the vacuum edged with distaste in white eyes. (37)

Evidently, this white shopkeeper treats Pecola as an abnormal being who does not deserve humanitarian treatment. It is this hatred in his eyes, and in the eyes of most white men, which makes Pecola feel an innate hatred for her own self.

Racism does not confine to the white community only. The light coloured, well-to-do African-Americans also consider their darker counterparts, inferior. This is exemplified in the attitudes of Geraldine, the Mulatto woman who loathes Pecola's very presence in her house; or of Maureen Peal, who initially befriends Pecola only to insult her later, saying: "I am cute! And you ugly! Black and ugly black e mos. I am cute" (56). These instances divulge the vicious nature of the racists.

In her childish innocence, Pecola is convinced that by adapting the white standards of beauty, she would gain acceptance in the society that she has craved for so long. Being the child of a poor family, she has only one asset under her position—her body—which she desires to be perfected with white skin, blue eyes, blonde hairs—yielding to the racial hegemony. Thus Pecola needs the blue eyes as weapons, not simply to wrestle down her inferiority complex, but more pathetically to get a mere social recognition, an equal position amongst the white men, women, children and even the black men.

Next to the racial ordeal, sexism: the exploitation of the female body physically and verbally, also contributes to the fall of Pecola in *The Bluest Eye*. Detached from their roots, brutally exploited as slaves or labourers by the whites and reminded of their low social position at every step, the black men suffer under the burden of their race without the courage to revolt. To vent their frustration they violate the most easily available victim near, their women at home. Cholly's anger, for instance, at the innocent Darlene, on

being caught at a private moment and ridiculed by the white hunters, visibly hints at the root cause of the violence that black men inflict upon their helpless mothers, wives, beloveds or daughters:

> Sullen, irritable, he cultivated his hatred of Darlene. Never did he once consider directing his hatred towards the hunters. Such an emotion would have destroyed him. They were big, white, armed men. He was small, black, helpless…hating them would have consumed him, burned him up like a piece of soft coal, leaving only flakes of ash and a question mark of smoke. (118)

This incapability in front of the powerful whites and the concurrent helpless status of black women also fuels the incestuous tendencies that contaminate the black community. Slavery vitiated incest in the lives of black women since the white men made free sexual exploitations of their slave women. Consequently the black men too acquired the notion that black women are born to be exploited and thus they considered raping of their wives, daughters, and near female relations pretty natural. In *The Bluest Eye*, incest is the most tragic experience that initiates Pecola's physical and emotional collapse. Cholly, representing the black man's self-hatred and lack of self-esteem, victimizes his own daughter. This further enhances the desire of young and innocent Pecola to have blue eyes, as she imagines that her father or any other black man would not have dared to harm her if she was a white skinned, blue eyed girl: "why, look at pretty-eyed Pecola. We mustn't do bad things in front of those pretty eyes" (34).

The sexist suppression of black woman is not merely confined to Cholly's rape incident in the novel. There is no age boundary for men to take up the roles of the predators for innocent girls. The brown child Junior, taught to behave like the whites by his mother, does not hesitate to humiliate Pecola, after trapping her by bait in his house and making her fear and struggle the element of fun and ridicule. Even little black boys, imitating the whites, regard harassing a helpless black girl customary. Poor Pecola becomes victim of all types of oppressions, including physical abuse by the little black boys, who sadly and ironically sees nothing wrong in humiliating





# CULTURAL REPRESENTATION OF GUJARAT IN SANJAY LEELA BHANSALI'S FILM '*RAM LEELA*': A CASE STUDY

**Aasita Bali and Dr. Narayanswamy K Y.**

## *Introduction*

Cinema is part of popular culture and thus it prepares a schema of visuals which can confront popular attitudes and tastes, produced for masses and not for elite's consumption. Films in Hindi language, produced in Mumbai are popularly known as Bollywood films. The Indian film industry stands above most other national cinemas due to its local focus yet enormous size (Kingsford and Smith n.pag). These films do not prescribe to any particular format or genre but has its own genre 'Masala films', which is broadly an amalgamation of various genres, in particular like action, romance, comedy and drama. Masala films are highly popular among masses since it tries to interlace a story in such a way the film has little bit for everyone. Film directors make it a point that irrespective of genre, there is enough spice in the film that can bring large audience to film theatre and help them fetch good box office collections. This spicy element could be attained by working on the permutation and combination of action with romance, style with drama or theme with adaptation.

Bollywood film makers have frequently tried to explore various regional themes to appeal to the audience. Film maker Sanjay Leela Bhansali is one of those popular film directors who experiments with themes that often represent a particular region of the country. For example he located his debut film 'Khamoshi' and later film 'Guzaarish' in Goa, also situated were 'Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam' and 'Ram Leela' and his television serial 'Saraswatichandra' in Gujarat and upcoming film 'Bajirao Mastani' is set in Maharashtra. While Gujarati culture was sporadically used in Hindi

Nila's final words point to a great truth which embraces all mankind regardless of race, language, nation, colour of the skin and so on. She only serves as the spokesperson of the author who has possessed the great knowledge that deep inside all people are the same.

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a girl of their own community. Their hatred for Pecola's blackness may also be construed as an extension of their self hating tendencies born out of the lifelong ridicule they face for their colour.

Though Pecola, being at the centre of the novel, is subjected to the highest degree of violence and sexual harassment by the men of her community, the other female characters also struggle under comparable exploitation, since men regard the female body their own possession. Pecola's friend Frieda MacTeer is preyed upon by a white man, but unlike Pecola she is able to recover the shock owing to the support of her family. The author also hints towards the abuse of the other black girls by referring to the perverts like Soaphead, who sexually exploits the young girls in return of candies, even before they reach the age of understanding the violence they are subjected to.

Racial and sexual depravities are not the only causes for the pathetic conditions of the black women. To add to it, there is poverty that completes the medley of suffering. Class, race and gender are thoroughly knotted to delegate a person's social status. Ages of slavery has crushed the capacity of the black community to be economically productive. Emancipation only brought a false promise that doomed in the transformation of slaves to under-paid labourers. Cholly Breedlove's youth passed in the vain pursuit of a career to sustain himself and later his family when he fell in love with Pauline and married her. Their married life turned out disastrous owing to the economic hardships and soon their love turned sour under the heat of poverty. Cholly took the aid of alcohol to keep away the pain of being a failure while Pauline took up the role of a governess at a white household, utterly rejecting her responsibilities towards her family and her children, to escape the monotony of a poor black family life. The household of Cholly and Pauline represents that section of the post-Emancipation African-Americans who wage a daily struggle against poverty and end up in the deceptive tranquility of drugs and alcohol. Claudia aptly sums up the struggle of the blacks to merge with the main fabric of the society saying, "Being a minority in both caste and class, we moved about anyway on the hem of

live, struggling to consolidate our weaknesses and hang on, or to creep singly up into the major folds of the garment" (11). Thus the adverse effects of racism and sexism are augmented with the class structures that force the likes of the Breedloves to a lifetime of subordination. In a society that values richness, maleness and whiteness, Pecola is the one who suffers the most due to her blackness, womanhood and poverty.

Analysing *The Bluest Eye* closely, inevitably leads us to the conclusion that the identity crisis of black women constitutes a big problem in the American society. Societal forces in form of racism and sexism dominate black women's life and expose the falsity of American idealism, which barely shields the rights of the whites, the males and the affluent classes, while denying the blacks, even their racial identity.

However, though black women are the ones who suffer most from racism and sexism, it does not necessary entail that there is no possibility for their resurrection. Black female authors like Alice Walker have set a paradigm of an oppressed woman's struggle and victory in shielding herself from suppression and later utilising her potentials to enlighten the whole society, in her epoch making novel *The Color Purple*. All the female characters in the novel help in Celie's transformation from a timid girl to an independent woman. Even in Morrison's *Sula*, the protagonist establishes her right to identity by transforming her fear into anger. These tales promote a chain reaction: the upliftment of women leading to enhancement of the men's world, which ultimately augments the whole black community towards progress.

In *The Bluest Eye* as well, Morrison presents characters, though limited in number, who refuse to conform to the white standards of beauty and take pride in their race. Perhaps the most striking example is the narrator Claudia herself, Morrison's spokesperson in the novel. Claudia's hatred for the white—dolls, babies, movie-stars, depicts her understanding of the hegemonic forces of the foreign cultural images that renders her own culture inferior. As a child, Claudia had harboured violent feelings for the racist images such as Shirley Temple or Baby Doll and tended to destroy them:





the wishes of Anirban. At Kishan's house he is the original master. 'Nila' is a supplementary sign who only adds to the material things that exist in his house. It should be noted that she does not add up. Molina also exists in the supplementary space in Anirban's house and in his mind; the original space being occupied by the other woman, Swathi. Ironically this woman also exists in the same supplementary space, only for the reason of being a woman.

According to Bhabha the notion of homogeneity lacks something. The idea of France comprising of only whites, can only be a myth. Its minus has to be compensated by bringing forth the presence of people from other races. Interrogating the supplement would only result in the beginning of the narrative of the nation, not in the end of it. It is quite ironic that the readers get a glimpse of French culture and life through the eyes of an Indian woman Nila.

Crossing the borders does not create any essential difference. It may be an ironical fact that Nila lived more happily in Calcutta in terms of money, servants, and other material comforts. She cannot boast of all these comforts in Paris but the best part for her is that she has the choice to decide things for herself. However hard one may try, one cannot erase the trace of history from one's memory. The thought of baptizing oneself as the native of any particular nation should be discarded. Bhabha says, "to dwell 'in the beyond' is . . . to be a part of a revisionary time, a return to the present to redescribe our cultural contemporaneity; to re-inscribe our human, historic commonality; to touch the future on its hither side" (10).

Towards the end of the novel Nasrin presents a wise Nila who utters the following truth:

> Is it only the unemployed people who rob and steal? . . . . Don't the white people do drugs? Murder? Tell me, is there a good place on this earth? Where would you say there is total safety? Aren't there addicts in Manila? . . . . This country has racism, so does India. This Rue de Vouyere, where only white people stay, do you think murders never happen here? Of course they do. One could have happened just today! (293)

As one goes through the novel *French Lover* one understands that the present life of the people always intrudes into stereotypical images created by the national culture. The contemporary image of Nila presents a contrast to the age old picture of a traditional Indian woman. The national past of India is represented by stereotypical women like Molina, a submissive mother caught up in the web of patriarchal family. Molina, despite knowing the truth that her husband Anirban is after another woman, serves him like a typical Indian wife. In contrast to Molina, Nila decides to leave Kishan's house without any second thought.

The novel attempts to break another stereotypical image of the rich, white people content with their lives. Danielle repeatedly refers to the difficult living in France. She reminds Nila that her (Nila's) condition is much better than many others. Danielle is having tax problems and life is becoming more difficult in Paris.See how Nila could relate every experience in Paris to her past experiences in Calcutta. At Danielle's flat when she sees that there is only one bed, she suddenly remembers how beds were made on the floor during weddings in Calcutta. She also recounts how she listened to the ghost stories of Manju aunty.

Nila's journey along the path of 'loss of identity' begins with her arrival in Paris. Her emotions shuttle between pride and humiliation. After Nicole's party Nila is annoyed with herself that she tells Danielle that she should have been with Kishan playing the role of a compliant housewife. Her self-esteem, due to which she leaves Kishan's house, soon is converted to self pity. Such moments of 'undecidability' frequently occur in Nila's life in Paris. She always remains in the 'liminal space' of trying to fit in and failing to do so.

Nila, Kishan, Sunil, Chaitali, Mojammel and others may add 'to' the population of France but they do not add up. They fail to become part and parcel of French culture. Even Morounis who believes herself to be a French citizen, may be ignored by the natives, for being an Indian by birth. The concept of supplementarity introduces a sense of secondariness. This situation is no different from that of the womenfolk in Indian household. When Nila sets up her new rented house, she remembers that Molina never had an opportunity to set her home. She was only supposed to execute





"Frieda and she had a long conversation about how cu-ute Shirley Temple was… I couldn't join them in their adoration because I hated Shirley...The other dolls, which were supposed to bring me great pleasure, succeeded in doing quite the opposite" (13). However, with the advent of maturity, the reality dawns upon her that the likes of Shirley Temple cannot really be loved or hated because it is merely an image—a figure without a personality, an empty symbol without an implication. Her realization of this futility of perusing the vague, white determined clichés of beauty enables Claudia to subjectively reject them, thereby subverting the racist hegemony that needlessly controlled their lives and subsequently explore a suitable definition to suit her black self. Thus she survives the ravages of the racist society, while on the contrary, Pecola, who remains ignorant to the reality behind the images of white aesthetics, frantically chases them and ends up losing her sanity.

Nevertheless, Pecola's fate stands apart from the tales of hope of resurrection as she is denied any cooperation and support from her mother as well as from the women of her community, who "cleaned" themselves on her and merely gossip about her fate. Being alone, neglected and socially rejected, Pecola fails to launch a fight against the oppressive white and male hegemony and restore to sanity. Thus she loses her balance and tumbles down into the illusive solace of "the bluest eyes". It is through this contrast, the narrator stresses upon the importance of the assertion of identity of the black women rather than their accepting the standards of white culture.

In an interview with Sandy Russel, Morrison confided her urgency to relate the tale of this triple suppression of her creed saying: "I remember my grandmother and my great-grandmother. I had to answer those women, had to know that whatever I did was easy in comparison to what they had to go through" (Russel 45). She sets forth to voice the struggles, hurdles and aspirations of the black women, who have remained out of the focus of not only the white version of the American history, but also ignored in the black re-interpretations. Morrison, in this novel explores the inner complexities of capitalist, racist and sexist American society and the difficulties it pose to those who constitute its non-creamy layers.

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believe that her country is filthy and the Western world is clean. Nila finds the streets of Calcutta unbearable once she reaches Paris. She feels that she has "landed somewhere outside the planet where there was no dirt, no hassles, nothing that piqued the eye, nothing uncontrolled, uncouth or ugly" (26). It is to this Nila that Sunil utters the following words of wisdom, "You'll understand in time that life is not an easy game, whether in Paris or in Calcutta" (Nasrin 177). Kishan's idea about India is also no different from that of Nila. When Nila insists him to wash his hands before eating food, he reminds her that Paris is not a dirty place like Calcutta, hence he need not wash his hands.

Paris is a dream, and Calcutta the reality, for Nila. From her dream she always awakens into her house in Calcutta. Paris stands for everything which Nila has so far aspired for. In her dream, Nila is seen climbing up on to a house on the top of a tree. To occupy the topmost space may be the biggest desire of the colonial subject because it makes one equal to her master. It is also mentioned that while Nila and Nikhil were children, she used to climb on the tree and sit on the topmost branch. By overpowering her brother who is a boy (who would be joining the patriarchal set up sooner or later), Nila has tried to display her resistance against superiority of any kind, right from childhood. If the same scene is shifted to the field of colonial rule the topmost space is occupied by the white master. Finally Nila manages to get a house for rent on the fourth floor and after entering the house she takes "a few deep breaths of freedom" (Nasrin 214). To reach that higher area implies freedom and security for Nila.

The conversations of Danielle and Nila throw light on the history of both India and France. They also provide opportunities for them to understand more about each other's nations. During one such conversation Danielle is shocked to hear that Bengalis admired Subhash Chandra Bose, a person who be-friended Hitler. Then Nila remembers that Gunter Grass also held a similar opinion about Bengalis. Nila and Danielle share a love-hate relationship. Nasrin very clearly states that Nila "was drawn to Danielle and also repelled by her. Danielle's words had logic and also lacked it. Nila swayed between liking and dislike" (Nasrin 119). It is because of the opinion differences between them that they part their ways later.

that Bhabha says that the performative finds a difference "between the people as 'image' and its signification as a differentiating sign of self, distinct from the Other or the outside" (212).

The main characters of *French Lover* exhibit a tendency to love and hate their homeland simultaneously. As Bhabha thinks, it is true that "the ambivalent identifications of love and hate occupy the same psychic space" (214). Kishan's dislike for India does not withhold him from giving his restaurants Indian names. After coming to Paris Nila begins to think that Calcutta is a 'filthy place'. On the other hand Nila could not help imagining Morounis dressed up in an Indian saree. Monique has a tendency to glorify Calcutta. But it should be noted that when she speaks about her past days in France her green eyes brighten. She could hear the cry of the French revolution; something which proves that her homeland still stays in her heart.

However, nation features differently in the consciousness of different characters. Danielle is not at all sensitive to the mention of her home country Canada where she has lived for six years. The only thing she would like to say is that it's a cold country and that she does not want to go back. She does not want to remember its name "because that brought on a snowy mountain of memories upon her, like an avalanche" (90). Later Nila also begins to share the same feelings for Calcutta. In her letter to Molina from Paris she writes thus, "Paris is a stunningly beautiful city. . . . it'd be a shame to die without seeing this place" (Nasrin 54). When she comes to Calcutta to see a dying Molina, she finds that Calcutta has changed a lot. Then her sister corrects her telling that it is not Calcutta but it is Nila who has changed. The same Calcutta which was dear to her once turns out to be a filthy place. After Molina's death, Nila has to wait for two more weeks to leave for Paris. She then feels that Calcutta is like a "burning ghat" (157).

Nila refuses to believe that there can be gambling and other illegal activities in Paris. She considers Paris as the epitome of all happiness. Nila breathes "in her fill of the clean air," and looks at Paris "in bloom with new eyes" when she arrives Paris after Molina's death (169). Nila is shocked to hear from Benoir that there is class system in Paris. She is unable to believe that French revolution could not get rid of it. She is conditioned to





## SALMAN RUSHDIE'S *THE SATANIC VERSES:* THE POLITICS OF RECEPTION

**Subhi Tresa Sebastian**

Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* has a unique place in the history of book censorship and reception. It is one of the very few books which still manage to draw the same level of attention, if not more, even after twenty-five years of its publication. The novel has been simultaneously hailed by the liberal audience and critiqued by the religious and the political crowd. Interestingly, India, Rushdie's own parent country was the first to pull the trigger of censorship. In October 1988, a few weeks after its publication in England, India issued a ban on its publication purporting it to be anti-Islamic. However the action was more of a political measure by the then Congress government in power- an attempt to preserve its Muslim vote bank. Nations like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, and South Africa quickly followed suit .But there the reasons were purely religious. Britain though at first was not a party to the bandwagon of censorship supporters had to eventually fall in and had to remove the copies of the books from the bookstores for a while .In spite of being written in English, the novel invited condemnation and a decree of fatwa on the author by the Iranian government and widespread reaction in the Arab nations. The Fatwa issued by Khomeini and the Iranian Government in February 1989 condemned the author of *The Satanic Verses* to death. Italy, Tokyo and Norway too witnessed similar resistance in the 1990s. The Italian translator of *The Satanic Verses*, Ettore Capriolo, was wounded in an attempted assassination in Milan in 1991; a week later, Hitoshi Igarishi, the Japanese translator, was stabbed to death in Tokyo. In 1993, William Nygaard, the book's Norwegian publisher, was shot and severely wounded outside of his Oslo home .The dawn of the new century too did not liberate the novel. Though the Iranian government repealed the fatwa in 1998, Iran's elite fighting force the Revolutionary

Guards re-ignited the controversy by renewing the call for Rushdie's death in February 2003. In India in 2012, the author was prevented from attending the Jaipur literary fest .And the literary enthusiasts were denied permission to read excerpts from the novel .In the West the novel again started to court trouble in the post 9/11 environment. Haunted by Islamophobia, any work that reflected anti-Muslim sentiment was blatantly connected to *The Satanic verses* and Rushdie. An amateur US movie *Innocence of Muslims* released in 2012 resulted in an unfounded uproar on the West and Rushdie. His publication of the memoir *Joseph Anton* in 2012 again brought the book back into the public glare.

Ever since this novel has been published the publishing world, the readers of literary works and even their reading processes have undergone a metamorphosis of sorts. Readers' literary tastes, their sensibilities and the very way they approach a piece of literature, have altered. As a work that has survived censorship and has witnessed the dusk of a century and the dawn of another, *The Satanic Verses* demonstrates how the changing milieu and socio-political equations have affected the reception of this work.

*The Satanic Verses* has a complex narrative structure. Its plot transcends time and space. Its expansive narrative pattern spans across England, India and Iran and shuttles between the present and early days of Islam. The multi-layered narration embraces a series of genres. The novel is primarily a magic realistic work with a highly blurred boundary between the realistic and the fantastic. Again it is a tragic –comic narrative ,narrating the lives of two survivors of a blown-up plane: Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta-the dual "angeldevilish"( *The Satanic Verses* 5) heroes. It can also be categorised as parody which places the theme of third world migration. Again, the text holds relevance in a post-modern counter-culture context as a subversive text on Islam's origin. Thus *The Satanic Verses* becomes a transnational cultural product and therefore one cannot easily define and classify its implied readers. According to Wolfgang Iser an Implied Reader is "a textual construct which aids the real reader to deal constructively with the inscribed text…a network of response-inviting structure which impel the reader to grasp the text" (*The Act of Reading* 34). Since this text does not fix specific parameters for the implied reader, the meaning making process and signification become elastic to its core





that then France will truly belong to the whites. Little do they realize that people keep floating from all parts of the world and that the borders of a nation can never be sealed completely. If each individual is heterogenous within herself then how much more heterogenous can be a nation!

Nation is always occupied by "a space that is *internally* marked by cultural difference and the heterogenous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities, and tense cultural locations" (Bhabha 212). In the novel South Asians like Nila, Kishan, Mojammel, Sunil, Chaitali and others occupy the liminal space. They occupy the margins of the French society. Their sufferings and their ambivalences form the major part of the novel. The novel also addresses issues regarding gender identities. The portrayal of the lesbian character Danielle throws light on the woes and anxieties of such people.

The performative and pedagogical aspects of people result in the situation of 'in-between' (Bhabha 19). On the peripheral level Nila practically tries to imitate everything Western. Yet her perceptions do not change easily. She cannot overcome the embarrassment when she sees couples kissing on the street. Her Indian upbringing comes in the way of certain matters like these. Nila easily takes on to modern outfits but she cannot erase Tagore's music from her mind. When she invites Catherine and Danielle to Kishan's house, she treats them with the traditional Bengali food. The readers find a Nila who takes pride in her Bengali upbringing. While dressing up for Nicole's party, Nila wears jeans and puts a bindi on her forehead. Clad in a modern outfit she does not hesitate to decorate her face in the Indian way.

After Molina's death Nila has to wait for two weeks to fly to Paris. She cannot bear the thought of delaying her journey even by a single minute. "Now she didn't feel Calcutta was her own" (Nasrin 157). When Monique constantly talks about Calcutta, Nila requests her to talk about France. There is another picture of Nila quite opposite to this when she asks her uncle to speak in Bengali, because he was using plenty of English words. When Nila comes to know that Catherine had been to India the first thing the former asks is whether Catherine likes Bengali food. Nila, throughout, tries to relate to her homeland by different means. It is all because of this

When the characters of *French Lover* are analysed, they may seem to signify a specific culture or nation, whereas in reality it is not so. On the first glance one may think that Nila represents India or specifically a particular region of India, Calcutta. Yet she does not fit in the image of a traditional Indian wife. In fact her knowledge of French history would help her easily pass off as a French woman. Sunil and Chaitali try to create an India of their own in their flat. Still they would prefer to go on a European tour instead of going to India. On the peripheral level Nila may appear to be quite modern yet she cannot consider Sunil as anybody other than a brother. An awareness of the history of their nations inhabits the consciousness of Nila, Benoir, and Morounis. Morounis very enthusiastically introduces the major landmarks of France to Nila. In turn Nila also introduces Tagore to her. Nila easily recreates the life history of Voltaire renaming him as Francois Marie Arouet. When she looks at Seine she sees the reflection of Joan d'Arc whereas others could see only the water. France's and India's historical memories lay intertwined in the consciousness of Nila. The thought of the French girl Joan d'Arc is immediately followed by another French woman who lived in Calcutta. Standing on the bridge Nila recollects the life of Catherine Grand, the daughter of a French official who also lived in Calcutta.

Unlike other characters Nila is keenly interested in the historical details of any nation, be it India, France or Rome. At Closerie des Lilas the names of great writers were written under the table cloth. They include Orwell, Hemingway, Baudelaire, Beckett and so on. Nila's joy knows no bounds when she realizes that she also has become a part of the history by dining there. People like Morounis pass themselves off as French citizens the moment they set their foot in France. They never hope to maintain their ties with the native land. Morounis feels that it was good that she could leave India otherwise she "would have died in that rubbish heap" (Nasrin 191). Still Nila would like to believe that Morounis felt a kinship with Nila; otherwise she would not have offered to take Nila on sight seeing.

Nation cannot wholly contain people who can be considered as its true natives. Benoir is introduced as a French man but his knowledge about French history is limited. The racist Lippens are engaged in futile efforts to drive away all the non-whites from France. They are under the false notion





and the entire process of reading and reception become multi-fold and complex.

*The Satanic Verses* was published at a period when its author Rushdie was at the helm of critical appreciation for his novel *Midnight's Children*. The latter's reception of the Booker Prize too placed him in the vortex of public glare. So when he announced his next novel there was already a lot of anticipation in the literary circles. The highbrow readers were waiting to read what the author has to deliver now. To use Stanley Fish's term, they formed the informed readers, "The reader whose education, opinions, concerns, linguistic competence and so on make him capable of having the experience the author wished to produce" ("Interpreting the Variorum" 297). These readers were mainly the critics who openly received *The Satanic Verses* and were able to deal interpretively with the cultural codes inscribed in the text. Most of them remained model readers. The system of cultural code inscribed in their consciousness directed them to read the text differently and helped them to classify the work as a historio-graphic metafiction, a post-colonial parody and as a novel on Indian diaspora and above all a magic realistic work of fiction.

*The Satanic Verses* was conceived at a period when the world was slowly getting attuned to globalisation and therefore it catered to a glocalised community. Thus Penguin, the publishers of the novel, aimed its publicity at a global community rather than at a local community or region. The reach of the novel's publicity was unmatched. The readers who confronted the novel were immense and diverse. And every reader came loaded with their typical cultural beliefs, values and practices. This largely concealed structure of values informed and underlined each reader's reading process. So even from the time of its publication *The Satanic Verses* experienced diverse reception as compared to its predecessors.

During the last two decades of the twentieth century topics like nation, nationhood, socio-cultural ideology and geographical location have played a prominent role in the reader's reception of literary works .In this context, due to a series of reasons, India and its ideological practices become an indispensable part of this study. The first reason for it is that the whole story of *The Satanic Verses* revolves around the socio-cultural background

of India and the two protagonists of the novel are Indians by birth. Secondly, India has earned the distinction of initiating the censorship of this novel and finally, the reason for banning the novel in India was more political rather than religious. In all other nations it was its religious content that triggered the ban.

India a multi- cultural, multi –ethnic community is renowned for its unity in diversity and for its secularist outlook on life. Of the many reasons for India remaining a true democratic secular community is its cautious approach to every religion and to its citizens' religious sentiments. The ban on *The Satanic Verses* can be partly attributed to this unique quality of 'Indianness' and the way people define this attribute. In a nation of more than a billion citizens, the nation hosts a highly diverse reading public, as multi-layered and as intricate as the novel's narrative structure. One can find among the Indian reading public the western liberals' counterpart as well as the most orthodox readers .The global citizens, the literally minded audience who are open to all narratives and the ideologically motivated literary readers- all find their space in this vast Indian reading community. When the novel was banned in India the explicit reason given (a move to prevent religious unrest) brought in many low brow readers who perhaps would not have otherwise shown any interest in this novel, into the reading community. The Fatwa issued by the Iranian Government on religious grounds too attracted many clerics and members of the religious community to the novel in India like in other parts of the world. The recent animated discussions surrounding the novel in India at the 2012 edition of the Jaipur Literary Festival also has political roots.

Rushdie's previous novel *Midnight's Children* too courted controversy in India. The depiction of Indira Gandhi and the emergency period drew flak from the political crowd. However in a similar strain Rushdie presents Margaret Thatcher's policy on the immigrants from former colonies in *The Satanic Verses*. Here in this text, Thatcher is referred to as "Maggie the Bitch" and her policy towards immigrants is strongly assailed, for instance where Saladin is arrested and maltreated by the immigration officers (*The Satanic Verses* 212). However, this reference did not land Rushdie in trouble in England. The reason could very well be the different perspectives in which the British and the Indians view politics. As a post-colonial nation





Bhabha 204). Nila's life in Paris does not bind her in any specific time or place. Past, present, and future torture her. Once she leaves Kishan's house she has a lot of space for herself. At her new house, for the first time Nila experiences the pleasure of deciding things on her own; one thing which Molina and many other Indian women could never get to do. Nila tries to create a space of her own, where she does not belong to, unfortunately. To make that space replete with Indianness, she fills the bookshelves with the books she had brought from Calcutta. Along with the Bengali books, she keeps *Ulysses*; a situation which clearly represents the mindset of Nila living in Paris. Though Nila comes back to Molina, in Calcutta, to her home, Nila finds that she does not belong there as well. But later she could possess that house by way of inheritance from her mother. Everywhere Nila has the physical space of her own, which she cannot own, paradoxically.

It is true that national narratives "represent the diametrically opposed world views of master and slave" (Bhabha 206). To begin with we see how Kishan's and Nila's views differ. Apart from being husband and wife, they also serve as colonizer-colonized and master-slave duo. Nila's principles oppose not just Kishan's ideology but that of every other male character in the novel. Sunil thinks that Nila holds feelings for him whereas Nila thinks that her brother's friend is just another brother for her. Even if Nila does not have any attraction towards Sunil, the latter thinks that it is his right to own a female body which he desires. Benoir and Nila hold a heated argument on how to maintain their relationship. Nila could not understand how Benoir could remain faithful to his wife and her simultaneously. That is why she proposes to back out from the relationship, an act which Benoir cannot understand. Nila strongly feels that one should know the history of one's nation whereas Benoir regards it only as a waste of time. When Nila tries to convince Benoir about the importance of knowing the history of France, he gets angry.

Nila can be considered as a displaced entity everywhere. She has been displaced from her paternal house in Calcutta, from Kishan's house in Paris, from Danielle's house, and finally and most importantly from the French culture. She thus emerges as a powerful, independent, and assertive woman in the whole process. One cannot deny the fact that all this happens in the process of 'ambivalent identification'.

stoops to the position of a submissive wife, when she cooks the food, arranges the home, and waits for Benoir the whole day. The only difference is that this time she does it happily, refusing to think about the patriarchal implications involved in it. In other words, Nila can easily pass off as the female counterpart of Naipaul's mimic man.

Nila's insecurities force her to weave a parallel life connecting her past (in Calcutta), her present (in Paris), and future (where she envisions a life with Benoir and a white baby). It would be important to note how Nila's character undergoes transformation as the novel develops. The girl who was obsessed with Bengali writers, slowly begins to build a liking for the Western writers. She is so happy to have visited the café where, she believes, Sartre and Beauvoir must have visited. Very excitedly she tells Sunil that Joyce published *Ulysses* from the bookstore opposite Notre-Dame. Examine the joy of Nila at the restaurant when she finds the names of writers written on the tablecloth. She thinks that "this is the place where Hemingway sat on the terrace and finished his *The Sun also Rises* in six weeks" (Nasrin 180). She desperately tries to connect with the French literature and history to fill in the void she currently experiences. That is the reason why she wishes to see the hovel where once the Bengali poet Madhusudan Dutta lived. She shows equal interest in narrating Dutta's story to Benoir.

At Nicole's party the readers find a poignant Nila, who remains perplexed throughout the party without knowing what is wrong and what is right. To begin with she does not even consider it right to be at the party on time; a habit which is taken for granted by all Indians. Secondly she wears jeans to the dinner party which also turns out to be a wrong dress code. It is a multicultural gathering where Maria hails from Sweden, Michelle from Southern France, Rita is a Jewish living in Paris, and Nila is an Indian who supposedly belongs to the third world. This party represents a cross-cultural experience for both the characters and the readers. It is a first world versus third world situation. Here Nila is provided with a set of strategies of identification, from which she must choose something.

Progress and modernity always result in ambivalence. It is a situation, as Althusser wrote: "Space without places, time without duration" (qtd. in





India is more sensitive to issues related to one's freedom and polity. And occasionally in India, we find politics being placed on par with religion whereas to the British the government is just a highly accountable institution. This fundamental difference itself demarcates the way the white liberals interpret the novel and the way the novel gets interpreted by Muslims in India, Iran, or in Britain.

The break of the twenty first century saw the evolving of social networking groups. This period has also witnessed the 9/11 terrorist attack and its repercussions. These events to an extent must have moulded and influenced the perspectives of the readers who have approached the novel in the first decade of the twenty first century .The dawn of the twenty first century brought in a huge change in the way people communicate. In 2004, the largest social networking site, *Facebook* was launched. Though globalisation had set in even at the time the novel was published, the rise of glocalised virtual communities was largely a product of social networking sites. These virtual communities though not fixed to any one ideological space or region wield power spatially .They slowly but effectively mould themselves into interpretive communities. These interpretive communities make their presence felt through reading groups and blogs created in the cyber world. Since the members of this virtual communities are not bound by any geographical boundaries or by their resultant ideologies they simultaneously inhabit a number of cultural spaces. The anonymity provided by the cyberspace allows them to offer unrestrained comments on their reading. They may at the same time be members of a series of interpretive communities just as the real community of readers. Though this virtual platform can enrich a competent reader's reading experience, the low brow readers may limit themselves to the reading of excerpts of the controversial passages or prefer to surf only the sites which cater to their already formed opinion on the novel. This can result in them replaying the flaws of the fundamentalists and the theologians who pressed for the banning of the novel.

The by- products of 9/11 –surveillance, the terror of irrelevance and Islamophobia have again brought the work back into the furnace of critical dissection. The novel at first created a furore in the Islamic world as a work blasphemous to Islamic tradition. In a post 9/11 world, however, the

work seems to gain added significance. Religion is now no longer considered merely a part of one's private conscience. This brings the author Rushdie back into the centre. He is an immigrant from India, educated in UK and now residing in US. Rushdie himself refers to his existence in *Joseph Anton* as a double unbelonging, "He was a Bombay boy who had made his life in London among the English, but often he felt cursed by a double unbelonging "(54). However he holds a unique position in the British cultural history and was knighted in 2007 by the British government. This makes him appear to the Muslim fundamentalists a part of the British cultural elite and as someone who has betrayed his religion .Eventually he is projected as an epitome of the western value system.

Ironically in the post 9/11 world which is characterised by a high dose of Islamophobia, the moment any work that has a supposedly anti-Islamic content gets published, the work automatically gets linked to Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*. The Islamic world has to a large extent equated Rushdie with the western gaze .The work has by now been inadvertently placed as the touchtone of blasphemy. Though such reception can help Rushdie and his novel gain more readers, it may not always be the model readers who will accept it as a literary work of art.

In the East too there has been a lot of change in the semantics of Islam, martyrdom and terrorism that have become a part of the prominent discourses. Therefore in this world the readers whether virtual or real, are flooded with an explosion of narratives and each reader will have to locate himself in this zone of violence. The readers do this by subscribing to various reading groups and to on-line discussions. Sadly, many of the discussions revolve around the so called blasphemous or controversial passages. This limits the readers' overall grasp of the novel and subsequently their responses.

Extreme militarization has resulted in many readers developing an urge to look into the world and its cultural products from a Mneippean framework. The revisionist pages where Prophet Mohammed and his mission of establishing the religion Islam are subverted are now being viewed by many communities of readers as a motif that heralds the terror of irrelevance –the fear that the West may wipe out the minority. On the





restaurant. Nila is sad to know that despite being a Bengali by birth, Morounis does not hold any feelings for anything Bengali. Nila is drawn towards Catherine only because the latter had been to India to study Baul music.

Nila is a migrant twice in that once she has been uprooted from her family in Calcutta post marriage, and then from Kishan's house in Paris. She feels like a guest in Kishan's house. She has been alienated from everything she cherished until then: her language, music, and books. She also had dreams of her own. Though Nila leaves Kishan's house according to her own will, she is now left to cope with her newfound freedom and in the new situation she has to form a new identity in a new world where there is no recognition neither for her nor for her language. Here the new nation should become the substitute for everything she has lost.

History of the nation persecutes the memories of every individual. In this context it may be important to understand how the metaphor 'home' features in colonial discourse. 'Home' features in the imagination of the migrants as a place to where no return is possible. They mourn the loss of the security and warmth provided by home. Terry Pratchett once said, "Why do you go away? So that you can come back. So that you can see the place you came from with new eyes and extra colours. And the people there see you differently, too" (Bapat). Contrary to what Pratchett says, Kishan and Sunil do not hold any special emotions for their homes back in India. For Nila, returning home may mean returning to the previous patriarchal set up where her father is the master.

In many cases the migrants prefer to set up new homes in the new land. Nila is also no different in this regard. She looks for a big house in Paris because she is used to living in a big house in Calcutta. Setting up a new home in Paris may imply an act of holding together the fragmented pieces of memory. Nila succeeds in crossing the physical borders of France, but she struggles hard to gain recognition within the 'imaginative borders' of the nation. 'Home' becomes a non-existent, indefinite place for the migrants. "The migrant seems in a better position than others to realise that all systems of knowledge, all views of the world, are never totalising, whole or pure, but incomplete, muddled and hybrid" (McLeod 215). The lack of security of being in a new place draws Nila closer to Benoir. She again

Nila takes great interest in narrating matters of historical and religious significance to others. See how gravely she tells Benoir how not eating beef became a custom in India. Nila's words illustrate how traditionally grounded she is despite the fact that she is attracted to Western culture.

Nila sympathetically listens to the stories about Rubel and Bachchu. In an attempt to fulfill their dreams both of them cross the borders of their nations to get to a foreign land and they have to pay for it; one by giving up his life and the other by giving up his legs. Nila could easily connect with the experiences of these young men because like them she had also cherished the dream of making it big in some foreign land. They are caught up in a tangled web of history. All of them are bound by bitter migrant experiences common to the people who share a colonial past. Nila has come to Paris to live her life; this is how she replies to the airport official when he asks the purpose of her visit. This reply points to the superstition of the Indians that in order to fulfil their dreams and live life to the fullest, they need to cross the borders of their nation.

The lonely expeditions of Nila in Paris take the readers through the history and culture of the place. They unknowingly become the expeditions of the readers as well. Nila narrates the history of Paris not only for the other characters but also for Nasrin's readers. Several instances can be noted in the novel where Nila overpowers the other characters with her knowledge of history. At Sunil's house when Kishan questions Nila for taking up a job without his permission, she tells Sunil about a bookshop she had been to, that morning. 'Shakespeare & Co' is the shop and Nila assumes that Joyce wrote *Ulysses* from there. An egotistic Kishan is not familiar with Joyce and he intentionally avoids Nila and asks Sunil about Joyce.

Nila expounds her first expedition to Kishan. It is an attempt to gain access to those areas that are forbidden to the colonial figure. Along with Nila, the readers also get the pleasure of seeing places and they also get acquainted with the landmarks of Paris. Nila's meetings with the other Bengalis are marked by her conversations on Tagore, Bengali food and so on. But later on Nila slowly loses this passion for Calcutta. Still she is able to retain her love for Bengali language and Bengali food. This love emerges out of her when she meets the Calcutta born French girl Morounis at the





religious front, *The Satanic Verses's* tainted background, as a book that has wounded the religious sentiments of a minority group can never exhaust its power to surprise. This forces the novel to remain perpetually in the limelight, though mostly for the wrong reasons. In a glocalised world the texts quickly get transmitted across borders and in this transfer, as Cohen and Roeh (1992) point out, "… [they] cannot escape some form of transformation" (23). Particularly in the domain of religion, global communication brings in varied cultural and traditional views. The virtual space acts as a melting pot for all sorts of opinions. This results in the text undergoing diverse interpretations. In the case of *The Satanic Verses*, the way the fundamentalists approached the novel at first was influenced by the notion that Koran is the word of God and therefore cannot be open to any sort of interpretation or external additions. The boundaries between the worldly and the spiritual cannot be trespassed and any medium that tries to break this barrier is anathema for them. Accordingly, *The Satanic Verses* was more than a literary or aesthetic work, a blasphemous piece and therefore anti –Islamic and heretic. To the liberal western audience the novel was first a piece of literature and its censorship amounted to a restriction on free speech and personal freedom. The dominant Christian background of the western audience too contributed to their positive reaction to the work. Many of the readers of this reading community are open to various readings of the Bible .Theirs is a religion that is lenient towards translations and varied readings of their religious text-the Bible. This ideological framework must have contributed to their inability to fully grasp the meaning of Koran as being the direct and inviolable word of God.

In a global world the readers read the novel in a multi-cultural environment. In such circumstances, the readers cannot be neatly classified into interpretative communities or implied or the ideal reader. The readers in this context are engaged in what Mary Louise Pratt (1992) has called a contact zone or domain of encounter between the cultures. In such a zone the readers experience literary texts in increasingly complex ways. At the time of its publication it was the censorship and the fatwa that kept the novel alive in the media, but now it is the virtual media and the social networking that keep the novel alive.

The censorship on the book has turned out to have a boomerang effect with the novel gaining its entry in every virtual site which proclaims the freedom of speech. But unlike the physical medium of censorship where organizations and governments get involved, the virtual world is one that can balance itself. Almost all the comments and statements made here have only a spatial, virtual existence .It is a medium that allows people to freely express their minds. Therefore, though the novel will always remain alive in the virtual sphere, the cyber media and its self-regulatory mechanism will act as corrective forces and thereby balance the spread of ideas.

Human perceptions are conditioned by the changing value systems .Literature a medium constituted of value judgements too vary accordingly. All literary works though unconsciously, are rewritten by the community that reads them. So every reading is a kind of re-writing. No literary work and no response to it can be extended to a new group of readers without being altered.

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which would link the French memory with Gandhi. Deep in his subconscious mind Kishan believes that Indian symbols would bring him prosperity. There is a reference to the bookshelf at Sunil and Chaitali's flat where they have kept world literature along with Bengali literature. Later Nila also does the same when she rents a house. Chaitali has installed the idols of Indian goddesses Lakshmi, Saraswathi and Durga. She and Sunil conduct puja every year without fail. These acts point to the psychological need of these characters to preserve and showcase the culture of their nation. Bhabha ascertains that through his essay he wants to discuss this "particular ambivalence that haunts the idea of the nation, the language of those who write of it and the lives of those who live it" (Bhabha 4).

In Nasrin's novel it is very difficult to place any character within the particular borderlines of a nation. The non-Indians initially consider Nila as an embodiment of true Indian culture and manners. But later on when they see what kind of a life she leads in Paris, they have to deconstruct their view of Indian women. Danielle and other friends share the common notion that Indians are poor. But when Danielle visits Nila's house in Calcutta, she realizes that how rich Nila is. From then onwards Danielle holds an image of a spendthrift Nila as opposed to the image of a poor Indian girl. When Nila cannot understand why Danielle went to a psychiatrist, she tells Nila that food and clothes are not everything.

People usually occupy a double space in the narrative of a nation. They are part of the history, heritage, tradition, and culture of a nation. A keen sense of history binds together the Indian characters Nila, Mojammel, Jewel and so on. They take pride in telling others that they hail from the land of Tagore. When Nila learns that Morounis is from Calcutta the next thing Nila expects from her is to speak Bengali. Nila asks Morounis whether she knows Tagore because she thinks that if Morounis is an Indian they could connect with each other through the music of Tagore. However Nila manages to instill in her the inferiority feeling that her parents must have abandoned Morounis since she was dark. When Nila finds that Morounis is least interested in India and Bengali language she tries to connect with her by inducing the feeling of hatred towards one's own skin which is common to all Indians. She hopes that at least by doing so they can experience the feeling of oneness.

## NATION AND HISTORY IN TASLIMA NASRIN'S *FRENCH LOVER*

**Sandhya Suresh V.**

"Nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye" (Bhabha 1). 'Nation' plays a key role in Taslima Nasrin's novel *French Lover*. The story takes place across two nations; India and France. To be more specific it is between Calcutta and Paris. The novel documents the lives of Indians like Nila, Kishan, Sunil, Chaitali and others in a foreign land.

Being a proud Bengali, Nila's eyes constantly search for signs of her culture: Bengali people, Bengali music, Bengali books and so on. At Kishan's restaurant Nila is extremely happy to meet the Bengali speaking Mojammel. He may be a citizen of Bangladesh; a region which used to be a part of India, yet both of them connect very well with each other. Both of them share a painful history of partition, but their roots are the same. They find a long-lost sister in Nila. Nila's life in Paris represents the gathering of "the past in a ritual of revival" (Bhabha 199). She ceaselessly tries to gather her memories of the care-free life she spent in Calcutta. Throughout her days in Paris, Nila is forced to recollect her mother Molina's suffering at Anirban's hands. The past defines Nila as a Bengali woman who passionately loves Tagore and Bengali literature. The streets of Paris bring to her mind the busy Calcutta packed with the noise of push-carts, beggars, bickering dogs, hawkers and so on. It may be true that she came to Paris to forget Calcutta but ironically Paris brings her closer to Calcutta.

Kishan's restaurants are named Taj Mahal and Lal Killa, even though he is not proud of being an Indian. He wants to change the names of these restaurants since they are not doing well. Surprisingly he needs a name





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## RUSKIN BOND'S *A FLIGHT OF PIGEONS:* IMAGES OF HATE AND LOVE IN COLONIAL INDIA

**Dr. Sarani Ghosal Mondal**

Ruskin Bond's *A Flight Pigeons* is an intense love story between a married Rohilla Pathan of UP and a British teenager. The married Pathan Javed Khan, whose love for Ruth grows deep, when his country is burning with Anti-British sentiment. The Sepoy Mutiny of Meerut (1857) is at its peak. The Sepoys along with the local Pathans of Shahjahanpur are killing the officials of East India Company and also looting their bungalows at different places of UP. Amidst such environment of hatred against the white-skinned *firangis,* Ruth and her mother are forced to take shelter at Javed Khan's residence and this complicates the plot of the novella. The symbol of pigeon has a wide range of meanings: it is both a private as well as a universal symbol in this context. The symbol of pigeon leaves on us an overreaching effect in the novella as well as in the film based on this novella called *Junoon* by ShyamBenegal in 1978.

In my present paper, I would like to show how an image of hatred culminates into love in an environment of acute socio-political unrest. The protagonist JavedKhan hates the colonizers from the core of his heart but he nourishes a strong desire for Ruth as well and he badly tries to justify his stance to his wife called Khan Begum and the other people of his community. Towards the close, we see a transformed image of Javed, who is above carnality and passion. His love for Ruth is very refined and asexual. He just wants have a glance of Ruth's face.

Ruskin Bond's *A Flight of Pigeons* is a novella set in 1857 India against the background of Sepoy Mutiny in Meerut. The Sepoy Mutiny is considered to be the second outbreak of India's Independence Movement against the British rule after the Barrackpore revolt by MangalPande on 29 March 1857.





In another sense, he gives voice to the voiceless as a spokesman of the marginalized.

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> And the themes of *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* deserve to touch the whole of society and to be touched by it. It is not simply the first play in Indian theatre to handle openly gay themes of love, partnership, trust and betrayal. It is a play about how society creates patterns of behavior and how easy it is for individuals to fall victim to the expectations society creates. (*Collected Plays* xxxxv)

Since love is a thing which lies deep in human mind than body, every person has his own attitudes and way of expression to it. That is why the socially constructed roles are often broken by the people who find their own ways of gratifying their sexual desires. This is what we see in the case of Dattani's characters that go on their own ways to satisfy their wishes.

Dattani's characters are mostly from modern urban families struggling for freedom and happiness under the weight of tradition, cultural constructions of gender and repressed wishes. He is not only making the people aware of the issues they swept under the pillow and that simmer dangerously below the surface of our consciousness, but he also makes his audience disturbed through his plays and exhorts them to take actions. He finds theatre as the best medium to persuade the people to find solutions for the problems they face. What distinguishes Dattani from other playwrights is his courage of conviction in depicting the innovative themes like portrayal of sex preferences by men and women which are still considered to be a taboo by the majority of Indian society. Through this play, Dattani exposes the underbelly of modern urban India and shakes human consciousness. He wants laws to be made to solve the problems of the sexual minorities. He questions the age old belief of marriage being based on heterosexual relationship. Dattani believes that since in real life there are left handers which are as natural as right handers; homosexual relationship is as natural as heterosexual relationship. He exhorts his audience to accept the reality of life.

Here, when all the characters in the play fail to resist the marginalization and all kinds of social injustices meted out to them in the society, the playwright, Mahesh Dattani raises his voice for them as he uses the theatre as a medium for protest against these kinds of malpractices.





East India Company had come to India for trade in the 1660s. With time, the company started exerting its power in the form of diplomatic and military operations. The company officials recruited a large number of native people as soldiers/ sepoysto guard their trade centers in India. Initially the sepoys were very loyal to the British officials. The tension began, when the company officials had tried to convert the natives into Christianity. Along with that, the company had also introduced the "doctrine of lapse", by which the company would take control of a state, where the ruler had died without an heir. This tricky doctrine appeared to be quite offensive to the sepoys. In addition to it, there was that cartridge problem known to all. (Internet)

Bond's novella starts with a prologue by the author, who gives us an introduction of the contemporary socio-political scenario ofShahjahanpur, which is about 250 miles away from the east of Delhi with an image of hate as the bungalow of Redmans hasalready been set on fire by a local Pathan called Javed Khan on 30 May 1857. The Pathans of the place call themselves as Rohilla Pathans. They speak Urdu and they are mostly from Bareilly and Shahjahanpur of UP. But this incident of barbarity does not send any alarm to the British community of the place as there is hardlyany circulation of newspapers. But the Labadoor family apprehends an impending danger.

At this point the author stands aside and Ruth Labadoor, the British teenager, takes up the remaining part of the narration and we witness the imageof loveshimmering against the backdrop of Sepoy Mutiny through her narratology. This image of human love culminates into the image of mystic love towards the close of the novella.But the image of love is always contrasted with the image of hate. In fact, love and hate go hand in hand throughout the narrative. Ruth loses her father in a massacre in the church. The Indian freedom fighters kill the British administrators mercilessly at their Sunday Worship. After that their bungalow is also burnt down. She then along with her mother and grandmother and some other members, takes refuge at LalaRamjimal's house.

It is now a new phase in their life. LalaRamjimal used to depend on Labadoors as he had supplied with *dolies* and carriages to English women.

At this point, the hierarchy breaks down with the starting of Sepoy Mutiny in 1857. And it becomes just the opposite. The subordinate takes the superior position. The author deliberately breaks the dichotomy between the "ruler" and the "ruled; the *firangis* and the natives. Ruth and the other female members are now at the mercy of LalaRamjimal.At the same time, they are exposed to the customs of the middle class Indian and especially Hindu household and they are also compelled to eat by hand. It is a life without luxury. But they are protected under Lala's custody. It is Lala's sense of duty towards his one time benefactor.

On the contrary, it makes Lala's position quite insecure in the society. "…that I am suspected of harbouring *Kafirs*" (Ruskin Bond 835). He is torn between his indebtedness to Labadoors and his sense of patriotism. By that time Mariam, Ruth, granny and the other three members of their community change their British names and adopt Persian names as Mariam's mother descended from a Muslim family of Rampur. Gradually they start indianizing themselves, "We soon fell into the habits of Lala's household, and it would have been very difficult for anyone, who had known us before, to recognize us as the Labadoors"(Ruskin Bond 839). The sharp distinctions between the two communities are no more visible outwardly. There may be subtle differences in their perspectives and psychological orientation. But they do not expose it in their attitudes. Inside the household, everything seems to be very hunky dory, but the others keep referring to them as "*Firangis*" again and again. The expression itself creates a sharp dichotomy between the colonizer and the colonized.

After some days, they are forced to move to Javed Khan's house from Lala's house as by that time it has become a public knowledge that the family members of Labadoors have taken shelter at LalaRamjimal's house. The native Pathans of the place attack Lala's residence with swords and pistols. They ask for Ruth. In spite of Mrs. Labadoor's anguish andresistance, the Pathanstake away the mother and the daughter in Javed Khan's house. A new phase begins in their lives: from a Hindu lifestyleto Muslim customs and culture. The metaphor of hatred is now allied with the metaphors of awe, pity and wonder, "These are the *Firangans* who were hiding with the Lala! How miserable they look. But one is young—she has fine eyes..." (846). On their way to Javed Khan's house, the group meets





"What Makes a Man a Man?
So many times we have to pay
For having fun and being gay." (*Collected Plays* 55-56)

Through Kamlesh and Ed, Dattani has portrayed the predicaments of gay people very clearly. They have to suppress their feelings and emotions to survive in the patriarchal heterosexual society. They yearn for recognition and acceptance. They want equal rights and justice as enjoyed by the heterosexual people. Since Dattani chooses to deal with themes relating to the complex workings of the modern urban Indian family, his protagonists search for their identities within this location.

Behind these homosexual people's desire to seek same sex love, there lies an agony of finding an identity of their own. Living in darkness, away from the purview of an open society, these characters are torn between desire and recognition. They fail to fulfil their desire as it is crushed under the norms of the society and lose their identity as individuals. All the characters in this play are represented in a way as to bring out the conflicts, repressions and past secrets which are assailing them. Throughout the play Dattani examines the psychology of persons who are by nature 'gays' or 'bisexuals' and the desire on the part of some of them to turn heterosexual. The various shades of gay life are presented in the play- the overt, the escapist, the comfortable and the complete hypocrites. Of the characters, Sharad is flaunting, Deepali more restrained and stable, Kamlesh is anguished and Ed the most obvious victim of his own insecurities. Bunny, the TV actor, is a rather more traditional Indian gay man who is married but publicly denying his own nature. Ranjit has taken an easy way out by moving to Europe where he can be himself. Dattani has recreated the characters in their own life situations. Through the play Dattani has hinted at the need for the provisions to be made for same sex marriage in the Indian context. He underlines that same sex love is as natural as heterosexual life.

The play lifts the veil of secrecy that shrouds the marginalized cultures, sexualities and lifestyles. In a sense, it is a plea for empathy and sensitivity to India's 'queer culture'. John McRae, the famous theatre personality, in the introduction to the play, says:

that the gay people really want the heterosexual society to realize their feelings and how they love and match each other. By kissing and caressing, both of them were saving each other from a desperate mood. Ed tells Kamlesh that he was thinking about committing suicide and how Kamlesh has saved his life by giving a suitable company. But towards the end of the play, the naked photo of Kamlesh and Ed/Prakash which Kamlesh was keeping secretly was once shown to Ed by Kamlesh himself. But Ed called it filthy and wanted to tear it up. He also told Kamlesh bluntly that he wants to be heterosexual. Prakash is ashamed of being a gay and wants to leave the place with Kiran.

As an idea for obtaining an identity, Bunny suggests, "Camouflage! Even animals do it. Blend with the surroundings. They can't find you…"(20). This is the typical Indian manner of constructing an identity. The other to be 'be yourself' would quite simply be to run away, or as Sharad would put it, turn into a 'coconut' like Ranjit, who boasts of having a steady relationship with a man abroad where his sexual identity ceases to be a problem. Bunny also advises Kamlesh to get married and to be straight as he is. When Sharad questions it, he says that there is nothing wrong in being a straight or bisexual. He adds that if he had confessed his gayness, he would not have been accepted by millions of TV audience. Bunny criticizes Ranjit's leaving India. Bunny says that Ranjit leaves India because he is ashamed of being an Indian and he can never run away from being brown. Ranjit admits at it that he is sometimes regretful of being an Indian. But Deepali says that in the case of people like her, it is not shame, but fear of the concerns they will be pushed into where they don't want to be.

Some of the characters are bisexuals and some try to be heterosexual. Sharad and Prakash want to be heterosexual when they realize the power of sex in the context of a heterosexual Indian society and how difficult it is to remain gay in India. Bunny is already bisexual and has wife and children.

The song of the gays which Sharad sings itself shows the plight of gay people living in a society which approves only of heterosexual relationships. Sharad hums:





a *Pir* or a Sage, who cautions Javed not to inflict any harm on British women (847). The sage is like a choric character in this novella. In Javed's house, the situation becomes complicated because of the presence of Javed's wife known as Khan Begum among the members of the household. She is not ready to accept a teenager girl for whom her husband falls for. Whereas Javed explains his stance before everybody, "How can I make you understand the fascination this girl exerted over me when she was in her father's house! The very first time I saw her, I was struck by her beauty. She shone like Zohra, the morning star" (849). This is how he praises Ruth without thinking of the effect it might create on his wife. Ruth and Khan Begum are placed on the same pedestal and both of them nourish acute hatred for Javed whereas Javed is full of love for Ruth. On the contrary he hates his wife. And he threatens his wife that if she goes against her husband, the demon within him will act on it. "The demon is only slumbering in my breast, and it will take little to rouse it" (489). Here, Ruth's expression of her innermost feeling is somewhat opaque, "I was like a doomed bird, fascinated by the gaze of a rattle snake" (489). It is as if she is hypnotized by the sudden outburst of Javed's contradictory emotions of love and hate. Ruth's mother also nurtures a strong sense of hatred towards Javed because of what she thought to be his crude passion for Ruth. Surprisingly Javed too possesses a strong sense of insight and expresses Mrs. Labadoor's hatred very aptly:

> Like an enraged tigress, whose side has been pierced by a barbed arrow, she hurled herself at me and presented her breast to my sword. I shall never forget the look she gave me as she thrust me away from the girl! I was awed. (850)

We see that Javed is being hated by all the members around him and his bold gesture of sheltering the British women in that socio-political condition puts him into disgrace in the eyes of his community as well.Javed does not care for the society. His passion for Ruth is so strong that he cannot think of anything other than Ruth, "We Pathans can take a wife from any race or creed we please" (851). Along with this statement, he makes it very clear that it is not at all a sudden infatuation on his part. Ruth is there in his mind for long. Time and again Javed tries to justify his decision to the

natives but the contemporary society of India, which is fervently anti-British, cannot accept Javed's claim of having a *firangi* second wife.

Gradually, Ruth and her mother start redefining themselves into Muslim customs in Javed's house, "Christian God was our God, and we allowed it to be believed that we were Muslims" (855). Now we see another phase of transition in Ruth and Mariam at Javed's household- from Hindu customs to Muslim customs.They are expected to learn *Kalma* and other rituals as well. The situation is extremely ambivalent for the two white women. The colonizers are at the mercy of the colonized. Also, the colonized British women are compelled to change their socio-cultural as well as psychological perspectives as per contemporary Hindu-Muslim customs. In spite of being white-skinned women, Ruth and Marium are doubly colonized because of their vulnerability. They change their dress code and start wearing *Kurta-Pajama* with *dupatta*. Even if they are fully dominated by the native culture and customs, but people keep referring to them as *Firangi* in spite of adopting Muslim names. Ruth is now Khurshid. Actually, the skincolour creates a sharp distinction between the white women and the natives.

With time, we see that this image of hatred merges into the image of love. The members of Javed's household including Javed's wife become friendly with Ruth and her mother. But at the same time, they are afraid of the fact that the foreignerscan come back to power at any timeand the situation will change again.Ruth's mother also tries to pacify Javed's aggression by saying that if the Company comes back to power in future then it would impossible for Ruth to be Javed's second wife. Meanwhile, the sage comes into the scene again and cautions the members of Javed's household that the *firangis*, "…. come flying like white pigeons which, when disturbed, fly away, and circle, and come down to rest again. White pigeons from the hills" (871). The symbol of the pigeon recurs again in another situation when Javed says:

> I saw a black buck and I fired at it, but I missed, and instead, I hit a white pigeon sitting on a tomb. The pigeon flew into a bush and I could not find it but it must have been killed. (875)





There is always the fear of the patriarchal heterosexual outside world which oppressively intrudes through various devices like the marriage next door, the children following Bunny, the TV star, the discovery of the concealed naked photograph of Kamlesh and Ed by the children and the others. When Deepali says, "There is such a traffic jam down there. Looks like someone is getting married", Kamlesh replies, "The Kapoors in the house next door. Their son. They are using our compound for some reason". Then Deepali expresses her disgust saying: "Intrusive. Very intrusive"(114). The intrusion of the outer world is something very dreadful to them. In Act III, Ranjit complains about the air conditioner for it was not working properly. He says, "It's not working. The air conditioning….. Those wedding people must have tampered with the junction box to get more power for their lights! Those bastards!" (*Collected Plays* 115) The homosexuals are afraid of the patriarchal heterosexual society as they are marginalized and ill-treated by them.

The love and betrayal between the homosexuals are more bitter experiences than that of heterosexuals because such experiences are rare compared to that of the heterosexuals, especially in a country like India. The whole society looks down upon them and treats them as strange beings. Most of the homosexuals leave even their family to be with their lovers. So, when they are cheated, they can't return to their family out of humiliation. This is what happened in the case of Kamlesh. That is why he was so depressed that he tried to forget Prakash by trying to be in love with Sharad.

These same sex lovers are struggling hard to get recognition in the society. But it is too difficult for them to achieve this because a major part of the society still considers it as an aberration. When Kamlesh consults a psychiatrist for his depression, he said that Kamlesh would never be happy as a gay man. It is impossible to change society; it may be possible for him to reorient himself. Even the psychiatrist couldn't cope with the loneliness and fear of Kamlesh and thus help him to get rid of his depression.

In Act II, Ed and Kamlesh meet in a park and as the conversation between them goes on, Kamlesh tells Ed that the people cannot see them at all, though they can see them in return. He adds, "If only they could see how beautiful we are together" (*Collected Plays* 81). Here it is quite clear

As the party is going on, Sharad takes a naked photo of Kamlesh and Ed from his pocket and reveals Kamlesh's pretension that he was trying hard to forget Ed. Kamlesh is ashamed and afraid of whether anyone else will see the photograph. By the advice of Sharad, he opens the window to throw the photograph after tearing it into pieces. They are going to have a ritual to break the relation between Kamlesh and Prakash. Sharad utters the mantra, "As my friends, this city and God are witness to my vow; I break all ties with Prakash" (*Collected Plays* 73).

Kamlesh agrees to do on the condition that after the ritual is over none of his friends will acknowledge his relationship with Prakash. All the friends agree with it and Sharad prompts him to go on with the ritual. But though Kamlesh utters the oath, it is not audible as the music is too loud. He looks at the photograph again and again. He wants to tear it up but he can't. Suddenly the whole situation is disturbed by the appearance of Kiran, Kamlesh's sister on the scene. Kamlesh introduces everyone to her.

It is revealed that Kiran is set to marry Prakash/Ed, Kamlesh's former lover. But she does not know the secret homosexual relationship between Kamlesh and Prakash/Ed. The already complex situation becomes even more confusing as the characters are pitted against exceedingly problematic issues. Kamlesh is unable to reveal the truth to Kiran and end her happiness. But later Sharad shows the naked photo of Kamlesh and Ed/Prakash to Kiran and reveals the truth. Kiran is puzzled to realize the same sex love between Kamlesh and Ed. Here Kamlesh seems to speak for the dramatist, Mahesh Dattani, when he asks, "If two men want to love one another, what's the harm?" (*Collected Plays* 91) Ed reinforces it when he says, "Don't be so afraid of what people think of you". Finally Sharad, speaking for himself, in a way, sums up the feelings of all the characters in the following words, "I ask myself what I have got, and what I am and what I'm not" (*Collected Plays* 111). The play ends with everyone goes on their own way. At last Kamlesh and Kiran are seen holding and consoling each other. Often the homosexuals find it difficult to resist the oppression and marginalization from the patriarchal Indian society which is steeped in superstition, the age old social norms and religious restrictions. In such a situation, Dattani's courageous and honest treatment of the issue is really becoming a strong resistance against the ghettoisation of homosexuals.





In reply to it, the sage says, "Pigeons are people who come out of their graves…" (875). These words of caution related to "pigeons" remind us of the reign of Bahadur Shah Zafar in Delhi. After the victory of Sepoy Mutiny, it was believed that the country was free from the clutch of the East India Company. But it did not last for long. In the same year in September, the British army reached the Red Fort and arrested the emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar and the next day William Hodson shot his sons and the grandsons as well. The company exerted its rule once again on the country. Indeed, the British officials came back in a more organized way to establish its power. This news of British victory relieves Ruth and Mariam that they will be more caged as "white pigeons". "Delhi is in *Firangi*hands again". (882) By this time Javed also realizes that his love for Ruth will remain unrequited. It will never culminate into marriage. He tells Mariam:

> I know that the time has passed when I could speak of marrying your daughter …it is too late now to do anything about that. But will you permit me to see her once more, before I leave? (891)

Here we see Javed is pining for a glance of Ruth. His love for Ruth has grown deeper and his temper and violent passion have also calmed down by then. Ruth then narrates the scene afterwards:

> He gazed at me in silence for about a minute, and for the first time I did not take my eyes away from his; then, without a smile or a word, he turned away and mounted his horse and rode away into the night. (891)

Javed is now a new being, who has left behind his bygone self. One glance of his lady love is enough for him now. The novella ends with Ruth's words:

> Looking back on those months when we were prisoners, I cannot help feeling a sneaking admiration for him. He was very wild and muddle headed, and often cruel…and there was in him a streak of nobility which he did his best to conceal….(896)

Indeed, Javed khan possesses a streak of nobility as he keeps his word till the end. He does not inflict any harm on Ruth and Mariam as promised to *Pir* or the Sage, "He is an admixture of love and unbridled temper, veiled

nobility that makes him a hero in the eyes of Ruth. The scared girl cannot help admiring this ruffian…"(Amita Aggarwal 103). Ruth's hatred turns into love at the end. The hatred can be won over by love even when the environment is not conducive to allow any kind of liaison between a Muslim Indian man and a British woman in colonial India.

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curriculum of a great many colleges and universities. In a country like India, However these progresses are very gradual but, however, are getting rooted nowadays.

*On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* is one of Dattani's best loved and most performed plays, both at home and abroad. It is a celebration of gay life. It is a tragicomedy dealing with homosexuals. It presents the concept of gay culture prevalent in big cities. In this play, Mahesh Dattani clearly depicts the predicaments of homosexuals in the highly conventional and hypocritical Indian milieu.

This article analyses how Dattani gives voice to the voiceless by rendering the invisible issue of ghettoization of homosexuals visible. The article is also intended to make the public realize the fact that the homosexual people should be allowed to marry each other and they have to get the same rights and justice equal to that of heterosexuals. The gay people's attitude to their life and gayness differ from person to person. In this play, some are fully comfortable with their situations while some are on the verge of suicide. Some undergo great mental trauma because of their love and betrayal from those who belong to the same sex.

Kamlesh, the protagonist of the play, invites his friends to his flat to confess in front of them the wrong deed he did to Sharad, his sexual partner. His friends include Sharad, a designer, Ed/Prakash, Kamlesh's ex-special friend, Ranjit, one who settled in UK in order to escape the patriarchal oppression of homosexuals in India and to be himself, Bunny, a serial actor and a bi-sexual, he is married and has children, and Deepali, a lesbian who lives with her life partner Tina. Some arguments and counter arguments are going on among them as some of them are cheated by others among themselves. Sharad shouts at Kamlesh for humiliating him saying that Kamlesh couldn't love him even after using him as a sex object for a year. And he blames Kamlesh saying that Kamlesh pretended to love him simply because he wanted to get rid of the depression he was undergoing after Ed/Prakash, Kamlesh's former special friend, left him. Sharad also finds out that Kamlesh uses the guard also for his physical needs. It again causes dispute between them. But Deepali intervenes and manages the situation.

assigned privilege, power and centrality while the second is derogated, subordinated and marginalized. There is another theoretical procedure to undo the "essentialist" assumption that the heterosexual and homosexual are universal and trans-historical types of human subjects, or identities, by historicizing these categories – that is, by proposing that they are social and discursive constructs that emerged under special ideological conditions in particular culture at a particular time. Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality* claims that while there had been a social category of sodomy as a transgressive human act, the "homosexual", as a special type of human subject or identity, was a construction of the medical and legal discourse of the latter part of the nineteenth century (43).

Adrienne Rich, in her essay, "Compulsive Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," explained what she called the "lesbian continuum" as a way of stressing how far ranging and diverse is the spectrum of love and bonding among women, including female friendship, the family relationship between mother and daughter, and women's partnerships and social groups, as well as overly physical same-sex relations (32). Later theorists like Eve Sedgwick and Judith Butler undertook to invert the standard hierarchical opposition by which homosexuality is marginalized and made unnatural by stressing the extent to which the normativity of heterosexuality is based on the suppression and denial of same-sex desires and relationships.

Judith Butter, the author of *Bodies that Matter* questions fixed identities like heterosexuals, homosexuals and lesbians. All our identities come from differentiations from other identities (225-226). Paradoxically, identities are repetitions based on performances. It is in this sense that heterosexuality which takes itself as the only authentic form of sexuality is a 'string of performances'. Heterosexuality sees itself as the authentic form of sexuality by relegating lesbianism and homosexuality to the background and discarding them as inauthentic. If heterosexuality is the centre, the other sexualities are the margins. Queer theorists now say that like gender, sexuality is a social construct. One can be either a heterosexual or homosexual and even both at the same time. Nowadays there are a number of journals that deal with queer theory and lesbian, gay and trans-gender studies and criticism. The field has also become the subject of learned conferences. The branch of study has also been established in the





## CULTURAL-SOCIAL SABOTAGE AND INCEST IN MORRISON'S *BLUEST EYE* AND ROY'S *THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS*

**Dr. Abhilasha**

Incest, a tabooed word and deed in all social and cultural contexts, earns nothing but social derision and humiliation. Yet it takes place and its delineation demands total honesty from the part of the author, for, it becomes imperative not only to share the taboo but also the context which leads to it. This paper is an attempt to trace the social and cultural pressure that can lead to incest with its healing, humiliating or hurting effects and for that purpose I have chosen two texts by two award winning women novelists from two different world cultures. The first text is *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison, the first African-American woman to receive the highest literary award for literature, the Nobel Prize in 1993; the second text is *God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy who won Booker Prize for her debut fiction.

Recent developments in feminist theory confirm beyond doubt that consciousness is grounded in one's personal history and that one's identity is constantly being reconstructed within the horizon of meaning and knowledge available in one's culture at given historical moments. Consciousness therefore is never fixed, never attained once for all, because discursive boundaries change with social historical conditions.

African American women's incessant search to find the place they needed, and, as black women, were not allowed to have in North American society, finds portrayal in Morrison's fictions that are ironically based on reality. Morrison has not only reflected the pangs of denial but also has showcased in her novels as well as in her critical writings, the inalienable suffering that goes with it.

In *The Bluest Eye* (1970), Morrison demonstrates what it means to find inaccessible the possessions and attributes that one's culture values. It reveals the representative nature of Pocola's story: self-loathing caused by cultural sabotage which ultimately leads to some form of destruction. The structure of the novel delineates the complex sources and effects of social and cultural sabotage. The form is therefore a figure for the cultural condition the novel addresses. The narrator in the novel states that "A little black girl yearns for the blue eyes of a little white girl, and the horror at the heart of her yearning is exceeded only by the evil of fulfillment" (162). This line is a pointer to the conflict the tension and the trauma that follow an unfamiliar desire. The little black girl is Pecola Breedlove who is dissatisfied with the world around her. She is born into a society that confused as it shuns its own cultural values and craves for self-gratification in the culture of the whites. In the novel this tendency of the society finds its symbolic expression in Pecola's quest for blue eyes which represent the western ideals of beauty. The quest results in the suffering and anguish of the blacks.

*The Bluest Eye* is divided into four sections, namely, 'Autumn', 'Winter'. 'Spring' and 'Summer'. This arrangement does not conform to the natural cycle of seasons. The ironic suggestion is that "pecola's story is not the usual story of birth, death and rebirth, from planting to harvest to planting, rather it is the story that moves from pathos to tragedy and finally to madness" (Christian Barbara 137).

The first section of the novel "Autumn" deals with the transition in Pecola's life. She matures from a girl into a woman. Gradually, the life history of Pecola is unfolded in this section. The totality of her tragedy is presented in fragments. The second chapter, 'winter' serves as a metaphor for frigidity. Here Morrison introduces the distasteful characters in the novel: Maureen Peal and Geraldine. The section 'Spring' contains the stories of Pauline and Cholly, of Cholly's assault of Pecola and also the story of Soaphead Church, all of which cumulatively distort the mind of Pecola. The last section 'Summer' exposes the reality of Pecola's situation. Here one finds her in the violent summer of her life. She is totally mad, isolated from the world around her, locked in constant conversation with herself, admiring her beautiful "blue eyes"(22). As Barbara Christian says:





and performances will reveal something at odds with the way in which dominant social groups will read and visualize his or her sexed body. Many literary works produced all over the world in the last thirty years are concerned with the representation and transgression of homosexuals. Their identity is analyzed by the major thinkers of the time like Michel Foucault (*The History of Sexuality* 43).

Usually the term 'Queer Theory' is used to imply the combined area of gay and lesbian studies, together with the theoretical and critical writings about all modes of variance-such as cross-dressing, bisexuality and Tran-sexuality-from society's normative model of sexual identity orientation and activities. The word 'queer' was originally a derogatory term, used to stigmatize male and female same-sex love as unnatural. But since the early 1990s it has been increasingly adopted by gays and lesbians themselves as a non-invidious term to identify a way of life and an area for scholarly enquiry.

These branches, both gay studies and lesbian studies, began as "liberation movements" in parallel with the movements for American and feminist liberation of the late 1960s and 1970s. Since then these studies are struggling to gain political, legal and economic rights for gays and lesbians, equal to those of the heterosexual majority. By the 1970s the two movements began to achieve a separate entity; gays thought of themselves as exclusively male while a major part of lesbians, joining with the feminist movement, characterized the gay movement as keeping anti female attitudes of the patriarchal culture. However, recently both the groups came to adopt the joint term "queer" and share a history as a despised and suppressed minority and possess common social and political goals. In the 1980s and 1990s, because of the assimilation of the viewpoints and analytic methods of Derrida, Foucault etc. the earlier assumptions about the unitary and stable gay or lesbian identity were questioned and historical and critical analyses became increasingly subtle and complex.

Some queer theorists adopted the deconstructive mode of dismantling the binary oppositions of Western culture, such as male/female, hetero-sexual/homosexual, and natural/unnatural, by which a spectrum of diverse things is forced into only two categories. Among them the first category is

## RENDERING THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE: AN ANALYSIS OF MAHESH DATTANI'S *ON A MUGGY NIGHT IN MUMBAI* AS A RESISTANCE AGAINST THE GHETTOIZATION OF HOMO-SEXUALS IN INDIA

**Abdul Nasir Vellarampara**

Mahesh Dattani is well known for his daring and objective treatment of the issues of the marginalized. His plays are well noted for their preoccupation with 'fringe' issues – issues that remain latent and swept under the pillow; they come to occupy the centre stage in Dattani's plays. He observes that much of the mainstream society lives in a state of 'forced harmony' out of a sense of helplessness or out of a lack of alternatives. Just because of the lack of choice, they conform to stereotypes like 'homosexuals' that in one sense leads to a kind of ghettoization within society, little spaces to which the marginalized are pushed. It is the plights of these characters as a result of their resistance against the social injustice meted out to them that constitute the subject of his play *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*.

Homosexuality is still considered a taboo subject by the major sections of people in India and abroad. In India, though homosexuality was decriminalized in 2009, again towards the end of the year 2013, it is recriminalized under section 377 of the Indian Penal Code and most of the people look at the gay people with contempt. In the course of an interview Dattani says, "You can talk about feminism, because in a way that is accepted. But you cannot talk about gay issues because that's not Indian (that) doesn't happen here…" (*Collected Plays* 319).

The terms 'homosexuality' and 'heterosexuality' are inventions of the nineteenth century. In his *The Archaeology of Knowledge* Foucault points out that the 'unnatural' homosexual subject is figured as someone whose actions





> Like a musicianMorrison connects Pecola Breedlove's desire for the bluest eyes to Mrs. Breedlove's restricted spirit and Cholly Breedlove's sense of unworthiness, to Geraldine's fear of funk and Soaphead Church's sterility, to Maureen's fate of as an eternal dream child and Claudia's ache to be whole. By exploring the devastating effects that the western ideas of beauty and romantic love have on a vulnerable girl, the novelist also demonstrates how these ideas can invert the natural order of an entire culture. (*Black Women Novelists* 175)

The objective symbolically represented by the quest for blue eyes, forms the central plot of the novel. The novel opens with Claudia's rumination that peeps into the past and ruminates over it in the present. The childlike innocence of the past is now being examined through the mature experience and this is how we come to know about the shocking fact that Pecola is having her father's baby. This highest order of incest becomes disgusting not only to the neighbors but to the surrounding nature as well hence it becomes unyielding, shocked into barrenness. There is no coming of flowers like marigold no sprouting of any seeds. "Quiet as it is kept, there was no marigolds in the fall of 1941… no green was going to spring from our seeds**…**the earth itself might have been unyielding" (*The Bluest Eye* 3). Even the nastiness of sex has been viewed through the innocent gaze of the childhood when Claudia says, "We had dropped our seeds in our little plot ofblack dirt just as pecola's father had dropped his seeds in his own plot of black dirt," and the nature could not bear it hence, "the seeds shriveled and died; her baby too" (5).

Pecola is to stay with Frieda and Claudia because her father Cholly Breedlove has burned up his house in drunken state and was in jail. Pecola gets very warm welcome from the two girls of her own age. Frieda gives her "some milk in a blue—and—white Shirley Temple cup" which Pecola loves so much and looks fondly at the picture of Shirley Temple's dimpled face who is the role model of American standard of beauty and acceptability. One can see the devastating effects of social prescription and how it is damaging the psyche of young girls like Pecola whose aspirations for the standard, 'that bluest eye' shatters her own perception of the self. It is not that only society rejects her for being black and poor. She rejects herself

too, desiring to be someone else. The white standard of beauty strangles the very imagination of tender children, "**…**all the world had agreed that a blue-eyed, yellow-haired, pink-skinned doll was what every girl child treasured" (14). Pecola and Frieda are not exceptions in loving white dolls and Shirley Temple but Claudia certainly is. When she gets a white doll as Christmas present she destroys the doll. She wants to discover what it is that makes white baby dolls or for that matter little white girls so desirous to others, "the secret of the magic they weaved on others. What made people look at them and say, 'Awwww' but not for me?' (17). This shows that though Claudia and Frieda, the McTeer girls are also troubled by questions of beauty the family support gives them strength to survive against all odds.

*The Bluest Eye* centers on the tragic life of Pecola and her parents' failure to give her warmth and stability. Her family members live a life of misery and frustration convinced as they are of their ugliness and worthlessness:

> No one could have convinced them that they were not relentlessly and aggressively ugly**…**you looked at them and wondered why they were so ugly; you looked closely and could not find the source. Then you realized that it come from conviction, their conviction. (28)

On account of her lack of self-esteem Pauline Breedlove is unable to nurture feelings of self-worth in her daughter. Dissatisfied with the role of motherhood, Pauline carries it with resignation as a heavy cross and her "crown of thorns" is her drunken husband Cholly. Cholly Breedlove, himself a man without center is unable to inspire any feeling of self-respect in Pecola. Her parents do not know how to love and they cannot give their children a sense of self, for they have none of their own. The home which should have been an anchor to Pecola (like McTeers' home) fails to give her any moorings. Perhaps the seeds of her parent's discontent lie in their own childhood experience. Being the ninth of eleven children in her family, Pauline was totally ignored by her parents and she blames their parental neglect on her limp foot. In the absence of her mother who goes to work outside the house, Pauline is forced to baby-sit and run the house.





their imaginations. Being able to "imagine" how someone else feels is the first step toward becoming more compassionate and empathetic. Imagine a world in which we truly believed and embraced the idea that we are all one people, with one heart and mind and soul! Poetry can help teach us this lesson, if only we would learn it.

Ajit Kumar: What is your future plan?

My plan is to continue to learn and grow as a human being and a writer—to experience as much as I can so that when I sit down to write a poem, I have something worthwhile and meaningful to say. I want my words to reflect how much in love I am, with the world. To me, everything is a miracle, from the tiniest hummingbird to the tallest skyscraper, but even more so, the capacity in each of us for love, kindness, empathy, and compassion. My goal is to continue in as much as I can, to nurture the light in my spirit, and to respect and revere the light in others. If I can capture even the smallest portion of that light in my work, I will be satisfied with that.

Terri Kirby Erickson:

Ajit Kumar: Any message for the readers?

Terri Kirby Erickson: Thank you...that is my main message. Without readers, a poem is just another tree falling in the woods, with no one to hear it.

Ajit Kumar: Thank you very much for your time!

Terri Kirby Erickson: And I appreciate your insightful questions, Dr. Kumar! It has been a pleasure.

There is no room for words that don't carry their weight! It is a sculpting process, really. One generally begins with a sort of free-writing exercise about whatever it is we wish to convey, and then we edit without mercy until the poem begins at last, to emerge from its hiding place. And just as a painter must learn when to put down the brush, so it is with poets. Part of the skill is knowing when enough is enough—when you have said what you meant to say the way you intended to say it. It has been said that a poem is never truly finished, but you must find a place to stop and let it "go" at some point, or else your work will never be read by anyone.

Ajit Kumar: Are you satisfied being a poet in USA?

Terri Kirby Erickson: Absolutely. We have a very active and supportive writing community in North Carolina, and I dearly love my writer friends. It is important in every profession, I think, to feel a sense of connection with others engaged in the same work. And when my poems have received national or international attention, the response from readers has been wonderful. We have so many literary festivals, literary magazines, poetry readings, poetry workshops and classes all around the United States, that I do believe in the main, many people are interested in and even enthusiastic about poetry once they have discovered what a joy it is and how healing it can be to read or to write it.

Ajit Kumar: How does poetry affect society?

Terri Kirby Erickson: I believe that poetry has an enormous impact on society. It engages us both intellectually and emotionally—often so deeply, in fact, that we never forget the lines of poems that have most affected us. There is a poem by Rainer Maria Rilke entitled, "You Who Never Arrived," that I carried in my billfold for years because of its moving language and powerful theme of love and longing. Poems can literally change the way we look at the world, connecting us with ourselves (thoughts, feelings, memories, etc.) and with each other, more powerfully than any other literary genre. Studying and reading poetry also helps young people learn how to pay attention to detail, useful in many professions, and helps to develop





But feelings of "unsettling emptiness" arise in her and she longs for a man to make her life meaningful and complete. "Pauline remembers her first meeting with Cholly as the day of her salvation" and the initial days of their marriage are happy. But soon dissatisfaction sets in. Since Cholly himself is not whole he cannot make her feel whole and as partners in life they are unable to give each other emotional support. Both of them are victims of a culture that makes them feel inferior, unworthy, incomplete. And they give to each other what they receive.

Cholly Breedlove's childhood is also a study in rejection and alienation. Abandoned by his mother when he was four days old, he is rejected by his father also who pays more attention to the crop game than to Cholly. More destructive than these rejections is Cholly's castration at the hands of white men who surprise him in the act of his first sexual encounter and ask him to proceed in their full view.

Pauline is not eager for the role of motherhood because she has seen how in her mother's life it has brought only more work and no gratification. Yet Cholly's tenderness towards her during her pregnancy fills her with expectations of bliss but she realizes that it brings only loneliness. She therefore escapes into the world of fantasy and experiences vicarious pleasure in identification with white women in the movies, "There I was, five month pregnant, trying to look like Jean Harlow and a front tooth gone" (96). This is another example of cultural assault that compels an individual to look like someone else rejecting herself.

In spite of her bitter dissatisfaction with motherhood in the case of the first child, Pauline once again becomes pregnant. But her experience at the labour ward in the charity hospital is bitter. She who imagines herself in the role of a creator feels debased when the white doctor attending on her comments, "They deliver right away with no pain. Just like horses" (97). This way one cultural persona tries to debase other cultural persona on to a sub-human level. Thus feelings of inadequacy and disappointments in life lead Pauline to vent her anger on her children. Pecola becomes the tragic victim of her parent's disillusionment with life. She searches pathetically for self-esteem but without the nourishing support of her parents she cannot succeed. Pecola's encounter with Maureen Peal and the lighter skinned middle class boy deepen her sense of worthlessness. When

Maureen Peals taunts at Pecola and McTeer girls by screaming at them "I am cute! And you ugly! Black and ugly black emos. I *am* cute" it leaves Pecola dumb with pain and misery(57). Claudia says to herself:

> Dolls we could destroy, but we could not destroy the honey voices of parents and aunts, the obedience in the eyes of our peers, the slippery light in the eyes of our teachers when we encountered the Maureen Peals of the world. What was the secret? What did we lack? (57)

But Pecola "sat looking in the mirror, trying to discover the secret of the ugliness, the ugliness that made her ignored or despised at school, by teachers and classmates alike. She was the only member of her class who sat alone at a table desk" (34). No one loves Pecola except her father who expresses his tenderness for her in a distorted manner by raping her. When the drunken Cholly sees his daughter bent over the sink washing dishes, a mixture of emotions surge through him. "**…**revulsion, guilt, pity and then love**…**what could he do for her?**...**what could a burnt out black man say to the haunched back of his eleven-year-old daughter**...**" (127). Cholly violates her body as the others have violated her spirit.

*The Bluest Eye* represents an indictment against the whole of a value system that has afflicted not only Pecola and her family, but an entire community. They are victims of the force of alien culture and its manufactured image; it is an image that connotes myriad contrived values including how a girl and /or a woman should look, act and even feel, "One lives, really, not so much in your house as you do outside of it, within the 'compounds' within the village, or whatever it is" (Stepto "Intimate Things in Place 475).

But in the explicit neighborhood of *The Bluest Eyes* we came across a community that represent products of a commodified system that in its imposition of social and economic order through the manufactured image, seeks to and succeed in inverting the truths of their life. This system also causes them to inflict pain and hatred of the self on to others, on to characters like Pecola, Pauline and Cholly. And thus the neighborhood, the community which could have provided sustenance, on the contrary, shares the blame for Pecola's destruction.





Terri Kirby Erickson: To have the quality of one's work validated by awards and accolades is gratifying, but I also appreciate the kind words and letters of readers who have enjoyed my poems and books.

Ajit Kumar: How important is imagination in your poetry?

Terri Kirby Erickson: For the purposes of writing poetry, an active imagination is crucial. Even when drawing upon specific memories of people and places when writing a poem, one has to have an active imagination to recreate these moments so that readers are transported by the words and feel something about what you have said. We never remember anything in intricate detail, so even if a poem is "true," it is not always historically accurate, which is much less important, anyway, than writing from the heart in such a way that readers are touched and moved.

Ajit Kumar: Critics say that your poetry is a reflection of everyday life! How do you react to this?

Terri Kirby Erickson: I think this is a true statement about much of my work. I find great nobility and worth in simple, everyday living, but I also think that people are endlessly fascinating no matter what they are doing! Some of my poem titles bring to mind people from all walks of life: "Young Girl at Walgreen's," "Washing My Baby's Hair Over the Kitchen Sink," or "The Man Who Cuts His Grass with Nail Scissors." However, I also tackle larger, more controversial or disturbing issues in poems such as "Leroy and Viola" from my new collection, which tells a tragic and true story about the struggle for Civil Rights in the United States. I believe that both kinds of writing are necessary in order to accurately reflect the human condition in its entirety.

Ajit Kumar: How is poetry different from other forms of literature?

Terri Kirby Erickson: A poem is much more condensed and the emotional impact more powerful in my view, because of this brevity. The poet has only a few lines through which he or she might move the reader, so every word is significant and must be exactly the "right" word.

She lifts her frail arm, then rests it,
gratefully, in her daughter's palm.
Gliding a wet
washcloth, my mother's hand
becomes a cloud, and every bruise, a rain-
drenched flower.

Ajit Kumar: Are you satisfied with the success of *A Lake of Light and Clouds?*

Terri Kirby Erickson: Well, the book was just released in April of this year, so I think it is too early to talk about its success. However, 250 people attended the launch party for this collection, which was also a fundraiser for the Simstein Fund of the Novant Health Derrik L. Davis Cancer Center in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. I donated 10% of every book sold that evening to this very worthy fund, which helps cancer patients who are financially challenged with expenses like medicine and lodging. And I have received some lovely letters from readers who have enjoyed the poems in this book so thus far, I would say I am quite pleased!

Ajit Kumar: What does the lake signify in *A Lake of Light and Clouds?*

Terri Kirby Erickson: The title of this collection was inspired by a beautiful property known as the Lasater Mill House in Clemmons, NC. I was struck when driving by it one day, by the beauty of the light, the drifting clouds reflected in the lake beside the house, and the lovely swan boats bobbing in the water. This charming vista was so peaceful and serene in contrast to what was going on in the news at the time. So when I sat down to write about it all, the juxtaposition of world events and this idyllic scene is what fueled the title poem and, in my view, makes it more interesting than a simple description of a visually appealing place.

Ajit Kumar: You have won many awards for your writing. How do you feel when you are rewarded and appreciated?





Explaining the reason why Roy's novel was chosen over the other Booker contenders, Jason Cowley, one of the five 1997 Booker Prize judges, said: "*The God of Small Things* fulfills the highest demand of the art of fiction: to see the world, not conventionally or habitually, but as if for the first time. Roy's achievement, and it is considerable, is never to forget about the small things in life: the insects and flowers, wind and water, the outcast and the despised. She deserved to win" (*The Times of India*). One can say that she could not have written it otherwise, because she was trying to be honest to herself as she was not writing 'on 'behalf' of anyone but herself' and because, in her own words 'I think that's the most honest thing to do … in our society particularly, the politics of 'representation' is complicated and fraught with danger and dishonesty.' It is the woman who is not 'representing' but presenting herself.

Her debut fiction *The God of Small Things* is polyvocal, voicing the angst of generations of women characters. It shuttles between the past, present and future reminding us of the narrative technique used by Toni Morrison in her fictions like *Sula* and *Beloved.* It is really very difficult to ascertain who the central protagonist is, Ammu, Velutha or Rahel-Estha. But there is one thing that binds them all together, and that is their transgression of Love Laws. "They all crossed into forbidden territory. They all tampered with the laws that lay down who should be loved and how. And how much" (*The God of Small Things* 31). The consequences of this transgression are more horrible for Velutha and Ammu, for the former because of his caste (untouchable) and in the case of the later because of her gender (female). So it is not only the intermeshing of the caste and sexuality that is the ideological centre of the book but rather the caste and 'female' sexuality (Ahmad 103).

At the age of twenty-seven Ammu "carried the cold knowledge that for her, life had been lived. She had had one chance. She made a mistake. She married the wrong man"(38). Without much education, because "Pappachi insisted that a college education was an unnecessary expense for a girl" and dowry, "since her father did not have enough money to raise a suitable dowry, no proposals came Ammu's way" (38). Nobody cared while she helped her mother with the housework. And when a man proposed, of another caste, Ammu grabbed it because she thought that this

is the only way or chance of her salvation. But this marriage shatters both Ammu and her dreams and she "returned, unwelcomed, to her parents' home, with her twins, full of shame to live on their mercy, and bear the "fate of the wretched Man-less woman"(45). Legally, "Ammu, as a daughter, had no claim to the property" (57). Her brother, Chacko received education from Oxford, married Margaret Kochhama, as per his choice and got divorced by her, but being a man he won all the sympathies of her mother and other female members of his family. After the death of his father he resigned his job as a lecturer to look after the family business of making jam, jelly and pickle that was run by Mammachi. "Though Ammu did as much work in the factory as Chacko…he always referred to it as *my* factory …" (57).

Chacko used to exploit the women workers of the factory for his sexual needs which is not only acceptable but justifiable too as Mammachi primly puts it: "He can't help having a Man's Needs" and for the purpose of having his sexual need fulfilled Mammachi built a separate entrance to the house, so that factory women can go unnoticed to Chacko to gratify him (168). But when it comes to Ammu's relation with Velutha, it is horrendously repulsive to Mammachi. She can understand 'Men's Needs' but 'Women's Needs' (especially for an untouchable) she cannot even imagine. Brinda Bose, in her insightful observation has said, emphatically, "It is not just the matter of transgression but, as Roy puts it evocatively, of who and *how much*. Society and government make rules and define boundaries; many of these are continuously transgressed… Women's transgressions are generally more easily condemned, as are those to do with the "Love Laws". When women seek to transgress the rules that govern love and desire, the penalty is death…" (*In Desire and in Death*, 59-60).

Thus in this confrontation between power and powerless we see that though Ammu, a major character in the novel, on the merit of being a woman, cannot have the same rights as her brother in the matters of higher education, marriage or inheritance. Her decision to marry a Bengali Hindu is an 'unchristian' act, a transgression for which she was not forgiven. But when she slips into the forbidden love affair with Velutha, an untouchable, nothing but the annihilation of herself could have appeased the fury of the "God of Big Things." In her move to "fashion female autonomy," Ammu





Ajit Kumar: From where have you gotten the maximum love for your poetry?

Terri Kirby Erickson: Reading poems by various authors—poems that move me in some way or change the way I view the world—has been such a gift. And writing poetry is a form of meditation, a time when I think of nothing else but what has inspired me and how best to tell readers about it in a way that will resonate with their own thoughts, feelings, and experiences. So I both love reading poetry and writing it, and can't decide really, which is more delightful.

Ajit Kumar: Any specific area, you believe that is more close to your heart?

Terri Kirby Erickson: I often turn to nostalgic themes of home and family. Losing my brother at such a young age was so heartbreaking that I sometimes yearn for the simpler times of my childhood before tragedy struck my family. And visiting those happy days in a poem, is the only way I can get them back. Recently, one of my poems, "Ice Cream Truck," was chosen by Garrison Keillor to feature on *The Writer's Almanac*. This poem is simple, visceral, and was inspired by a cherished childhood memory of mine that seems to touch a chord in those who remember the thrill of the "ice cream man" coming to their neighborhoods, too, and the experience of eating those cold, beloved treats on a hot summer day.

Ajit Kumar: That's great! Could you please share a few lines (the most close to your heart) which exhibit a direct love towards your family members?

Terri Kirby Erickson: I have another very brief poem I can share, entitled, "Sponge Bath," from my collection, *In the Palms of Angels*:

**Sponge Bath**

Draped in towels,
my grandmother sits in a hard-backed
chair, a white bowl
of soapy water on the floor.

Ajit Kumar: Do you believe nature is an important part of your life? Please share a few lines of a poem which exhibits your sensations towards nature.

Terri Kirby Erickson: I am inspired by nature and often include some reference to the natural world in my poems although I have to admit, I feel most comfortable in urban landscapes. I grew up in the city and moving into to the suburbs was not something I thought I would ever do, although I've lived in a small town for about twenty-two years now. Here is my very short poem, "Queen Anne's Lace," which was originally published in *The Christian Science Monitor* and is also in my book, *Telling Tales of Dusk*:

**Queen Anne's Lace**

Queen Anne's lace dandies up
a ditch, like embroidered hankies
in a farmer's pocket.
Such tiny seed-pearl petals
seem hand-sewn by
seraphim to their purple
centers—yet they thrive
in common places, fine as tatted
borders, blanket-stitched to burlap.

Ajit Kumar: Any memorable moments while composing *In the Palms of Angels?*

Terri Kirby Erickson: Yes, there is a poem in this collection entitled, "Empathy," that I wrote in response to an intense conversation I had with one of my close female friends, mainly about a health challenge she was facing at the time. These few moments of sharing our "stories" in a "grocery store parking lot" inspired me to write this poem exploring and celebrating friendships between women, which are so life-sustaining and necessary, not to mention a source of joy and kinship and comfort.





earns death at the age of thirty-one, "Not old. Not young. But a viable die-able age" (3). Anyway the prejudiced society of Ayemenem was not going to grant anything save the taste of "wrinkled youth and pickled futures" to women like Ammu. The analogy of petrifaction is quite apt. Once rejected by her family a woman becomes a kind of play things in the hands of society even its caretakers. Ammu dies, as a destitute leaving her twins behind, vulnerable, exposed to the callousness of the same society she died while resisting its onslaught of inequities. They also transgress the social laws or better to say in incest they are trying to seek transgressive solace, or as Aijaz Ahmad says, " Rahel returns…takes him into her arms and reaches out to heal his psychic wounds through the bereaved solace of incest…as private balm for emotional injuries once caused by various brutalities in the public domain … a kind of sisterly mercy " (107). This incident particularly reminds of another kind of incest in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*. In that novel also a burnt out black father is trying to give himself to his burnt out black daughter as sympathy that leads to the horrible end of Pecola's life.

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## AFFINITY FOR SHADONIAN CULTURE IN LINDA SMITH'S *THE PIPER OF SHADONIA*

**Dr. Suneetha Yedla**

*The Piper of Shadonia* is a traditional fantasy novel, relying on an imaginary realm where magic exist, is just as engrossing and fulfilling as contemporary paranormal fantasies. *Tobin, fourteen year old boy who lives with his parents in the city of Cradoc, a part of the old country of Shadonia, which has been included as a section of the Forezian Empire for over twenty years.* Hamish, Tobin's father never likes his mother talking to Tobin in Shadonian Language which drives him to follow Shadonian culture at his sapling age. He has an impression that the people who move in the line of their own culture are uneducated louts. The same expression is presented in the following quoted lines of Hamish :

> Do you want people to think Tobin is an uneducated lout, Mother? Forenzian is the language of commerce and culture. The only people who speak Shadonian are peasants in the hills and the poor and illiterate of Old town. (21)

At the time of the beginning of the story, Shadonia is, to forgive the pun, under the shadow of their Forenzian conquerors, his father a 'toady' to the Forenzian regiment stationed at Cradoc, and the spirit of the Shadonian people broken, their cultural traditions no longer passed on from generation to generation. Tobin is an exception. Though Tobin is schooled in the Forenzian ways *i.e.*, those of the wealthier ruling class, and physically looks Forenzian because of his light hair, Tobin is proud of his Shadonian heritage, as supported by his father's mother, Gran, who continues to speak to him in Shadonian and tell him the stories of their people. Even with his mixed background (his mother's father had been Forenzian but had converted to Shadonian), Tobin finds it tricky to balance his Forenzian advantages with his Shadonian background, especially when taunted by two Shadonian boys,





Terri Kirby Erickson: My favorite poet is former U.S. Poet Laureate, Ted Kooser. I so admire his work because there is a heartbeat in every poem...something that is luminous and real and true. He is infinitely tender with his human subjects and the "places" they inhabit on the page. At once original and warmly familiar, Mr. Kooser is a master at his craft. He continues to inspire me every time I read one of his lovely poems. To have two of my poems chosen by Ted Kooser to feature in his *American Life in Poetry* column, which reaches some 3 million people worldwide, is such a thrill and an honour.

Ajit Kumar: When did you start writing?

Terri Kirby Erickson: I started writing poetry with hopes of publication in 2005, but I have been writing poems in "secret" since I was a child.

Ajit Kumar: What was the concept in your mind when you composed *Telling Tales of Dusk*?

Terri Kirby Erickson: I always write individual poems without thought as to whether or not they will fit into a single collection. But when I put together this manuscript, the poems seemed to flow not from just one, singular voice, but from the many voices of a chorus singing the same song. I love to create (or borrow from experience!) "characters" in poems, and to speak through them. And I believe that the voices of this collection in particular, are very reflective of my experience of growing up in the American South while still being relatable, I hope, in a universal way. We are all more alike than we are different when it comes to what we hope for, what makes us happy or sad, and all the rest of our shared human emotions.

Ajit Kumar: . You say that you love to create "characters." Did you get this idea from some other poet?

Terri Kirby Erickson: I have always written this way, even before I started reading the work of others. I have, since childhood, had a very vivid imagination.

Communications. I had one sibling with whom I was very close, a younger brother who was killed in an accident when he was twenty. This tragedy was a turning point in my life, and compelled me to more fully realize that every moment we live on this earth is a gift, and to cherish the people we love while they are with us.

Ajit Kumar: Who inspired you for writing?

Terri Kirby Erickson: My fifth grade teacher introduced me to poetry and indeed, to artistic endeavors of all sorts. And I have been an avid reader all of my life. Books are the open doors to everything and every place imaginable! And I wanted from a very young age, to become an author. I am so grateful to have achieved this dream with my poetry.

Ajit Kumar: Why poetry …why not fiction or drama?

Terri Kirby Erickson: I love the pithiness of poetry—how you can tell an entire "story" in just a few lines. The emotional impact of a poem is so powerful, and moulding and shaping language until the poem "says" exactly what you meant to say in the fewest words possible for an aesthetically pleasing, moving and lyrical result, is both a joy and a challenge.

Ajit Kumar: While writing, do you feel that you are talking to the readers?

Terri Kirby Erickson: Oh yes, definitely. I believe that poetry is a form of communication. I always write with the idea that I am "conversing" with other people and not just talking to myself!

Ajit Kumar: Do you read something for the background of your poetry?

Terri Kirby Erickson: With some poems, a little research is necessary, yes. That is when the Internet becomes a very important and easily accessible tool.

Ajit Kumar: Whom do you appreciate the most among the poets and why?





Kasper and Graff, that his father was the "biggest boot-licking toady to the Forenzian emperor in all Cradoc" (41). That assertion continues to plague and direct Tobin's actions throughout *The Piper of Shadonia* as he attempts to defend his father and his Shadonian heritage.

In fact, Tobin's father, Hamish as the mayor of Cradoc, a job he accepted because he hoped to do a better job than the previous mayor, and where he tries to balance his duty to Forenzian and to Cradoc. Tobin feels caught in the middle; he feels a deep loyalty to the old kingdom, with its own kings and queens, and he feels that his father is a follower of Forenzian Culture. This is presented in the words of Hamish with Clarice by placing his hand on her shoulder, "It's all right, Clarice. I'll be back soon to enjoy more of your beautiful music" (40). Tobin looked away by the words of his father on their native music. It wasn't fair that his father made him feel like…..like a barbarian invading a haven of culture and peace. He stalked down the hall, hands still clenched (40). Even Tobin hates his father as follower of Forenzian Culture, he is not in a position to receive his friends comment on his father. Tobin's father's face became as sealed as a locked room on hearing his son's answer to his friends in hatred voice. Infact, while reading the story of *The Piper of Shadonia* Hamish appears to be good in his characters by presenting himself as royal to his own culture. He said that he is loyal to the emperor, as he was bound to his oath of allegiance. To his mind, he makes him any less loyal neither to Shadonia nor to the people of Cradoc, whom he vowed to serve. At this context, Clarice, Tobin's Mother expressed how his father loved Shadonian Culture, "He fell in love with Shadonia – its woods and hills, its stories and songs and dances – even before he fell in love with Mother" (43). Tobin possesses a special gift, which he is learning to use – the ability to let his mind become one with his surroundings so that he has ability to merge with the grass, bushes, and flowers, thus becoming invisible- though this only works when he is outside and concentrate fully on the blending. One day in his observation, he found the house of Mayor looks like a castle. It was the home of Shadonia's Kings and queens in the old days. Later, on the one occasion he'd been there, shortly after his father was elected mayor, Tobin had thought it looked exactly like a Forenzian house. He knew, because Crispin and Lizette's parents slavishly adopted every Forenzian fashion (154).

The appearance of a troupe of puppeteers in Cradoc heralds new conflict after Major Gurtin, a Forenzian officer, accuses them of inciting the Shadonians to rebel against the Emperor, and convinces the Mayor to arrest them. Tobin runs towards the puppeteers to warn and ends up accompanying them on their travels. So Tobin's adventure begins with the Ellabalm Puppeteers *i.e.*, Balm, Ella and their daughter Gaby, along with the Shadonian bully Kasper. It is during this time, while evading detection and watching behind the scenes, that Tobin develops his gift of becoming part of the landscape and calling forth the spirit of the river. When Tobin suspects that a wandering group of puppeteers are using their shows to stimulate a rebellion against the Forenzians, he uses his gift to learn more details, and to listen to Forenzian plans to arrest the rebel supporters:

> "Limit ourselves?" Tobin echoed.
>
> Balm nodded. "Do you see that fence over there? We never used to build them. Not till the Forenzians came. We're erecting other fences too, around our minds and spirits. They prevent us from being what we used to be--a part of the world around us."
>
> He threw another sideways look at Tobin. "But not you, lad. I don't know why it is—maybe your family heritage, maybe all those stores your Gran told you—but you seem to be able to jump over those fences and be part of the land."
>
> Was that why he could blend with his surroundings? Summon the spirit of Balm? But what should he do with this ability to leap fancies?
>
> As though sensing the turmoil in his mind, Balm reached over and patted Tobin's knee. "You have a special gift, Tobin. I'm glad you're with us."(102)

Tobin Morgenstar is far away from home in the scene quoted above. He's travelling with a troupe of puppeteers, stopping at villages to perform plays, never sure of his next meal. It's a world away from what he's used to as the mayor's son in the town of Cradoc in the small kingdom of Shadonia.





**Terri Kirby Erickson** is the author of four collections of poetry, including *In the Palms of Angels* (Press 53, 2011), winner of three international awards, and her latest collection, *A Lake of Light and Clouds* (Press 53, 2014). *Telling Tales of Dusk* (Press 53, 2009) was #23 on the Poetry Foundation Contemporary Best Seller List in 2010. Her work has won numerous awards and honors, and has appeared in the *2013 Poet's Market*, Garrison Keillor's *The Writer's Almanac (July 25, 2014)*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *North Carolina Literary Review*, *Storysouth*, *JAMA*, *Verse Daily*, and many other publications, and has twice been chosen by former U.S. Poet Laureate Ted Kooser for inclusion in his *American Life in Poetry* column, sponsored by The Poetry Foundation and the Library of Congress. She is a member of Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, a professional organization of women educators, and has taught a number of poetry classes in public schools, universities, and other venues. She is a member of the North Carolina Poetry Society, North Carolina Writers Conference, and the North Carolina Writers' Network.

**Terri Kirby Erickson** was chosen as the 2013 Leidig Keynote Poet for Emory & Henry College in Virginia. Former Leidig Poets include Ted Kooser, Mark Doty, Kelly Cherry, Fred Chappell, and many others. She has won many awards, mainly a Nautilus Silver Award for Poetry, 2012; winner of the Next Generation Indie Book Award for Poetry, 2012; Finalist for the International Book Awards in Poetry, 2013; and the Poetry for Their Freedom Award, 2013.

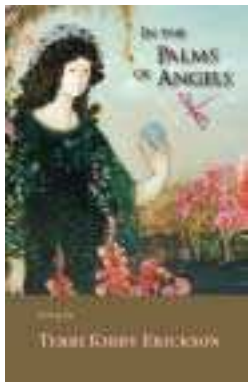
**Dr. Ajit Kumar** interviewed **Terri Kirby Erickson** on August 6, 2014 about her writing through online mode. She explained her experience of being a poet. She expressed her ideas on different collections of poems. She answered each question with great delight and patience.

Ajit Kumar: Could you please share the earlier days of your life…I mean your familial and educational background?

Terri Kirby Erickson: I was born in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, to wonderful and supportive parents, and attended public schools. I graduated from high school as a member of the National Honor Society for scholastic achievement, and from college with a Magna Cum Laude Bachelor of Arts degree in English Literature and Mass

## SPIRIT AGLOW: IN CONVERSATION WITH TERRI KIRBY ERICKSON, A POET FROM NORTH CAROLINA (USA)

**Dr. Ajit Kumar**





**Pictures provided by Terri K. Erickson**





Tobin's affinity for Shadonian culture isn't the only thing that sets him apart; he has the ability to blend into his surroundings so that he slips out of the notice of people and almost achieves invisibility by sheer effort of his mind. As he embraces the stories of the Shadonia of old, the more he disdains the way Shadonia is now, aping Forenzian culture and forgetting their own.

Hamish had never liked the fact that his mother talked in Shadonia. At that moment Amaryllis had been silent a long time, staring out the window of her room. Sometimes when she did that, Tobin thought she saw far beyond the garden and the river. But she had the thoughts of their own culture in her mind, "Shadonia has its own culture," she'd said at last. "A culture that should not be ignored. How can I tell its Stories in a language not its own?"(22) Further it's no wonder Tobin is captured by the message of a troupe of travelling puppeteers who are trying to spread the culture of Shadonia. Sneaking out to watch their plays, Tobin also overhears how the puppeteers are in danger of arrest from the Forenzians. After all, their plays are thinly veiled allegories about the Shadonians' need to throw off the shackles of Forenzian overlords. The version between Hamish and Tobin made Hamish to glance at Tobin angrily. The tag of war between Hamish and Tobin is clearly picturized in the dialogue given below:

> "Are you sure? I remember my parents telling me stories about heroes who called on the spirits of the land and river when they needed help."
>
> "My parents told me the same tales. I loved them as a child, but childish fables are a thing of the past, just as are many of Shadonia's ancient customs." (224)

Tobin's struggles with the implications of belief put into action are evoked with sympathy and insight. While Tobin continues to search their cultural identity, his only one source of stability, Tobin's grandmother, a strong supporter of Shadonia ideals and freedoms, has suddenly died by entrusting to him an ancient pipe and she asks him to use when Shadonia is in need of it. Bewildered by the sudden loss of his grandmother, Tobin impulsively decides to throw in his fortunes with the travelling puppeteers, warning them of how the Forenzian military sought to arrest them for inciting rebellion against the Forenzians.

At that critical juncture, Tobin remembers the wooden flute given by his grandmother telling him that in times of trouble he must play it. Tobin doesn't understand or want more powers but with his pursuit, Tobin blows on his pipe and causes a not-quite-liquid, not-quite-mist to rise from the river, the Spirit of the river, to crash down on the Forenzians, thereby allowing the troupe to escape unharmed into the forest and eventually into the distant mountains. This happening wins Tobin their trust as the high-born young man is now on the run from the authorities with this band of would-be political rebels. The players are Balm, his wife Ella, and their beautiful daughter Gaby. They spread the word about a folk hero named Bloody Bartholomew who challenges Forenzian rule and is a rallying point for the Shadonians. Nevertheless, the story ends with a surprising and satisfying conclusion as Tobin carves a path for himself that is neither pro-rebel nor pro-forenzian empire, a way that allows him, just as Balm says, "to jump over those fences and be part of the land" (102).

Finally I would like to present about the concept of the between-two-worlds dilemma of cultural conflict and search for identity of younger generations of Shadonia. Linda Smith, in the novel *The Piper of Shadonia* has described the struggle of younger generations of Shadonia trapped between their ancestral culture and Forenzian culture as the between-two-worlds dilemma. This concept is clearly presented by Linda Smith through the character of Tobin, who lives in two worlds. As the son of an important mayor, he must be loyal to the dominant Forenzian Empire, but he cares more about the ancient and suppressed world of Shadonia. When his grandmother dies, she leaves him a wooden flute with powers Tobin barely understands. As Tobin watches a street-theater troupe one day, he realizes the puppeteers are criticizing foreign rule under the cover of light amusement. When he overhears plans to arrest them, he warns the puppeteers to escape across the nearby river. But soldiers pursue the players, and Tobin remembers his grandmother's words in times of trouble, he must play the pipe. When he does, it raises the spirit of the river in a terrifying wall of water, enabling the puppeteers to escape, but at great cost to the Forenzian army. Tobin has an unbelievable power to help his country break free of colonial rule—but he must learn how to use it. Horrified at the deaths his first attempt has caused, he flees with the puppeteers, who are at the center of a secret movement to free Shadonia. Tobin wants to help his





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facets of culture through which she finds reconciliation between two opposing cultures. The hybrid individuals live within the "third space" recognizing the differences. In *The Bonesetter's Daughter* there is an acculturation of both the cultures retaining the individuality of both the cultures rather than their assimilation.

The notions of nation and nationhood are not distinct from Diaspora studies. In the acculturated novelistic space that *The Bonesetter's Daughter* outlines, a feeling of national consciousness is seen. LuLing talks about China and its culture with pride. This is perceived more in the descriptions of the war with Japan. She presents the Chinese men going for the war and the wish for their success. When the war ends they celebrate with firecrackers. The Chinese solidarity with America is seen in the words of Miss Grutoff, "With America on our side, now China will be able to win the war more quickly" (306). The civil war in China between the Communists and the Nationalists is also elaborated so as to depict the majority Chinese opinion favouring anti-communism. So the spirit of the home nation and the nationalistic feelings associated with it find an expression in the narrative of wars. In addition the host land is remembered with positive feelings as revealed through the words of Miss Grutoff.

*The Bonesetter's Daughter* is renowned as a multicultural fiction where the ethnic groups cry out their voice. In this there is the lamentation for home culture, the search for identity and the desire to assert the individuality in the host land accommodating its culture. It fits into the variety of diaspora literature through the depiction of characters living in present pondering over the past. They tread through new 'routes' recognizing and affirming their actual 'roots'. The novel puts forth a 'salad bowl' rather than a 'melting pot,' placing both cultures in interaction with each other. In other words, the essence of both the cultures is preserved and these cultures are placed as the inevitable part of the life of the multicultural persona in the novel.





country to be free without bloodshed of his country people. Linda Smith tries to place the teen in the midst of a national conflict, pitting parents against friends, oppressor vs. the oppressed, and emotions over reasoning. To present this concept the central hero Tobin constructs some tough choices. Not only that but also Linda Smith has managed to balance Tobin's angst and subsequent development within the story of an oppressed people finding the means to stand up for themselves, all in a satisfying fantasy for young in *The Piper of Shadonia*.

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## IMAGES OF A MUSLIM IN THE INDIAN ENGLISH NOVEL

**Dr. Gharge Sunita S.**

The British Indian Empire/ the Indian Subcontinent was partitioned on the communal basis into India and Republic of Pakistan in 1947 and later secession of Bangladesh from Pakistan in 1971 caused the havoc in the history of human race. Partition resulted in the barbarity of the worst and massacre was terribly tragic. It was deliberate, so urged so many Indian and Non-Indian writers to present this picture in their creative writings. This partition is a side issue in Indian English Novels. But R.K.Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao do not focus primarily on this event.Yet other novelists have dealt with it seriously. Novelists like K.A. Abbas, Attai Hosain, Khushwant Singh, Manohar Malgonkar, Chaman Nahal, Bhlchandra Rajan and others have treated it in detail in their novels.

R.K. Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma* presents the political scene before independence and tragedy of partition. Attai Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* tells Laila's struggle of her own freedom and India's struggle for independence. It presents the Muslim point of view of national and individual freedom. Novelist presents the Muslims like Kemal and Asad prefer to stay on in India. The novel is an appeal to shun all hatred to embrace non-violence. So Asad is Gandhian. Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* is the picture of Partition. It shows, in the words of Sharma, "how the terrorist movement - a symbol of national solidarity-, designed to oust the British from the Indian soil, degenerated into communal hatred and violence.... between the Hindus and Muslims" (*The Partition in Indian English Novel* 33). In this novel Shfi Usman in the guise of a Sikh was a freedom fighter but turned a terrorist and he fought with the Hindu associates due to Hafiz, a leader of terrorist Movement. He is an advocate of Muslim point of view, absolute and fanatic Muslim considerations. He





*Bonesetter's Daughter* there is an attempt to juxtapose America and China, the host land and the homeland. Amy Tan's novels are therefore called novels of reconciliation. Even the chapter headings of the novel are given as a combination of Chinese script and English title. The mother prefers Chinese, but at the end her story narrated in Chinese gets an English translation, through which the languages meet together. Ruth, on the other hand knows only English. But her mother wants her daughter to know Chinese. LuLing is ashamed of her daughter's ignorance of Chinese language. She says to Precious Auntie's ghost, when Ruth mediates their talk, "Forgive me that she speaks only English" (61). LuLing's involuntary exclamations are always in Chinese. "Throughout the years, LuLing lamented in Chinese, "Ai-ya, if only your father had lived, he would be more successful than your uncle" (62). LuLing holds Chinese close to her bosom, identifying her self with the language. She exonerates the language saying, "Writing Chinese characters is entirely different from writing English words. You think differently. You feel differently" (63). Though Ruth is not interested in Chinese language, towards the end of the novel, after deciphering the narrative of LuLing originally in Chinese, and translated in to English, she comes into contact with the language. Her we see how English mediates the daughter's understanding of her mother's culture.

Bilingual calligraphy brings out the acculturation of both cultures. It was a means of livelihood for the family. Ruth helps the mother checking the spelling of the English words. She corrects her mother once saying, "It's 'grape fruit', not 'grapefoot.' It's a fruit not a foot" (57). LuLing in turn taught her "the mechanics of writing Chinese" (57). Here both the cultures come in interaction with each other, which is the major theme the novelist is trying to drive home throughout the novel. At the cultural plane also both the cultures are equally accommodated into LuLing's life side by side with her emotional longing for China. She had two kinds of weddings – an American model and a Chinese. She says, "For the American part Miss Grutoff gave me a long white dress.... For the Chinese banquet I wore a red wedding skirt and head scarf that GaoLing had embroidered" (291). Tan attempts to find a productive balance between the different

She still carries the cultural baggage of Chinese myths and superstitions. She says, "By the time I was born, Immortal Heart was no longer lucky" (176). Each year Ruth loses her voice in August, a period that she associates with dazzling array of solar activity. The novel recalls the oracular power of dragon bones and the popularity of fortune telling, as inevitable ingredients of Chinese culture which reverberates even in the American life.

Chinese dragons traditionally symbolize potent and auspicious powers. "Dragon bones" were prized for their medicinal qualities and used to treat Malaria and other diseases. Now Chinese nationalists consider dargon bones as a symbol of biological continuity and singularity of Chinese people. Dragon bones are also transmitters of Chinese civilization and culture since, some oracle bones bear earlier examples of Chinese writing and recorded history. In *The Bonesetter's Daughter,* "Dragon Bones" symbolize the genetic links and secret histories that bind the three women. In the novel by adopting a boarder writing strategy, the emotional and blood ties of three women are depicted through intervened memory and reality within an oriental cultural atmosphere romanced by such image as dragon bone.

LuLing also recalls the ink-making job which reminds us of her childhood days. It was a female chore, from which the men benefitted. Ink is significant throughout the novel. It stands for language as a cultural artefact. LuLing teaches Ruth how to write Chinese characters which shows transporting her culture to the next generation. The superstitious nature of the mother which she inherited from her Chinese descent is revealed when Ruth is made to write in the sand and talk with the chopstick in her hand to Precious Auntie's Ghost. The novel therefore presents a diasporic chronotope. It means that when a character lives in the settled land s/he will be travelling through the past time in his/her homeland. By "Chronotope" Bhaktin refers to the inseparability of time and space. For the diaspora both the past time and the present space are inseparable.

"Hybridity" commonly refers to the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonisation. Multicultural societies undergo hybridization at the cultural and linguistic level. In *The*





voices for them. Shafi betrays Debi, his Hindu friend. So Debi was arrested and sent to Andaman. Shafi detested Congress and demanded separate State for Muslims. Eventually he is killed by Sundari and Gian. Manohar Malgoankar's *A Bend in the Ganges* shows his an image of a Muslim as a terrorist, deceiver, revenge taking man, a killer and a supporter of a father of Pakistan.

Khushwant Singh's *A Train to Pakistan* also bears a Muslim's image as the killer. Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* talks about Abdul Gani's transformation. A friend is turned a foe and hated Hindus. Nahal shows Nurul Nisar, a Muslim daughter, loves Hindu Arun. She wants his conversion as an Islamic and he also asks her to transform as a Hindu.So he is called "timid Hindu." Actually, both reject each other's desire. Their true love doesn't make them embrace each other's religion. This shows how fanatic and orthodox they are.

The diaspora Indian English writers - Rushdie, Bharati Mukherjee, Hanif Kureshi and others have portrayed the Muslim culture and characters in their creative writing. It reflects their image of a Muslim. Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* presents Saleem Sinai as a compound of the three races, Hindu , Muslim and Christian/ British. He has made his Saleem as a prophet of independent India. Though a fantasy, Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* gives the image of a Muslim Saleem as a third person looking back at the British imperial power and its consequences in India. He has made them responsible for it. Dr. Aziz, Saleem's supposed maternal grandfather's portrait is different from E.M. Forster's Dr. Aziz in *A Passage to India*.

Honoured as the "Grande dame" of diasporic Indian English literature (Edwards 151) Bharati Mukherjee, "Lahiri's foremother" (Chetty 75) an activist of civil rights, educator, an author of highly praised novels, two collections of short stories and non-fiction works, utilizes her personal experiences in crossing the cultural boundaries. The second of three daughters of Sudhir Lal and Bina Mukherjee, Bharati Mukherjee, a wealthy upper-middle class Bengali Hindu-Brahmin from Kolkata, India likes to be identified American writer of Indian origin. Mukherjee draws her characters as transnationals who remain connected to their homeland and hostland

equally in The *Holder of the World , Leave it to Me , Desirable Daughters* and *The Tree Bride* . They are neither expatriates nor only immigrants in their values and attitudes but transnationals, whose networks cross the borders of the nation - state.

The Transnational Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughters* is the best example of Mukherjee's "Two Ways to Belong in America." *Desirable Daughters* grew out of Mukherjee's close conversation with her two sisters - at the home her India-based sister in Bombay- Ranu and Mira who lives in America. Their conversation was about the choices they had made and how their lives were and how each of them had married the man of her choice. In *Desirable Daughters* Bharati comes to terms with what her Indian heritage has left her as residue and what America she has discovered. It is a novel of three sisters, two continents and a perilous journey from the Old World to the New World, and again to the Old World. It allows characters (mostly female) to move beyond the traditional boundaries of identity/ culture and national geographical boundaries.

Tara in Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughters* and *The Tree Bride* is Indian / Bangladeshi / American by culture at the same time. Her identity is, in the words of Rushdie, "at once plural and partial" (*Imaginary Homelands* 15). Like Mukherjee her "Tara Bhattacharjee's (identity) is fluid. She adapts to both the traditional culture and her adopted American ethos" and questions her own identity Singh 188). The identity crisis and a longing to define one's own identity are triggered off when she is faced with the illegitimate son of her much idolized sister – Padma Didi

*Desirable Daughters* begins with the story of Tara Lata and ends with the protagonist's or Tara's return to Tara Lata's home. The novel ends where it starts and vice-versa. Tara's roots are there. She is linked cohesively to Tara Lata, 'a tree bride' whose supposed husband died of snakebite before the marriage. To save her from a lifelong cursed widowhood, her father Jaikrishna Gangooly, a pleader in High Court, marries his 5 year old daughter Tara Lata to a tree in 1879, in Bengal, "today's Bangladesh" (5). Jai Krishna Gangooly had repositioned the stars of Tara Lata by marrying her to a tree. It was her fate, her "lifetimes' virginity" (14). At least she may remain a wife, a wearer of vermilion powder in her





*The Bonesetter's Daughter* is the story of a mother and daughter whose relationship is troubled by cultural differences. The mother has a traditional Chinese upbringing, while the daughter was raised in the US. The cultural differences and the incompatibility of LuLing with the US culture are evident in her inability to linguistic adaptability:

> LuLing got into fights mainly because of her poor English. She didn't understand others, or they didn't understand her. Ruth used to feel, she was the one who suffered because of that.... And since immigrating to the US fifty years before, she had not improved either her pronunciation. (49)

The ungrammatical passages through which the mother speaks out bear testimony to her lack of linguistically handicapped status in America. LuLing says after meeting Dr. Huey, "No, no nobody pay!" Lu Ling cried. "Inside purse put my health card. I don't show card doctor charge me extra. Everything suppose be free" (60).

*The Bonesetter's Daughter* is not an exception from other diasporic fictions that ponders over the past. Throughout LuLing's narrative she explores Chinese legends and myths. As an ethnic writer Tan uses this as a tool to represent the emotional longing for the homeland represented through this. In the beginning of the chapter entitled "Heart" LuLing narrates the legend associated with her place, Immortal Heart village:

> Yet the village began as a sacred place. According to legend, a visiting emperor himself had planted a pine tree in the middle of the valley. The tree was to honour his dead mother, and his respect for his mother was so great he vowed that the tree would live forever.... Rich and poor alike made a pilgrimage to Immortal Heart. They hoped that the tree's vital energy would rub off on them. They stroked the trunk, patted the leaves, then prayed for baby sons or big fortunes, a cure for dying, an end to curses. Before leaving, they chipped off some bark, snapped off some twigs. They took them away as souvenirs. (174)

> not there to our supposedly well-trained eyes, makes itself known or apparent to us, in its own way, of course. The way of the ghost is haunting, and haunting is a very particular way of knowing what has happened or is happening. Being haunted draws us affectively sometimes against our will and always a bit magically into the structure of feeling we come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as transformative recognition. (Gorden 8)

The third chapter of Part Two is entitled "Ghost." In this chapter, Ghost is presented not as a frightening agent, but as a saviour. LuLing narrates how she was spared from the marriage with the Chang family whom Precious Auntie hated, with the fear attached with Precious Auntie's ghost. The ghost element in the story reiterates the assertion of 'Chineseness.' In China the fear associated with ghost is pertinent. Ruth as a translator of the messages from Precious Auntie's ghost also shows the element of Chinese ancestry associated even with the second generation of Chinese immigrants. The memory of past evoked through ghost serves as a medium for recalling the memories of homeland and reassertion of their Chinese identity for LuLing. Through this the novel proclaims that they are deeply tied up to the memories of homeland, the thread which is unbreakable.

For Ruth, the ghost writing has double meaning. Pin Chia Feng writes:

> On the one hand, it refers to her profession as an unrecognized ghost writer of self help manuals; on the other, Ruth had been forced in her youth into the role of spiritual medium to fake communication through sand-writing is mobilized as a trope for (trans)cultural negotiations, with Ruth serving a s a translator. As well, ghost writing in the novel is an ethnic marker and along with the reference to the bones of Peking man, underlies an anthropological interest in China and Chinese history. (23)

Ghost stands for invisibility. The invisibility of the homeland China and the consequent longing for the land is invoked through the pervading presence of ghost throughout the novel.





hair–part, and not a widow. It will save her from a lifetime of disgrace and misery. So later she could help the beggars, sick people, and young soldiers fighting the Raj and turn herself – Tara Lata - the saint, spiritual healer, and the freedom fighter. Tara Lata never left her house in Mishtigunj for the rest of her life, but she helped " the Cause of an Independent India and United Bengal and protected Young Freedom Fighters from British arrest" and " she herself was Dragged from her Home on the Night of October 12, 1944, by Colonial authorities and Never Heard from Again. Her death was announced on October 18, 1944, and Attributed to a heart attack" (20). She had lived for seventy years and gradually changed the world. The life of rooted Tara Lata becomes a milestone for the rootless Tara, who writes by recounting Tara Lata's marriage.

Like Tara Lata, self-propelled Tara, the protagonist, narrator, a thirty-six year old, convent school educated, writer, is the youngest of three daughters of Dr. Motilal Bhattacharjee from Ballygunj, Calcutta. She shares her name with Tara Lata, Tara says, " … I had been named for her" (16), and her history begins with Tara Lata's wedding in Bengal Presidency. Like Tara Lata, Tara has two sisters "we are sisters three as like three blossoms on one flowering tree" (16). They are from Calcutta but reside at three different places of the world. Tara is "on a mission of discovery" search for roots of her family (17). Beautiful and talented, the three sisters - Padma, Parvati and Tara from a civilized, wealthy Brahmin family of "bhadra lok, "are born exactly three years apart from each other on the same date in the month of October. They are named after goddesses to survive and prosper. Tara is a modern, postgraduate (MA), convent educated, divorcee, highly Americanized. Her childhood was spent in Calcutta in the sixties with her elder sisters – Padma and Parvati. At twenty, Tara's life begins after marriage to Bishwapriya Chatterjee, who comes from a wealthy family. Tara let her father to choose for her a husband. She has crossed with him the dark waters for California. For ten years Tara is a married woman, the wife of Bish, living in a gated community in Atherton, California. They have a son Rabindra/Rabi. But they are thrown into the middle of a modern enigma. Tara interrogates, "what do they know of the need of a modern woman? (27)

Being a good Hindu wife she never called the husband by his name whenever in India, but in America she calls him Bish. He is a generous, protective provider, to whom love "is the residue of providing for parents and family, contributing to good causes and community charities earning professional respect and being recognized for hard work and honesty" (27). Bish is an electrical engineer, a scholar of Stanford, who could transport Tara from the enchanted garden of Ballygunge to Stanford University in the early 1980s but can't provide what she desires. After a decade of marriage, she understands that the promise of life as an American wife is not being fulfilled. She wants to work somewhere, but is not allowed as Bish is a traditional Indian Husband. His 15 hours' office, and his public functions in "Boston, New York, Tokyo, Taiwan, Malaysia, Manila" (82) make Tara alienated. Tara's world is only Atherton gated community; she feels "sick… alien" (87). Mrs. Billionaire, Tara is looking for respect, for a life apart from her husband's identity, while he is expecting her to be a good cook, an attentive wife, and raise a good boy. She wants to join the community college but can't. Hence Tara has "left Bish …. after a decade of marriage …" (82). Then she lives in San Francisco, Upper Height, or Cole valley, with her son Rabi.

She has also a live-in lover, Andy, a balding, red–bearded, former biker, former bad-boy. He is a Hungarian Buddhist contractor, Zen retrofitter, Yoga instructor, and carpenter, "Tara's Mistri" (25). For Andy "love is having fun with someone, more fun with that person than with anyone else, over a longer haul" (27). It is her American adventure to take a lover outside of marriage. Padma condemns and considers Tara's divorce as shame to the Bhattacharjee family. Though Tara and Padma reside in USA, they are strangers to each other. Tara says "I never told you about Andy, or Pramod or Mahesh or Donald…? (184) Tara has become "American", self-engrossed, for whom her past is now 'the darkest cave' (133). The Americanized Tara accepts her son, Rabi's confession about different "sexual orientation". He is a gay (134).

Her American life is blasted by the sudden arrival of her so called nephew Chris Dey, who is looking for Padma, his mother. Padma's secrets are thus being exposed. Chris Dey appears in Tara's living room and the identity of her family as Bengali Brahmins of "Bhadralok", is called into





third person narration dealing with the present life of the mother and the daughter. Through Mr. Tang's translation of LuLing's story Ruth came to understand her mother and her family heritage. At the end of the novel LuLing gets an assisted family facility and Ruth and her lover Art reconciled their relationship, and Ruth found the actual name of Precious Auntie – Gu Liu Xin.

In *The Bonesetter's Daughter* we find both migration out of compulsion and wilful adoption of migration for better standards of life. It was the fear associated with the ghost of Precious Auntie that LuLing was sent to an orphanage, from where American culture enters her life. This is a domestic migration. It was not a wilful exile that she underwent. In the part where Miss Grutoff offers visa for one person to accompany her to San Francisco, different characters respond differently. Sister Yu says, "...I don't care to be around other Americans. Civil War or not I'd rather stay in China" (318). Here is a person who imbibes nationalistic fervour. But LuLing wished to go with Miss Grutoff. Her response when GaoLing is announced to be the person to go to San Francisco is noteworthy, "I was too stunned to say anything. That night I went over in my head how I had lost my chance. I was angry that GaoLing had tricked me....Before I fell asleep I decided this was fate. Now what ever happened that was my destiny" (320). The Japanese occupation of China and the subsequent war also compelled the Chinese to seek refuge elsewhere. The story thus adds the flavour of migration.

The ghost pervades the story with connotative meanings regarding home. The ghost is beyond the gothic element of the novel. It complements the diasporic imaginings in the novel. Through the introduction of the ghost a desire for 'at home' is embedded as in the case of most of the grotesque stories that places the characters within the home out of fear for a ghost:

> The ghost is not simply a dead or missing person, but a social figure, and investigating it can lead to the dense site where history and subjectivity make social life. The ghost or the apparition is one form by which something lost , or barely visible, or seemingly

The mass emigration of the Chinese occurred from the nineteenth century to 1949 caused by wars and starvation in Mainland China. The migrations were mainly to America, Australia, South Africa, South East Asia, Malaya etc. The Immigrants were illiterate, poor peasants. Amy Tan is an acclaimed Chinese American writer who immortalizes the immigrant's longing for home. Her characters seek to reconcile with the host land amidst which they ponder the culture of the home land. Upon the publication of her first novel, *The Joy Luck Club* she became an instant star in the publishing world. Her skilful rendition of mother –daughter relationship, in her first novel continues in her later novels like, *The Kitchen God's Wife* (1991), *The Bonesetter's Daughter* (2001), *Saving Fish from Drowning* (2005). These novels, besides being family sagas, there are overtones of diasporic existence, expressed through the love and antagonism between the Chinese immigrant mothers and their daughters. Tan keeps on invoking Chinese landscape and history to contextualize the portrayal of Chinese American experiences. It is at this point that Tan's novel fits into the framework of diasporic fiction.

*The Bonesetter's Daughter* portrays the relationship between a Chinese immigrant mother LuLing and her daughter Ruth. It includes an introduction and seventeen chapters divided into three parts. It ends with an epilogue. The introductory chapter exposes the major themes of the novel. It is a third person narration of Ruth's and LuLing's American Life in San Francisco. The seven chapters focus on Ruth's career and her childhood in flashbacks. The second part is presented as narrated by LuLing which is deciphered by Ruth where LuLing recalls her life in China because LuLing is now affected with Dementia. The story was found as a stack of paper by Ruth at the bottom of the drawer. It recounts LuLing's life with the Liu clan in the village of Immortal Heart in the Western Hills, south of Peking. It is revealed to her that Precious Auntie, her nurse maid is actually her mother. This part also reveals Precious Auntie's story. LuLing was sent to an orphanage run by American Christian missionaries after the death of Precious Auntie. Later she got married and her husband got dead in the Japanese war. After two years of life at Hong Kong, she also migrated to San Francisco as her sister GaoLing did. The third part switches back to





question. Tara initially is outraged and cannot believe that her unmarried sister could have become pregnant and have a child. She suspects and starts her investigation of the family secrets and origins. Tara thinks that the boy – Chris Dey, is trying to set up a scam of some sort. Rabi and Andy suggest that she should call her sisters and discuss it. She calls Parvati and Padma.

Parvati lives in Bombay, India and is happy with her husband, (a love-match) and two sons - Bhupesh and Dinesh. Actually she has shocked her family by choosing a husband, Aurobindo Banerji, a Bengali Brahmin from a Tallygunge family, but the match is not approved by her father. She jokes that "she manages a hotel, not a home" as she allows her husband's relatives to be houseguests for weeks at their luxurious apartment at Marine Drive (51). Her easy life with servants and dogs is humorously described by Tara, who asks her about Chris Dey. The sister makes her aware of the gangsters in Bombay and warns her to beware of Chris.

Padma Didi is the elder sister. She has married Harish Mehta a non–Bengali businessman; twenty years older than her. He had previously married and had children. She lives now in New Jersey (Montclair). She is Indian in her clothes, cuisine and work as a television anchor of Indian television programme set in Jackson Heights, Queens, run by her Indian lover, Devanand Jagtiani (Danny). She doesn't accept Chris Dey as her son (bastard). Tara complains to the police as she asks her sisters and Ronald Dey about Didi's lover in India, and Chris Dey, her child who had grown up in orphanage and was sent to USA for education but was killed and "body found in the delta. It was Mr. Christopher Dey, the Indian national, of Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, India" (276). The Dawood gang has been active in India and USA. Actually posing as Chris Dey, Abbas Sattar Hai, a member of the gang, wants to kill the techno-guru Bish and his family. He is wanted internationally for murder and arson. He visits Tara and Rabi frequently at home and at public places. Tara is assigned to Jasbir "Jack" Singh Sidhu, the Americanized Indian policeman for investigation. He makes her aware of dangers to their (Tara, Rabi and Bish) lives. He retaliates by bombing her house where the three (husband- Bish, Tara and Rabi) are present. Bish rescues from explosion in her house and is badly injured. He is admitted and recovers but is crippled. When Tara's house is

bombed by an unknown person, it is suspected that the imposter Chris Dey is, in fact, Abbas Sattar Hai of the Dawood gang, who intends to destroy Bish and his worldwide communication network, high techs in USA and India. In the final, third part of the novel, Tara visits India and Bangladesh with her son. She meets her parents at Rishikesh and visits the home of Tara Lata of Mishtigunge.

*The Tree Bride*, the sequel of *Desirable Daughters* , continues the tale of Tara and tells the real reason of Chris Dey's scam of some sort. Tara "dreams of the past" and finds Hai's intension of firebombing her house (*The Tree Bride* 15). She says, "The target of Abbas Sattar Hai's bomb wasn't Bish or Indian money ....It's me he wants to kill" (239-40). The image of a Muslim as a killer is in the mind of Mukherjee; yet, she blames the British imperials and their imperialism that have divided the Hindus and Muslims in India as their strategy to strengthen their imperial domination.

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## CULTURES IN INTERACTION: DIASPORIC OVERTONES IN AMY TAN'S *THE BONESETTER'S DAUGHTER*

**Ajomy Maria Joseph**

Postcolonial studies got a new flavour with the advent of Diaspora studies instigated by the theoretical formations of many theorists like Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy etc. Diaspora is first and foremost the movement of bodies over spaces brought about by migration either by choice or by compulsion. The cultural articulation of the experiences of those scattered group is seen through the literature of Diaspora. Diaspora studies see migration in terms of dislocation, transformation, adaptation, rootlessness etc. It covers concepts like the experiences of displacement and homelessness, the ideologies of 'home' and nation, the cultures of diaspora, the politics of multiculturalism, the predicament of minorities, the exilic perspective, identity questions like belonging, assimilation, acculturation and issues relating to race sexuality and gender. It also theorizes the phenomena of borders and borderlands, mixing, hybridity, multilingualism, double consciousness, homesickness, memory, nostalgia and melancholy.

The Greek term, diaspora means, "scattering" or "dispensation." It can be defined as the movement, migration or scattering of people away from an established homeland. The term refers to many historical dispensations over the centuries such as the expulsion of Jews from the Middle East, the African trans-Atlantic Slave trade, Chinese migration during the Coolie slave trade etc. The term was first used in its original sense of citizens' emigration to a conquered land appeared in the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek.

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## SMOTHERED EMBERS: A FEMINOCENTRIC READING OF DEVAKI NILAYANGODE'S *ANTHARJANAM; MEMOIRS OF A NAMBOODIRI WOMAN*

**Deepa R.**

The male – female power relations in society is determined by production and biological production was estimated as the seminal means by which humans maintained the race, and the role and responsibility of the males in biological production was accomplished only in a later phase. Maternity in primitive civilizations were deified and a matriarchal system developed in ancient civilizations marked with mother goddesses; a system of female centrality and female domination, despite the weaker physical biology of the female is admitted. But with biological production alone humanity could not subsist and as males gained upper hand in non-biological production at the manual and intellectual level , and as the non biological asset begins to have command over biological production, males with better manual labor power gained upper hand. Conversion from matriarchy to patriarchy was the inevitable consequence.

The range of patriarchy and matriarchy differed with space and time though patriarchy in general became the system predominant. In the occidental societies, with a better performance of manual dynamism patriarchy had almost perfect sway- (though the British Queen is still nursed as sign of respectable matriarchal racial memory); but in Asiatic society though conversion in favour of patriarchy was inevitable, substantial matriarchal structures were maintained against the background of male hegemony and female subjugation. Indian villages in general carried patriarchy to the most repressive level as from the Vedic period the social norms of Aryan patriarchy set a formidable structure which opened war





story space that is appropriated. The texts demand what Sharan Kumar Limbale has demanded – a change of aesthetic (Limbale, 19) that is life affirming. It makes visible alternative world views, spirituality other than the mainstream, knowledge of indigenous medicine and so on. The space in the Indian literary public sphere is thus expanded. The subaltern counter public has shifted its attention from tales of the individual's and community's woes and builds or retrieves knowledge that was hitherto 'hidden.'

The formation of subaltern counter-publics through Dalit writings runs the danger of terming the latter as separatist. A public turns into a counter-public when it contests the mainstream public. Dalit writings do exactly this. It questions the privileges of the dominant groups and demands the eradication of inequality and unjust practices. This public is 'contestatory' (Fraser 67) in function; yet 'the concept of a counter-public militates in the long run against separatism because it assumes a *publicist*orientation' (Fraser 67) (emphasis in original). Hence, just as women's writing has moved from being a subaltern counter-public, dalit writings run no risk of being termed enclaves serving only certain needs.

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customs and conventions sometimes with a celebratory tone. Thus 'Matapuja' figure in *Joothan*, 'Theyyam' in *Chorapparisham*, Chinnamalai festival in *Karukku* , tales about Essakkiappear in *Sangati*, deities like Karuppusamy in *The Grip of Change*. Antonio Gramsci had suggested that popular social thought, which includes popular religion, superstitions, ways of seeing things, opinions and acting collectively, can be channelized into a political movement through a critical awareness (qtd. in Nayar 24). The critique of institutionalised religion, dalit spiritual practices, critique of superstitions, giving up of performances related to reproducing the inferiority of castes are abundant in dalit works.By engaging with these issues political strength is garnered and cultural citizenship is assured to the historically subjugated dalits.

According to Pierre Bourdieu, taste is determined by the social position from which it stems. Different social groups express their distinctive social habitus through practices like food. Even in the matter of food, dalit writings offer a varied perspective that has never found its way into mainstream writing. Dominant caste narratives have focussed on vegetarian practices of food as the 'standard' form. Even cookery books of respective regions in India focus on vegetarian and non-vegetarian food culture of the dominant. Food in dalit writings can be used as metaphors to convey different meanings that "have bearings on the existential conditions of the toiling, hungry millions" (Guru 5). Food here is not related only to taste and hunger. It is very important in the construction of cultural identity. Food is affirmatively used as an alternative culture of a region. Non vegetarian food is used to counter the nationalist construction of 'upper' caste vegetarian 'thali' or 'sadya'.Through projecting food practices and cuisines of the dalits an attempt is made to subvert the orthopraxy of the cuisine culture of the dominant. Ironically the food culture of the dominant castes was made possible only because of the toil of the dalits. It also preserves what David Sutton has termed as the phenomenon of 'food memory'

Gramsci is against the imposition of any normative language and proposes critical engagement between the various dialects. This new language will bring to the fore new world views. When dalit texts use dialects, the language of dignity, self -respect emerges and also present 'knowledge' that was hidden or unacknowledged hitherto. Thus it is a new





even against the female embryos. Though the ancient Aryan Brahminical rule and hegemony swept almost the whole of the Indian subcontinent, the Dravidian southern part stood apart still preserving the matriarchal hold. Kerala, untouched by the Vedic hegemony later yielded to Buddhism which for centuries resisted the social and familial discriminative practices imposed by the Vedic patriarchy. Social and familial being of women was honored in Buddhism and emancipation of women was part of Buddhist social agenda. Kerala which was alien to Vedic patriarchy, welcomed Buddhism and the social texture of Kerala later became a mixture of ancient Dravidian and Buddhist ideology

But the lean matriarchal defence of Kerala fell with the revivalism of Brahminical religion and fall of Buddhism. The seventh century Revivalism swept the land of Kerala also. The matricider, mythical signifier of the end of matriarchy, conquers Kerala and distributes the land of Kerala between Brahmin families.

Western feminism, which encounters subjugation of females, from the periods of ancient Greco- Roman civilizations, predominantly patriarchal, has no such history of long enduring matriarchal structures as in Kerala. So the women's right movements in Kerala acquires a distinct plane which never approves of the trends of female fundamentalism or sectarianism aligned to western feminism

Ultimate subjugation of the females at the familial and social levels was proposed with the commencement of seventh century Hinduism, which accomplished the hegemonic text of *Chathurvarnya*. The text of *Chathurvarnya* and the thesis of antibuddhist *himsa* (murder) supposed to be sanctified by *Avatar* of God was a definite reversal of the belief system that preserved the primitive matriarchal notions. In the place of the god given child breeder female, came the child giver Brahmin priest born out of God's head. The Brahminical laws liquidated fundamental human rights of females belonging to all castes; liquidation of fundamental human rights was not confined to females but upon the males belonging to the entire untouchable classes. which formed about eighty percentage of the

population; right to public appearance, right to drinking water, right to learning, right to chosen marital life, right to worship etc. were denied to out- caste males and females. So at the social level for about eighty percent of the population, females and males were fellow sufferers; to delete the masculine self respect of the outcast males their females were taken by the upper caste and sexually abused; to humiliate the outcast males further, females of the outcastes were not allowed to cover breasts; after social rebellions even when outcaste females were bold enough to cover their breasts breast tax was imposed upon them.

What is described above was the social tyranny and repression caused by the Aryan patriarchy. But at the familial level, patriarchy was fully entertained only by Namboodiri Brahmins, a slender minority. All the other sects of the upper caste minus certain Kshatriya clans, followed matrilineal inheritance and the same were preserved by the prominent lower caste segments. Though the eldest maternal uncle was entrusted with the power of governing the joint family, the matrilineal economy bridled the male member domination and except the eldest male in the joint family all the male members were comparatively powerless. To preserve the asset of the family undivided and solid only the eldest among the namboodiris were given right to Vedic marriage and the younger ones who did not have right to property, had to seek sexual asylum in females of inferior caste by way of informal marriages. Among all castes the namboodris alone followed a mindless patrilineal system but all other castes despite the predominant patriarchal politics of the Brahminic law stood with the matrilineal system by which females enjoyed some degree of power that relaxed female subjugation to a certain extend The husbands in joint families just inferior to the Brahmins found a shade of god in the child giver Brahmin father and this led to a polyandry of divine sanction.. Among the Brahmins polygamy was entertained and polyandry was disallowed. In the rigid Brahmin patrilineal system females were a depressed lot, never allowed to breathe social light; they were tortured on charges of immorality put under the terror of inquisition and excommunicated on charges of adultery whereas the supreme Brahmin males enjoyed polygamy, marital and extramarital





These may include 'hysterics, stunned silences, grief or irrational outbursts' (Nayar "Postcolonial Affects" 6). In Dalit writings, it is the 'particularity and difference' that is highlighted and affirmed. There is a refusal to participate in the given public sphere that is 'national'. Instead of the 'subjectivity' available in the idealized nation, Dalit writings demand the incorporation of subjectivities other than the 'national'. The issues highlighted in dalit works were issues that could not be voiced openly earlier.

Religion is often considered irrational and therefore never on the platform of the public sphere whose primary importance was to 'reason'. But as Jürgen Habermas has himself recently suggested critical attention needs to be paid to religion. Religion is very powerful and it can influence the public sphere though it is a vital challenge in contemporary society (Butler *et al* 121).They note that Black churches were central to the Afro-American civil rights movement in America 'providing it with "free spaces" to organise' (Butler *et al* 122) and also that black churches remained important to the black public sphere. On the contrary Catholic and Protestant churches lost their voice as an organizing discourse. This was understood as a modernizing secularising process. A similar picture can be drawn of the public sphere in India. Though many theories were put forward regarding the perpetuation and reproduction of caste, one importance reason for not critiquing caste is that it could not be talked about in the 'modern', 'secular' nation. Caste being a core component of Hinduism and later components of most other institutionalised religions in India was only an unacknowledged presence. Habermas insists that incorporating religion should not foreclose any public debate. By voicing about it through dalit writings, religion and caste is incorporated in the public sphere.

It can be argued that Dalit writings widen the public sphere by incorporating the 'cultural, linguistic, religious and customary practices that constitute group identity and personality' (*Human Rights Inc* ).The above statement was made in connection with the national public sphere. In stratified societies, the 'unequally valued cultural styles' put marginalised sections under 'powerful informal pressures' (Fraser 64) by the dominant and privileged groups. Therefore whatever was the 'norm' was the cultural norm of the privileged group which in the case of India is to be read as upper caste. Through Dalit Writings, the subaltern counter public contests the nationalist cultural claims. Dalit texts highlight the cultural practices,

of Human Rights violations and to forge a collective solidarity and attain new subject positions from where they could speak (4-5). To be able to articulate an event as a part of human rights story of violation entails the event a space or a public platform. It is this potential of dalit writing that is foregrounded here.

Dalit writings, as Pramod K. Nayar has argued in several essays ("Trauma", "Postcolonial Affects"), take recourse to the language of human rights. They do not stop with mere recounting of trauma and being victim stories. Along with the foregrounding of the suffering, many writings advocate a strong sense of freedom and affirmative identity. There are shifts in moments from the status of victimhood to that of agent. For instance, in Bama's *Karukku* there is a new understanding of history and political consciousness:

> We who are asleep must open our eyes and look about us. We must not accept the injustice of our enslavement by telling ourselves it is our fate as if we have no true feelings; we must dare to stand up for change. We must crush all these institutions that use caste to bully us into submission and demonstrate that among human beings there are none who are high or low. Those who have found their happiness by exploiting us are not going to let us go easily. It is we who have to place them where they belong and bring about a changed and just society where all are equal. (Bama 25)

Through this advocacy for acting, the narrative adopts the language of human rights and pries open a space in the public sphere. Dalit narratives enable a re-ordering of the space in the public sphere where the hitherto 'un'-voiced is voiced. Joseph Slaughter in one of his essays points out that a discourse on Human Rights is bound to provide the 'public ,international space that empowers all human beings to speak'(Slaughter 415).Questions that were previously hushed or never raised demand a fair argument and extensive deliberation in the works, even before an answer can be formulated.

Public spheres do not admit irrationality or emotions. Yet, it is by making use of 'affect' that the dalit narratives reconfigure the public sphere.





sex. But in the lower ranks among the upper caste and among the lower caste, polyandry was more common, because the male members of those sects could not maintain even a single wife. Of course polyandry brought female centeredness to the joint family and this particular male-female economy also reduced the intensity of female subjugation accomplished by Brahminic hegemonic politics.

Women emancipation movement in Kerala, in contrast to any such movement anywhere else makes its distinct, for it is basically triggered by the matriarchal Dravidian and neutrarchial Buddhist heritage; it has been highly energized by matrilineal polyandric contradictions within the polygamic, patrilineal, patriarchic hegemony and rule. The subjugation of women at the familial and social level is a universal phenomenon but it is and ever was and would be the inevitable expression of the system of exploitation by which, the existing structure of political economy meets its demands. Freedom, as Christopher Caudwell puts it, is the consciousness of necessity. The definition of necessity changes with time and space, and the definition of necessity—whether it is necessary to cover private parts of the female so as to make her a private possession of a particular person, male (or female—in the lesbian context), whether the extramarital situation, polyandry or polygamy or free sexual life of certain female tribes in Kerala—all entertained by the pre renaissance patriarchal political economy – may be reexamined in the context of western feminism.

Devaki Nilayamgode (1928- ) was born in Pakaravoor mana at Mookkuthala in Malappuram district to Pakaravoor Krishnan Somayajippad and Parvathy Antharjanam. Born in an orthodox Namboothiri home, she didn't receive any formal education. Yet she published many books and several articles. Her works include *Nashtabodhangalillathe, Yaathra: Kaattilum, Naattilum* and *Antharjanam: Memoirs of a Namboodiri Woman*. *Antharjanam* is an autobiographical work which gives an insight into the lives of namboothiri women from an objective perspective. Devaki Nilayangode without any anguish or resent presents the patriarchal system prevalent among the namboothiri communities which subjugated the female in all domains. Even the birth of a female in family, through which the

family survives, is considered as an inauspicious sign. There is a sumptuous meal if a boy was born and only two knocks in the door if it is baby girl. Children were taught from an early age about the conventions in the family. They were denied of motherly warmth and comfort as they believed that it would ruin their life. The children got this from other women.

The *Antharjanams* often lead a secluded life within the four walls of the mana. Their day starts with a ritual bath in the early hours and had to dip in water if they happen to tread a strand of hair or a few drops a from sutra woman. After their visit to the temple, they spent their time on cooking .the rest of the time they had to recite the mantras. The only entertainment allowed for these women is the kaikottikali.

Girls, on reaching puberty or *uduthuthudangal* have to reside inside the house. They were not allowed to appear before men. They were not given any education. Girls were not permitted to read and if anyone discovers any hidden book from them severe punishment was certain. So they read while they had menstruation which was considered as a 'godsend'. Devaki Nilayangode tells us how her sister's ambition of studying Sanskrit was fulfilled. Though her father was a teacher he didn't had the courage to teach them Sanskrit. So a 'Nambisan' was brought to the *illam* and he taught her sister in adjacent rooms so that they cannot see each other and her father sat on the doorstep.

According to the custom in the Namboodiri family, only the elder son can marry women of the same caste. The rest were allowed to have *sambandhams* so as to prevent decentralization of wealth. They had separate quarters in the illam called madhom to house these wives of the *appan* Namboodiri's but were not permitted to enter the house because they cause a state of pollution. A separate cook was there to serve them.

Women in the Namboodiri community were not allowed to wear colored saris. Colored saris always fascinated them. The only ladies who had permission to wash their clothes were 'Veluthedath' family. Again these women had separate windows to collect and return the clothes. They were





In Post- independent India, issues related to caste or domesticity was swept under the carpet. In the race for becoming a secular nation, issues related to the family, domesticity or caste were deemed matters of the private sphere- hence not 'open' for discussion. The founding fathers of the nation wanted to put a rest to the violence which had taken place in the wake of Partition. If, in the case of women discussions related to the family or children were private; in the case of caste, discussions centred on them was detrimental to 'secularism' and against the concept of 'unity in diversity'. (Moreover practices related to caste, like for instance prohibition of inter dining came to be primarily maintained by the women confined to the space within the home-and anything related to women, the 'irrational' creatures, were 'private'). With the women's rights movement, dalit movements and human rights movement gaining currency, the 'private' issues related to women and castes came to the fore- in the public and were treated as political. The visibility of these issues need not necessarily include them in the public culture. But the discussions that were generated sought to uncover the politics of exclusion of 'her' stories and stories of caste. Thus was forged a rightful space for the concerns of women and dalits.

Nancy Fraser argues in her essay that in stratified societies, it is better to have several public spheres rather than just one national public sphere. Some of these could be counter publics that often contest the national public, " …the proliferation of subaltern counter publics means a widening of discursive contestation, and that is a good thing in stratified societies"(67). This is stated as 'sub-state' publics in the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic , Religious and Linguistic Minorities. India being stratified at various levels has various counter publics along with the main stream public. Dalit writings like feminist writings have formed as a strong subaltern counter public. This is done by expanding the discursive space of the public sphere itself. The next few paragraphs examine how this expansion has taken place.

Sidonie Smith and Kay Schaffer in their essay "Conjunctions: Life Narratives in the field of Human Rights" trace how the human rights discourse has taken a recourse to a language other than juridical or political. Taking the example of Life Narratives, they have demonstrated that this literary genre is offered 'discursive threshold' from which to narrate tales

## DALIT WRITINGS AND THE FORMATION OF SUBALTERN COUNTER PUBLICS IN INDIA

**Nisha M.**

Ever since Jürgen Habermas put forth the idea of the bourgeois public sphere, it has been subject to debates and modifications. According to the concept of the public sphere, the matters under deliberation must be matters of public concern or common interest. Interests that were private were inadmissible in these discussions. This ensured that the affairs of women (which were largely domestic) and of the marginalised or weaker sections (who did not count numerically) went often unaddressed. The public sphere which was supposed to be liberal thus merely meant the bourgeois men and hardly the public (qtd. in Fraser 61). Various theoreticians have utilised the concept of public sphere like Ann Travers use of the public spherein the field of cyber feminism, Alexander Kluge's concept of 'oppositional' public sphere and Film, and Nancy Fraser's reformulation of the subaltern counter public.

'Subaltern Counter Publics', a term coined by Nancy Fraser is 'parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated groups invent and circulate counter discourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretation of their identities, interests and needs' (Fraser 67). She points out how feminism was a counter-public that was able to invent and include words like 'double shift', 'sexism', 'sexual harassment' in the counter public (67). Following the definition mentioned above, this paper attempts to show that Dalit writings (along with other arenas of dalit assertion) expand the very notion of the public sphere itself. It would also explain how the adjective 'counter' in counter public is not meant to destabilise the notion of public sphere or is intended at separatism.





not allowed to wash it in the *illam* tank. *Antharjanams* were not allowed to wear gold ornaments. The only one permitted to them were the bronze ornaments. *Antharjanams* had to travel in a different fashion. They would be accompanied by *irikkanammas.* They have food at the *oottupura*-a dining hall built for the Brahmins. The Antharjanam will receive uncooked rice from there and was it with water from river and cook in a separate fireplace. If they are to travel in a bus they would prefer to sit in a corner all wrapped up. Again the money needed for this travel has to be made by the *Antharjanams.* Tradition decreed that they had to find money to meet their expenses. They got it from *pidiyari* a fistful of rice. The only entertainment was the *kaikottikali,* an occasion to show their dancing prowess during the Onam season. A teacher will be hired for this and apart *Antharjanams,* Nair women, and the *Ambalavasis* took part in it. Kunhikuttiyamma who came to Nilayangode told them the stories of Unniarcha and Kungi with the moral women should never consider themselves inferior to men but should stand up like Unniarcha. But these stories were not entertained in *illams,* "She may sing and dance well, but her comments are unwarranted and not worthy of emulation" (53). These stories of bravery always fascinated them but to emulate it was beyond imagination.

Devaki Nilayangode tells of the *Antharjanams'* attitude to other castes in clear terms. All women except their own caste was considered polluted. So whenever they happen to touch them they had to take a dip in water. But these women can't survive without *irikkanammas* and Veluthedath women. Devaki Nilayangode tells of their practice of treating low class women as 'other' when they make them eat from the same plantain leaves left by the *Antharjanam:*

> The children were fed first, then the namboodiris, and finally the women. When the first two sets of people had eaten, the maid servants removed the used leaves and cleaned the floor. But when the last round was over, the used leaves were kept in place for food to be served to the Nair women who had accompanied the Namboodiri women as helpers…. They were humiliated in

so many ways – in their very life as helpers, in having to rush forward to be granted admittance to the oottupura, and finally, in being forced to eat on used banana leaves!(91-93).

After the wedding ceremonies, a woman becomes a wife only if eats the left over food of her husband and the practice is the central narrative of Om Prakash Valmiki's story *Echil.*

Marriage of an *Antharjanam* was made without her consent. Aged Namboodiri always paid a sum to the bride's family as most brides who give consent to marry these old ones were from poor family. If the bridegroom is young, the bride's parents have to give the dowry. Marriage ceremony lasted for four days. Widows were considered as the most inauspicious being among the Namboodiri women. Husband's death was believed to be caused by evil stars in wife's horoscope. So she was considered as guilty of a criminal act from the moment of his death. Soon after the the demise the wife was asked to remove the thaali and to have a bath. She was not allowed to remove the clothes and has to remain in a dark room to observe ten days pula, the period of defilement. She eats only uncooked raw food these days and was made to sleep in a bare floor. Thus there will be two or three women in the dark room cursing their fate as Namboodiri had more than one wife.

The story of Kuriyedathu Thaatri is mentioned in the autobiography. Thaatri underwent a legal procedure called *smaarthavichaaram* for having illegal relations. Devaki Nilayangode had an admiration when she says "she was the fallen woman who had enticed and insulted great Namboodiri's as well as Vedic teachers. But beneath the tone of accusation, I also detected a note of unconscious appreciation of Thaatri"(114). Thaatri was called *saadhanam* and her mentioning of a Namboodiri caused the birth of a *nangiyar.* The Namboodiri's wife was pregnant then and the prevailing law would excommunicate the Namboodiri but such ignominy did not apply to his wife. After Thaatri's mentioning, the brother –in law of the Namboodiri brought her sister back home. She was pregnant then and gave birth to baby girl who was transformed to a *nangiyar*. The baby was not permitted





to live with her mother and the mother was not allowed to touch her baby. If so she has to have a bath. As a result, the mother has to take several baths a days as she has to feed her baby. The *nangemma* remained single throughout her life as it was very difficult to find a groom for her.

The autobiography closes with the renaissance of Namboodiri women due the efforts of E. M. S. Namoodiripad, V.T Bhattathiripadu, Arya Pallom and Parvathy Nenminimangalam. Their efforts rescued the Antharjanams who were given the freedom to come out of the four walls, have formal education and vocational training. They had to face severe criticism from both within and outside the house. Kuriyedathu Thaatri was considered as a heroic figure as there was one woman to point her finger against patriarchal authority.

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