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## CONTENTS

1. **Encountering the Other through Spiritual Optics: Ethics in Asif Currimbhoy's *The Refugee*** 1  
Dr. Betsy Paul
2. **Questions of Racial Identity in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *The Thing around Your Neck*** 10  
Ms. Thankam K. Abraham
3. **The Culture and Politics of Street Art: Visualizing Dissent and Contesting in 'Public' Space** 17  
Ms. Razeena P. R. and Dr. Praseedha G.
4. **Tropes of Appropriation - Colonial Ambivalence in Forster's *A Passage to India*** 26  
Ms. Shalini Rachel Varghese
5. **Aesthetics in Pope Francis's "*Laudato Si*"** 34  
Dr. Sr. A. Princy Anto
6. **Living like the Tsanchifins: Analyzing Rootedness of the Native Americans in Barry Lopez's Fiction** 44  
Dr. Praseedha G.
7. **'[H]unt with the Hounds and Run with the Hare': Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* as a Case Study of Situational Ethnicity** 53  
Dr. Moncy Mathew



## *Editorial*

*Pursuits* is a peer reviewed research journal published annually by the Research Centre for Comparative Studies, PG Department of English, Mercy College, Palakkad.

The current issue presents a wide range of articles exploring world literature, focusing on areas such as race politics, ethnic identity, ethical concerns, street art and aesthetics. The research papers reflect the attempts on the part of the contributors to analyse areas of topical and research interest, pertaining to matters and issues so relevant to our times.

*Pursuits* Volume XV is a consolidation of academic deliberations by faculty and research work by Ph.D scholars.

I place on record my sincere thanks to all the faculty members and research scholars who contributed to the current issue of *Pursuits*. Let me also gratefully acknowledge the constant support and encouragement from our subscribers.

Dr. Sheena John  
Associate Professor & Head  
PG & Research Department of English,  
Mercy College, Palakkad.



**ENCOUNTERING THE OTHER THROUGH  
SPIRITUAL OPTICS:  
ETHICS IN ASIF CURRIMBHOY'S *THE REFUGEE***

**Dr. Betsy Paul, Associate Professor**

That a self gains its ethical traction from the face of the Other is one of the core premises upon which Levinasian ethics rests. Levinas describes ethics as “spiritual optics” (78), a process through which one becomes capable of seeing the Other as different from oneself in order to be able to cater for that Other. If this ethical paradigm is applied to the contemporary context of refugees that permeate international politics it can pierce through many layers of its problematics. This paper seeks to trace how the Indian English dramatist Asif Curribhoy's 1971 play *The Refugee* probes into ethical questions concerning the right course of action during face to face encounters with the Other in the context of a refugee crisis.

The refugee problems within this play have as its background, a historical situation which accelerated a refugee flow from Bangladesh to India. At the same time, the problem of the refugee is a perennial one for mankind and the ethical questions posed are as significant today as in 1971. Though the play is rich with techniques that can render its performance a multisensory experience this paper depends more on a textual reading of the play and goes through its thematic nuances to discuss some major ethical questions connected with the issue of the refugee.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNCHR, defines refugees as those "who are outside their country of nationality or habitual residence and unable to return there owing to serious and indiscriminate threats to life, physical integrity or

freedom resulting from generalized violence or events seriously disturbing public order" (Office of UNCHR 19).

The refugee by his/her very nature evokes mixed responses from the people of the country in which s/he seeks refuge. There is always scope for the human feeling of sympathy in the beginning which might quickly drain out giving way to fear, suspicion, hatred etc. During this process the imagined personae of the refugee, as the Other of the self, gradually evolves to be seen as the Other of the national identity.

*The Refugee* incorporates this transformation within its span. One of the earliest Indian playwrights to write exclusively in English, Currimbhoy's oeuvre consists of themes ranging from social issues, romantic liaisons, and political conundrums. *The Refugee* is the second of what is called "Bengal Trilogy," Currimbhoy's political plays dealing with Bengal, the other two in the trilogy being *Inquilab* (1970), and *Sonar Bangla* (1972).

The play is set in the background of the War for Liberty which took place in what was then known as East Pakistan, resulting in the formation of Bangladesh. Yassin, a University student in Dhaka escapes from Bangladesh after the massacre of the intellectuals which took place in the beginning of the unrest. He reaches the household of Sengupta, who was his mother's childhood friend, and is warmly welcomed. Sengupta, himself a refugee during the partition of India is all enthusiastic to be of help.

Further into the play, we realize that Sengupta's enthusiasm to help Yassin comes from varied reasons. One, obviously, is that he had had tender feelings for Yassin's mother, Rukaiya. Secondly, it can be a fellow feeling which came from the fact that Yassin and him were both Bengalis and also that both were refugees. Thirdly, we can also surmise that helping Yassin gave Sengupta a feeling of self



sufficiency, a feeling of having reached a position from where he could offer refuge.

In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas describes the subject who seeks the Other as self-sufficient, and so “truth is sought in the Other, but by him who lacks nothing” (62). This self sufficiency is one of the prerequisites for Levinasian ethics.

It would seem as though Sengupta is on that Levinasian quest for the Other, the quest that was to give meaning to his existence. But according to Levinas, the encounter with the Other is a “face-to-face encounter”. It is an encounter where the self has to realise that the Other's face is different from one's face and one has to expose oneself “to the questioning of the Other” (*Totality and Infinity* 178). The vulnerability of this exposure is something one has to bear in order to attain transcendence.

Thus an encounter with the refugee cannot simply be an encounter that ends with the munificence of the autonomous subject. The generosity of the subject is generosity only in the eyes of the subject. What the subject considers as his/her generosity needs to be tested and transformed through the questioning glance of the receiving Other. Sengupta offers a room in his house (his favourite study), and daily meals to Yassin inviting him to be part of the family. At the same time, there are expectations which Yassin is supposed to fulfil in return. Other than the common expectation of the acknowledgement of the good act, the Sengupta family expects Yassin to be politically committed to the cause of Bangladesh, against the ones who caused the atrocities forcing Yassin to escape from his homeland.

Yassin, on the other hand, tries to stick on to his identity as a non committed academic. In spite of the fact that he would have been brutally killed by the perpetrators of violence, he is reluctant to join

the Mukti Fouj, the militant group to free Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, Sengupta's daughter Mita and son Ashok are deeply involved in work connected with refugees. Mita is engaged with "voluntary social work" and is "concerned with refugee rehabilitation" (4). She gets emotionally involved in the refugee problem and feels Yassin to be a bit too indifferent. Ashok wants to join "Mukti Fouj", the militant group set on to liberate Bangladesh. Sengupta, perturbed at this turn of events, tries to tell his son that "the Mukti Fouj aren't our problem, Ashok. They belong across the border." But Ashok counters him, asserting that "they are our problem, Baba. we have got to help them" (12).

Sengupta does not agree with him completely. He maintains that "the other able bodied men from East Bengal should do" the volunteering. All this conversation takes place in Yassin's hearing, though he is in his room and not openly present in the scene other than through the lighting in his room that is suggestive of his presence in the stage directions. This expertise of Currimbhoy in the theatrical craft makes the situation all the more suggestive and symbolic. Nothing is directly told to Yassin but the insinuations aggregate and nudge him into making a final decision. Thus, gradually, Sengupta is trying to give up his responsibility to the Other, whereas beneath his moral horizon he tries to get absolved from the duty to save the Other "from death," as Levinas would have it. According to Levinas, "The trace of the Other is the heavy shadow of God, the God who commands, "Thou shalt not kill!" (*Difficult Freedom* 8). The Other is saved from death when the Other is allowed to express his/her identity as it is. Then the face of the Other will be saved from wearing the mask of the subject, or from being a clone of the subject.

Here, Sengupta looks at Yassin, but does not recognise another face with different priorities and desires. Instead, what he sees in him is

just a clone, a person just like himself. The initial finding of similarities seems to be congenial and fraternal, opening up the resources of his heart and home to another like himself. “Remember..,” he tells Yassin, “... this is home ... and we are your family” (2).

But, from the very beginning, differences surge up. Sen Gupta talks about how his blood boils thinking of the injustice. Yassin, but, is in a different mental make up. He was a university student in Bangladesh when “the initial massacre of intellectuals at universities in East Bengal took place, and the first flight of a few thousand refugees occurred across the border into West Bengal” (2). He had survived “miraculously” (7). Yet, according to him, these experiences need not immediately give him a cause to get involved in militant action. “In Comilla University we have a tradition for learning. We also have a tradition for revolt. The twin paths of contemplation and action - if you like” (7), he says, but at the same time his preference for contemplation is obvious. “I became involved - though no choice - and now I’m searching for a way.... to abstain” (6).

The situation becomes worse as refugees start to flow in thousands. They seem to be endless and scenes of suffering and horrifying poverty get interspersed into the dramatic space, as Currimbhoy states in his stage instructions, what could be seen around are “maimed human beings reduced to inhuman existence, robbed of dignity and essential life” (8). Sengupta realises that things have gone beyond mere self complacent sympathy, as he says to his wife, “That's a laugh. It takes me a lifetime to build this house and garage and that refugee out there points a finger at it ... and occupies it!” (9).

As the refugee numbers aggravate, Yassin's stance becomes all the more questionable. Sen Gupta cries out for an outright war with

Pakistan, “Declare war and march in!” but Yassin counters with a “no!” (18), forcing Sen Gupta to ask on whose side he was. Yassin has to make his stand and he proclaims that he would never be disloyal to Sengupta and Bengal, at the same time, he must be allowed “freedom of thought and action” (19) or else he was being deprived of the refuge that he was given. It is at that time that Mita rushes in to announce the outbreak of cholera in the refugee camp and in an emotional outburst blurts out that “both aggressor and giver of shelter”... must ... “search for our conscience” (20).

This search for conscience and morality becomes no easy task during such a juncture as the available moral choices limit options and force paths of action. As Judith Butler says in *Prekarious Life*, “that we can be injured, that Others can be injured, that we are subject to death at the whim of another, are all reasons for both fear and grief. What is less certain, however, is whether the experiences of vulnerability and loss have to lead straight away to military violence and retribution” (XIII). But such uncertainty becomes a luxury which the likes of Yassin are not allowed to enjoy easily. Currimbhoy introduces a mad refugee, Ramul, to exemplify this.

Ramul is shown in a quasi surrealistic contour and Currimbhoy brings out his similarities as well as dissimilarities with Yassin. He, too, is a refugee like Yassin, but unlike Yassin, who is an upper middle class intellectual, he seems to be a poor and uneducated person. Yassin encounters him as he goes into the refugee camp in the backyard of Sengupta's house. After Mita's outburst concerning the finding of conscience, he decides to visit the refugee camp at night with Professor Mosin. He had so far avoided visiting it, but, to Mosin's questioning his motive, he replied that he was searching for his conscience. At the same time, he feels as though a conscience is being thrust upon him. “They throw on me a guilt, and indirect

compulsion, to do what I don't believe in." And, he feels that "they are not wholly wrong either" (20).

The condition is worsened by the presence of the teeming numbers of refugees who are depleting the whole town's physical and moral resources. The divisive forces were working even among the refugees. When Yassin visited the refugee camp, Ramul was holding a trial. Ramul had earlier given a speech about how it was necessary "to weed out the undesirable from the refugee camps" (21) and then a prisoner is brought in. As Yassin steps out into the light Ramul asks him whether he was trying to save the prisoner and Yassin replies in the affirmative. Ramul asks "Why?" to which Yassin answers that "he may be innocent," but the logic of it escapes Ramul since he says that they "also kill innocent people" (22).

The illogicality of war and its ultimate meaninglessness is thus laid bare. Yet, Yassin is forced to choose a path of action which is not of his liking. Even Ramul's words lead him to it. Earlier in the play, Yassin had answered Sen Gupta's query concerning his mother Rukaiya's death by saying that she died of a broken heart. In this scene Ramul suggests that Yassin ought to be taken as a prisoner since he is guilty by not doing anything. "You negate life," Ramul tells him, "it's like someone dying of a broken heart. And not being buried" (22) forcing an aggressive reaction from Yassin. Anyway, Ramul proclaims the release of the prisoner, with the ominous prophecy, "give him enough rope: he'll hang himself" (22-23). Currimbhoy does not make Ramul stop even there. He goes on to make him say that "we were just playing a game, see?" (23).

Yassin finally makes the decision to go and fight against the Pakistanis. Then he too is breaking others' hearts. Mita is distraught and Sen Gupta's wife weeps and tells him that he is "breaking her heart" (28). Thus, the breaking of the hearts becomes inevitable, and

the burying of broken hearts alone seem to bring out a resolution. It appears as though Yassin has to do that by leaving Sen Gupta's house, and by fighting, and by doing revenge.

Yet, the answer does not seem that simple as broken hearts refuse to be buried, and Yassin has to answer Mrs. Sen Gupta's question, "Wait, wait, Yassin. Are you sure ...sure you're doing the right thing?" with a simple statement, "I don't know" with which the play ends.

The question of what is ethical seems to force one into a moral conundrum in such a circumstance.

At the same time, war is a context which demands (even from artists) silences and overt affinities to projected national identities. And, there seems to be very little choice. As Currimbhoy rightly points out in his letter to Faubion Bowers, "a mistake committed at a particular point of time seems to have a cumulative effect, and one inevitably gets drawn into it all" (qtd. in Agrawal 42). The play, then, provides, what Judith Butler in *Frames of War* argued literature was capable of, "the conditions for breaking out of the quotidian acceptance of war and for a more generalized horror and outrage that will support and impel calls for justice and an end to violence" (911).

Moreover, moral choices are not always optional. Currimbhoy depicts this human craving for the power of choice, for agency, in other plays too. Like Yassin who demands "freedom of thought and action" (19) Henry, the protagonist in *The Clock* too exclaims, "all I want is to live as I choose" (17). Yet, agency is a difficult dream to be realised. Yassin is drawn into his decisions because of his circumstances. But, for Sen Gupta, his choice was more a choice and he decided to choose a way away from seeing the Other, from immersing into the "spiritual optics" that is demanded by

the “first philosophy” (*Totality and Infinity* 304) as Levinas calls his ethics. The refugee crisis in the contemporary context also demands choices incorporating “ethical optics” and the relevance of the play is that it points out a way towards such an optics.

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**QUESTIONS OF RACIAL IDENTITY IN  
CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S  
*THE THING AROUND YOUR NECK***

**Ms. Thankam K. Abraham, Assistant Professor**

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, the Orange Prize-winning writer from Nigeria, seeks to reveal poignantly and powerfully, a variety of concerns that address the African diaspora in the 'New World' in her writings. The collection of short stories titled *The Thing around Your Neck* strongly brings forth issues of ethnic wars, trauma, displacement, immigration hassles, ethnic identities, problems of misogyny in an African society rooted in patriarchy and alternative sexualities. Hailed by a critic as “Chinua Achebe's twenty-first century daughter,” Adichie stays remarkably true to her African identity. She also speaks about the compromises that an average African has to make in order to find acceptance in the ostensibly liberal America, and how The States seems to offer all the security, success, affluence and safety that looks so distant in their homeland. She draws a powerful contrast between dreams, expectations and hard core reality. According to Jess Row, “Adichie is keenly aware of the particular burdens that come with literary success for an immigrant writer, a so-called hyphenated American. Though in this book she strikes a tricky balance exposing, while also at times playing on, her audience's prejudices one comes away from “The Thing Around Your Neck” heartened by her self-awareness and unpredictability.”

The 50s and 60s of the twentieth century saw a flurry of political activism and independence movements in the African continent. “Concurrent with such political changes came also, across



the once colonized world, the retrieval and animation of indigenous culture as an important vehicle of national self-expression, and therefore of resistance to the colonial exclusion of the native as uncouth, uncivilized, inarticulate, irrational” (Bochmer 344). The stories included in the collection bring out vivid pictures of a Nigeria that has been liberated from the grips of colonial exploitation but is tottering and reeling in its walk to a safe and stable society. “Cell One,” the first story, is located in the Nsukka campus, where life should have been easier and smoother with parents 'safely' employed so that the children “had grown up watching Sesame Street, reading Enid Blyton, eating cornflakes for breakfast, attending the university staff primary school in smartly polished brown sandals” (5). Adichie's words seem so innocuous when she ostensibly draws such a serene description of the boy's childhood yet it is a powerful statement about how the minds of the people had been so completely colonised that their modes of entertainment, food habits etc. are heavily borrowed from the wealthy west. The children thus fed on such alien diets do not grow up to be refined, polished and of intellectual bend of mind. The narrator speaks of the burglars from well-to-do homes who break into their neighbours' houses to make easy money. What begins as a story of a robbery, of a girl's frustration at the indulgent attitude her mother has towards her errant brother, goes on to speak of the 'cult' culture among the campus youth, its violence, menace and senselessness, the utter failure of a corrupt law enforcing system that persecutes the guilty and the innocent alike to save its face, and of the harrowing experiences in Cell One, a torture room, a youth of carefree abandon, compared to the painful realities of the life around him.

Nkem in “Imitation” is a woman who feels threatened by the intrusion of a rival in her husband's life. The story, however, subtly

weaves around Nkem's preoccupations with the 'imitations' of indigenous African artefacts her husband takes a joy in collecting. The curios trigger off thoughts about her native land and 'pagan' customs, cruel practices that easily earned them the epithet 'uncivilized.' Nkem's husband Obiora brings his wife to prosperous America, well away from Nigeria with its poverty, hunger and children hawking in traffic hold ups because he wanted his children "to be like their neighbours," the kind of children who sniffed at food that had fallen on the dirt saying it was "spoiled" (24). Nkem contrasts it to her own childhood, when one snatched up the food whatever it was and ate it. Nkem's thoughts are almost painfully centered around her husband, reflecting the androcentric native African culture. The references to her hair are a reminder of black racial identity. Terms like 'relaxer' and 'texturizer,' brought in so casually, are strong assertions of that identity.

Diasporic literature is about lives caught between two worlds and cultures. Nkem speaks of the extreme loneliness of America that "forces egalitarianism on you" (29), and makes the house girl your friend and equal. The pain that she feels as a cheated wife brings forth memories of her youth, when she too had dated married men on the sly. She tries to justify it as the result of the abject poverty that she was in at the time. Her sense of inferiority springs from her lack proficiency in English and her essential identity as a 'Bush Girl.' After acquiring the greencard, she no longer has to face the embarrassing and humiliating interviews with the American Embassy. Yet, she is caught between two selves one which yearns for the "cadence of Igbo and Yoruba and pidgin English spoken around her" (37) and the other which has America snaking its roots under her skin.

"A Private Experience" is a recounting of a traumatic experience of an ethnic conflict between Igbo Christians and Hausa

Muslims, of an unlikely friendship that springs between two women belonging to warring factions. Adichie has drawn a very convincing picture of the sensibilities of ordinary citizens in riot situations. “Ghosts” is another story of trauma, of the Biafran war, how it shatters the dreams and lives of people, how it forces the narrator James Nwoye and others like him to flee to safe destinations like America and Sweden for better life and opportunities, how it finally led to having a grandson who does not understand his native Igbo language and customs. Nwoye comes back to Nsukka after many years to pick up the strands of a life that he and his wife had left behind. Nigeria after the war is one of corruption, lawlessness and anarchy; yet, he chooses to remain there even after he loses his wife. He does not rate the life in Nigeria as good or bad, for him “it is simply mine. And that is what matters” (71).

“On Monday of Last Week,” “The Thing around Your Neck,” “The Shivering” and “The Arrangers of Marriage” are stories of Nigerian immigrants in America. The characters in them have come in pursuit of higher studies, a stable economy, steady income and even as a victim of an 'arranged marriage.' Kamara in “On Monday of Last Week” discovers new sexual sensibilities in her only to be finally disappointed by the woman who awakens them in her. She also discovers the stigma attached to the word 'half-caste' in the American soil whereas in Nigeria it meant “an automatic cool, light-skinned good looks, trips abroad to visit white grandparents” (76). The word becomes highly politically charged in the American context where the blacks strongly resent and fight against the tag of inferiority attached to them. The bewilderment faced by Kamara comes out more powerfully in the narrator of “The Thing around Your Neck,” who is choked by the loneliness and the travails of being an African immigrant in America. So it comes as a welcome relief and pleasure

to Akunna when her boyfriend's parents “did not examine you like an exotic trophy, an ivory tusk” (126).

“The American Embassy” is another story of trauma that makes a mother want to leave the country that consumed her only child and escape to the land of safety, America. The humiliating ordeal at the Embassy office as well as a desire to live in the land that holds the memories of her dead child makes her rethink her decision. In “The Arrangers of Marriage” Adichie circumspects the false notions of blending in that make an immigrant negate his native culture totally even to the extent of giving up one's name (identity). Ofodile Emeka Udenwa alias Dave Bell is completely caught up by the glitz and glamour of the fast American life, and wants his wife too to be like him. His notions of an ideal immigrant gush out when they are out shopping in a supermarket: “Look at the people who shop here; they are the ones who immigrate and continue to act as if they are back in their countries.” He gestured, dismissively, towards a woman and her two children, who were speaking Spanish: “they will always be doomed to supermarkets like this.” His hypocrisy becomes apparent when he confesses that he “had to think about my children's looks. Light-skinned blacks fare better in America” (184). His wife Chinaza musters up enough courage to leave her husband, but later comes back to the fold of marriage, for it was a question of survival in an alien country that demanded 'papers' to accommodate one. According to Asante, “The borrowed Western culture has become part of the African culture and values, which has evolved to a post colonial identity that proponents of post colonial critique seek to uncover. A critical look at the West African sub-region after colonial rule reveals not just the cultural breakdown of Africanism but also the replacement of African culture with Western values, language, and thought.”

“Tomorrow Is too Far” is about a guilty secret that gnaws a woman away, a secret that makes her flee Nigeria that holds the memories of her dead brother whom she hated, to the anonymity of America. “The Headstrong Historian” is a different take altogether, narrated in a style reminiscent of Achebe. It is a story of how colonization takes its roots in Nigeria and how it affects the lives and customs of the people there. Nwamgba, the protagonist loses her son to colonial culture, as she chooses to get him educated in a missionary school. The lot falls on her granddaughter Grace or Afamefuna to reclaim “the lives and smells of her grandmother's world” (192), for the book she would write called *Pacifying with Bullets : A Reclaimed History of Southern Nigeria*. The African diaspora became a historical reality due to colonialism, and the story addresses those many silences in the narration of the history of the 'Dark Continent.' “Jumping Monkey Hill” highlights the essential plurality of African culture that is often unseen by world outside.

According to Jane Shilling, “Family and exile are recurrent themes in this collection: by compulsion or choice Adichie's subjects are often far from home; alienated from the comforting familiarity of place and culture by violence, fear or the hope of a better life. Adichie's birthplace, Nigeria, is the lode star of the collection: the place from where her characters set off to seek education and wealth in far distant places, the home for which they yearn when they are away” With her characteristic captivating style of storytelling, Adichie addresses the issues of Nigerian diaspora political and economic instability in homeland, struggles of acclimatizing in the new environment, the dilemma of choosing between native traditions and ways of the new home, questions of ethnic identity in a disarming manner.

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**THE CULTURE AND POLITICS OF STREET ART:  
VISUALIZING DISSENT AND CONTESTING  
IN 'PUBLIC' SPACE**

**Razeena P. R., Assistant Professor and Dr. Praseedha G.**

Street Art is a visual tradition that has subsisted for over forty years and continues to evolve and modify the street, which is a huge cultural laboratory. Commonly known as Post Graffiti, Street Art fortifies the value of surveying the ongoing materialization of art at street level as a foreshadowing of the coming trends in leading cultural institutions. Modern street art has become an unavoidable visual element of the urban landscape in nearly every city around the world and positions this form as the quintessential art movement of the twenty-first century.

One can recognize the recurrent appearance of certain street artist's pseudonym or tags. They are exceptional as they are unsanctioned interventionist practices, challenge the art institution and commissioned public art and fundamentally question the ethos of ownership through the process of creation. During travel, one could notice the unique styles of street art particular to different geographic locations. When street artists choose to make the move from creating art in the street to creating art style work in the gallery, the meaning and experience of the work changes. Modern street art are re-contextualized from a free, public setting to a private, institutional space, such as a gallery or museum, which is inextricably connected to established systems of regulation and valuation. It then ceases to function as a democratizing means of communication and instead becomes part of a dialogue that has historically privileged certain voices while excluding others.

Street art, a form of expression ancient and modern, public and private - is a medium of communication that crosses boundaries among academicians, cultural theorists, public policy experts and laymen. Deciphering street art requires a perception of the extant literature, centered around the history of the form or a typology of inscriptions or art styles. Work based around problems or themes that highlight diverse contexts, histories and styles of this art form is rare in the prevailing literature. Street Art by nature is cross disciplinary; a breadth of research underlies its universal appeal and its efficacy as a form of literature. Expressing oneself through visual narrative, symbolic languages or iconic marks is a tool in our quest as humans to make sense of the world and ourselves. Today, the act of scrawling figures in spray paint over a surface does not always engender praise. Nonetheless, these unsanctioned messages have become embedded in the visual culture of the late twentieth century and early twenty first century. Scholars know that erasing drawings with swaths of white paint will not stop their expression; street artists will merely adapt their drawings and morph their imagery to new contexts and other surfaces. Incising an image or art on a wall, tree trunk or fresco, painting a billboard or a train and reshaping stone are socially embedded acts that invite the viewer to engage in a dialogue. Experiencing these texts, it asks them to see differently.

The experience of viewing street art in a constructed gallery space is not at all the same as discovering a new work of art, commonly referred to as a 'piece' in one's city streets. The simple replication or simulation of aesthetic style does not necessarily involve the transference of street art's unique style. According to a 2012 article, in *The Independent*, written by Michael Glover, street art is 'art made on the run'. Glover goes on to describe the unique nature of street art. The uncertain lifespan of street art works, as well as its



inherent spirit of urgency and rebellion, make for unique encounters. With this form, there exists an important sociopolitical aspect linked to a work's geographical location, the work's placement within a community and within a system of relations. As art historian Miwon Kwon states, in street art, the site specificity should be considered 'not exclusively as an artistic genre but as a problem idea, as a peculiar cipher of art and spatial politics. It combines ideas about art, architecture and urban design on the one hand and with theories of the city, social spaces and public space on the other.

The concept of vandalism in the form of spray can markings and contemporary ordinances evolved during the late 1970s. Contrast between brash colours, black contour lines and compressed drawings were hallmarks of the 'wildstyle' from almost 40 years ago, a style that continues to this day. The rapid proliferation of this aggressive style of art appearing on the walls of urban centers all over the world has become an international signifier of rebellion. In 1993, culturalist theorist Jean Baudrillard described the art of the streets as a positive, if not revolutionary act, calling it the 'symbolic destruction of social relations'. Baudrillard took pleasure in the levelling effect on social mores induced by the tags and wildstyle calligraphy he saw in subway tunnels. He cheered their subversion of official signs and the chaos that ensued. The pervasive, repeated marks that he found aggressively painted on walls and trains were largely unintelligible to Baudrillard. Thus they became 'empty signifiers' and, for a post structural semiotician, they symbolized an act of war that bombarded the banality and excess of the twentieth century life.

Street Art is omnipresent in both the built and natural environments of virtually every country and culture in the world. This universality makes it hard to define and its malleability is both its strength and weakness. The very presence of art on a wall or on a

train, incised on architecture or inside a church ,scrawled on a bathroom stall, displayed in a gallery or seen among ancient ruins, allows it to become a catalyst for dialogue and controversy .When art in these many contexts are juxtaposed, it becomes a complex expression that can be explored as a cultural document and as a witness to human experience that rarely coincides with dominant cultural narratives. It tends to run parallel to or intersect at hard perpendiculars to such narratives.

Street Art itself is a polyvocal medium. It is composed of ideas, expressions and emotions translated into brief written phrases or visual codes with fluid meanings. Baudrillard enjoyed the visual anarchy in the 1970s, but the 'nonsense -forms' he identified significant meanings for those creating these tags. In at least one sense he was right, art on the streets did start a revolution that was related to past 'unofficial' expression and yet it gave birth to a wholly different visual text. It is a meaningful visual expression or text and is almost entirely dependant on two elements: context and form. For example, an artist crafting latrines on bathrooms walls is speaking to a smaller to a graffiti writer who goes around city using a can of spray paint on a moving train. Similar scaled differences hold true when examining arborglyphs found in the forest of Southern Colorado and Northern New Mexico, ancient Maya palace graffiti and personal commentaries found scratched into early 16th century frescoes from a church in Northern Italy.

Post Graffiti can be seen as parallel text within a culture. It is composed of signs that are inspired and shaped by societal context and physical environment. Like written language, it can be read as a text that communicates meaning through its composition, style and use of syntax. However, it can also be analyzed through its forms and designs. Formal visual elements are characterized by the qualities of

lines, colours, shapes, textures and patterns. The size and scale of piece, relative to its physical environments, affects how a viewer reads and experiences street art. Understanding the subject of a particular graffito, inscription or image is more subjective; these expressions are driven by emotions and often spontaneously made, but they can also be carefully planned texts with sober messages. Scholars and civic leaders alike will stumble over interpreting the messages of these works, modern and ancient, whose meaning can be direct or ambiguous. Swaths of paint, carved masks and scratches might be seen as defacement, as clever, or even as artistry. It is contradictory; at the same time a snapshot, a witness of human experience and an archive of these experiences.

This art form can be considered a form of communication that is an unedited mirror of culture. Explored in this way, it is a separate genre of expression occupying a unique place in the study of texts and images. Humans may have communicated first through sound the speech. Later, experiences became codified, archived and open for interpretation when these expressions, emotions and ideas were translated into signs and visual narratives. Historically, street art in the form of carved masks, scratches, tags and inscriptions-has been dismissed as the musings of societal outcasts or belonging to the visual detritus of urban life. Yet these largely anonymous expressions complicate and challenge our understandings of built environments and the official narratives these structures convey. In transforming our past and our notions of self into universally coded and shared histories, little room has been left for alternative forms of storytelling and of archiving information. The drawings examined on the streets are representative of these other expressions and other narratives. Their omnipresent existence in ancient, historic and contemporary life shapes how one defines public space, official stories and

vandalism.

Examples of street art across the world present new interpretations of old imagery such as arboreal art, ancient art, 'burners' on subway cars, latrinalia, carved rocks, inscriptions on army barracks and writings on sacred saint's portraits. Theoretical tools culled from cross-disciplinary sources along with close examinations of form, content and subject matter has inspired these re-readings of texts, which were dismissed previously as mere vandalism. Street Art invites dialogue. Critics show that viewing these etchings can be transformative, didactic and disturbing. They highlight the visual codes, unusual semantic structures, imagery, colors and media unique to a culture or subculture in creating and codifying meaning. It conveys an emotional immediacy that is valuable both for those inside a subculture and for the outsiders, including those who study it. Ironically, these essential anarchic features also make it target for devaluation and erasure.

Street Art offers profound social, political, psychological and cultural insights. It facilitates a discourse that refuses to adhere to any normative protocol. The discourse is inherently democratic because all persons possess the capability to initiate and participate in an uninhibited manner. One could say, it is a means of venting frustrations, to say things one would normally not dare speak about. No rules define or constrain graffiti discourse; individuals are unrestrained to determine the topic, the language and the duration of the interaction. This autonomous quality represents an integral and distinguishing component of Street Art. One may also use a semiotic perspective to facilitate a different insight into gender differences in it. They contend that a thorough understanding of gender can only be achieved by moving beyond positivistic and psychoanalytic perspectives to the underlying level of meaning found in the art form

and by constructing an interpretation that considers data from all strata of the society. The semiotic perspective begins with the recognition that street art are communication, a discourse among anonymous persons. To draw in a public space is to communicate since the form is in visible areas. The contention is that this art form allows for open discourses (sexist, racist and homophobic speech) that organizations cannot sanction, but which may also act to establish or reinforce the privileging aspects of patriarchal practices, thus supporting the hegemonic disorder. What emerges from the street art is that context affects the message and meaning.

Participants of street art create a social world that is maintained by language themes and rules. The streets become an interchange of language, interpretations and ideologies by members in a group; it is an organized system where language functions, social practices and agencies such as dominance, resistance, conflict negotiation, critique, commands and challenges, are intertwined and whereby writers deploy these practices to actively reproduce and transfer aspects of culture. These drawings break the hegemonic hold of conventional style over the urban environment and the situations of daily life. As a form of aesthetic sabotage, it interrupts the pleasant, efficient uniformity of "planned" urban space and predictable urban living. For the writers, public art forms disrupt the lived experience of mass culture, the passivity of mediated consumption. Street Art is art. Aesthetic criteria and motives behind the artist's work far outweigh arguments on legality or unconventional presentation. While vibrantly rich in history, graffiti has a controversial past, present, and future that will likely continue to be the subject of debate, especially with the insurgence of street art, an art form that often overlaps graffiti art in subject matter, media, aesthetic appearance, and placement as a public form of art. Street art has historically been

viewed as a form of vandalism, a curious enigma, and a menace to society. Infused in the emergence of the hip hop culture, the public art revolution primarily took place in New York City in the 1970s and 1980s. At that time, urban youth began extensively spray-painting subway cars, trains, and walls, providing a voice to the disenfranchised, anti-authoritarian rebels seeking an identity to be seen, felt, and heard by all. It seems that this style of graffiti-inspired art is still present, yet transformed and altered such that it now blurs the boundary between it and another art form called street art. Close contemporary to the street art revolution, graffiti has a foothold into contemporary, mainstream urban culture, yet still maintains its roots in street art, with influences that are unmistakable. While graffiti art is traditionally seen as an art form emphasizing self-proliferation of a namesake via use of creative, bold lettering with spray-paint, street art knows no boundaries, often incorporating lettering but also using stenciling, painting, wheat pasting, and sticker “bombing” as art forms that share a similar aesthetics.

Scholars have praised street art for its unique ability to give a voice to minority groups and marginalized people. Critics see the act of creating street art as both a ‘celebration of existence’ and ‘a declaration of resistance’. Slovenian feminist writer Tea Hvala views street art as ‘the most accessible medium of resistance’ for oppressed people to use against dominant culture due to its tactical, non-institutional, decentralized qualities. Hvala views street art as an example of what de Certeau called a ‘spatializing practice’ that ‘may challenge or complement our understanding of how diverse individuals inhabit the city and perform their experiences of such habitation. This could be connected to Edward Soja’s concept of ‘thirdspace’, which refers to ‘lived spaces of representation’ in which various social forces and institutions, as well as hegemonic values and beliefs collide with the reality of various modes of lived

experience'. As such, when encountering street art in urban 'thirdspace' such as alleys or underpasses, the viewer 'engages in a form of mapping urban space.'

In a genre that is often remarkably stable in form and tone, street art is also continuously evolving and presents scholars with many unknowns. The value of this art form as an intimate, sub-rosa narrative will be better when we consider graffiti as yet another tool in our quest to make sense of our world and ourselves. Modern street art form has developed completely and separately from traditional, institutionalized art forms. Street artists today draw inspiration from art history at times, but it cannot be said that this art form drew directly out of any such canon or typology. Modern street art did not begin as an art form at all, but rather, as a form of text-based urban communication that developed in its own networks. Whether abhorred or adored, street art provoke passionate debate, reflecting the prominent role they play in the cultural landscape and consciousness of a city.

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**TROPES OF APPROPRIATION -  
COLONIAL AMBIVALENCE IN FORSTER'S  
*A PASSAGE TO INDIA***

**Ms. Shalini Rachel Varghese**

Of the substantial body of fiction that captures the intricacies of the east-west encounter in the colonial era, famously called the Raj novels, one of the most elaborate, sensitive and consequently discussed novels is E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* published in 1924. The novel continues to be listed twenty-fifth on the Modern Library's list of 100 Best English language novels of the twentieth century. The 1984 film version of the novel directed by David Lean, starring Judy Davis, Victor Banerjee, James Fox, Peggy Ashcroft and Alec Guinness won two Oscars and numerous other awards. Forster's attempt, in this novel, is to understand the difference in India by means of a western vocabulary of liberal tolerance and has gained much critical acclaim in India and abroad.

The novel exhibits a certain transcultural modernism that examines the habits of thought that are fundamental to a European sense of superiority- a motive accomplished in the characterization of the open minded Fielding versus the narrow political snobbery of the larger ruling class British in India represented by the McBrydes and the Turtons. Much of the enduring interest in the novel comes from the metropolitan modernism in it, which Forster constructs as consciously transnational, and the novel thereby becomes a progressive move in the nineteenth and twentieth century colonial discourse. In this, Forster seems to take on the moral complacency of the imperial British and, with his "only connect" motto he underscores the importance of seeing people through experience



rather than as expressions of as a set of predetermined concepts. A critique of the emotional and spiritual limitations of the English, trapped by convention, is seen in the characterization of a considerable number of British officials and their wives who even verge on caricature in the novel. Thus, the philosophic and poetic import of the novel accounts for its classic status, even as it is explicitly concerned with presenting the socio-political case of colonial India under the British rule. The purpose of this reading of the novel is, however, to re-examine Forster's critique of the British, against the perception of India as a formless civilization, positioning his colonial narrative as a site of ambivalence in the history of colonial constructions. It explores the corroboration of European points of view through the introduction of the mystical, the monstrous and the extra-ordinary as an inevitable interpolation in the meeting ground between the east and the west. Forster's novel has no visible demon or monster but engages with the idea of the demonic or the monstrous in the incident of the Marabar caves which unleashes the catastrophe in the plot of the novel.

The incident that rocks Chandrapore occurs when Dr. Aziz, the Indian protagonist of Forster's novel invites his English guests namely, Mrs. Moore and Miss. Quested on an expedition of the Marabar hills. After a train journey, followed by an elephant ride, Aziz and his guests, with a procession of servants and local villagers, make their way to the cave, when an oppressive soundsurrounds them. When they visit the first cave, Mrs. Moore feels faint and stumbles out of the cave in distress. It is not the smell and crush of the crowd that distress her, rather, it is the contrast between the silence of the journey and her awareness of the terrifying echo inside the cave which reduces every single sound to the same monotonous noise. The echo of the sound(s) in the cave is described in Mrs. Moore's words,

“Boum is the sound as far as the human alphabet can express it, or 'bou-oum', or 'ou-boum'- utterly dull” (137). She further explicates the nature of the echo: “If one had spoken vileness in that place, or quoted lofty poetry, the comment would have been the same- 'ou-boum’”(139). A distressed Mrs. Moore interprets the ominous message of the echo as one that negates the value of everything. The echo stands for a cosmic meaninglessness that has left her disoriented in her effort to know “the real India.” Once out of the first cave, Mrs. Moore decides to stay behind and suggests that fewer people should be allowed to the next cave. The exploration of the cave ends up in the cataclysmic disaster of Adela accusing Aziz of having assaulted her in one of the caves. Adela's story appears to suggest guilt but Forster's plot has cautiously pointed at a mutual lack of attraction between the characters of Aziz and Adela. Fielding is convinced of Aziz's innocence but the frustrations of other Anglo-Indians manifest in support of Adela with such emotive phrases as “lady, a young lady”(169) and “an English girl fresh from England” (170) and the readers are left puzzled as to what happened in the cave. The rest of the novel dwells elaborately on the aftermath of Aziz's trial and the complicated Indo-English relations that surface therein.

Cyril Fielding, Forster's most sympathetic English character in the novel, and widely regarded as Forster's own mouthpiece of liberal humaneness, moderation and concern for justice, comes up with the theory that the guide has assaulted Adela. Forster has prepared the readers to accept a parallel psychological breakdown in Adela's step by step recollection of the events of the cavelerin McBryde's bungalow. She remembers particularly how she scratched the wall of the cave with her fingernail to start the echo. Mrs. Moore too is thrown out of gear completely from her earlier stands of fortitude, charity and equanimity by the terrifying echo.

The echo in the cave has affected her psychologically, consequent to which she has a mystic experience, akin to a nervous breakdown and loses her faith in Christianity. She turns uncharacteristically querulous and more cynical thereafter. What is constructed in the nature of the echo is not only a mystic aura that is indefinable, but a force that negates everything, and throws all action into uncertainty. The caves are attributed with a character as they are described to have “fingers and fists” (117) and the echo in the caves lend the overwhelming voice to this figure. To quote from the novel, “Fists and fingers thrust above the advancing soil—here at last is their skin, finer than any covering acquired by animals, smooth rather than windless water, more voluptuous than love. The radiance increases, the flames touch one another kiss, expire. The cave is dark again, like all caves (117). At this point, Forster oversteps the realms of the real and the rational that had secured the bond of friendship between Fielding and Aziz earlier.

The suggestion of a supernatural force, or the spirit of irrationality, begins symbolically at the point where the echoless silence culminates into the meaningless echo in the caves. The caves repeat each other almost to infinity, each the echo and pattern of the one before: an eight foot long tunnel that leads to a circular room twenty feet in diameter. Inside it, it is dark but an alighted match reveals that the inner walls of the caves are highly polished and reflect beautiful natural shades and shapes. The novel prepares its readers for a catastrophe that is bound to deviate from its realistic setting at this spatial point. Mrs. Moore's uncanny experience in the first cave, followed by the memory of the echo gradually destroys her hold on life. A similar frightening moment in the cave leads young Adela to spin a tale of physical attack from a mental meltdown. Adela's rationality and Mrs. Moore's liberal outlook diffuse upon coming into

contact with the echo. The overpowering hollow of the caves is a discovery made by its English visitors inside the caves only after Forster makes the invitation to speculate the Marabar in great detail from the outside before the expedition. The enticing magnetism of the caves is but a cover for the empty and the hollow, a power inimical to man, rejecting individuality and negating all life that enter them. The resounding “boum” of this frightening spirit cancels all voices that speak to or approach it. It is a monstrous, supernatural force that destroys all who seek it.

It is interesting to note the way in which Forster uses the “supernatural” in the cave to epitomize the Indian encounter? One of the reasons for this is perhaps his conscious avoidance of certain otherforms of cultural stereotyping that occurs in colonial literature. For instance, no Indian is shown to be uncivilized in the way perceived by the average Anglo- Indian in the novel. Even the symbols of snakes and kites do not convey ideas of fear and destruction as might be imagined by the Anglo-Indian. The reader, therefore, notices the distancing of a range of stereotypes that find its place in the vast body of colonial literature—the ignorance of the natives, their effeminacy and indolence, their oversexed nature, their essential unworthiness and so on. Of the many definitions of “monster” offered by *The Oxford English Dictionary*, two are useful in the validation of the invisible monster of Forster's novel, namely, “something extraordinary or unnatural: a prodigy, a marvel” and “a person of inhuman and horrible cruelty or wickedness, a monstrous example of some particular vice.” Though neither a visible thing nor a person, the “boum” of the echo are spatial metaphors of the unnatural and nihilistic. When, for Forster, the broad vocabulary is one of western liberal tolerance and many of the stereotypical notions of native ignorance are contradicted throughout the narrative, the text

employs tropes that are supernatural to admit a native opacity that is further endorsed in the transformed views of a mature and objective Fielding at the end of the novel.

The novel carries out its obvious narrative function of rejecting the seemingly stubborn opposition between British overlordship and the increasingly defensive Indian resistance to it, but also mystifies the mongrelized and disruptive aspect of the encounter in the process. The monster or supernatural, then attains the purpose of essentialising what is not possible for Forster's just exercise of social realism. In rendering the supernatural as the symbol of native opacity, Forster also expatiates the mystic ground of European bafflement. If in D.H. Lawrence's autobiographical novel about Australia, *Kangaroo*, written around the same time, otherness is recognized as disrupted and unrepresentable, Forster does attempt to represent otherness, only to find it mystifying and obstructed by spiritual monsters. As Elleke Boehmer notes in her study of Forster in *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, "Forster by contrast does not try to signify India, and to do so in conjunction with the West, as a mystifying- if also a self-regulating confusion opposed to the West's control. The panoply of imagery of the Orient is seemingly so accessible as to be irresistible. India is a moral obfuscation, a vast and tenebrous chaos" (143). If the caves stand for the India that is irresistible, the monstrous echo stands for the moral obfuscation and infinite chaos, the inevitable outcome of encountering the irresistible.

The contradictory assortment offered by Forster's novel finds its quintessential expression in the aporia, the dark spot of the caves with its marauding echo, suggestive of everything that is mongrelized and disruptive. At the level of social realism, however, Forster's novel attempts largely to reject the intractable opposition between British supremacy and Indian resistance. Forster offers the liberal option of

an “aristocracy of the sensitive” (Boehmer 142) in the form of friendship between Fielding and Aziz. British dishonesty is to be condemned even as India is chaotic, but individual Britons and Indians, like Fielding and Aziz, are occasionally able to rise above the divide in order to affirm human value. However, the point of divergence remains unsettled till the very end and the monstrous echo in the cave is an ominous reminder of the very deep and unimaginable (at least in a provisional time frame) structural integration needed in bridging the divide between the East and the West. As Elleke Boehmer has remarked in her essay, “Metropolitans and Mimics”, “Suspended between the polarities of social naturalism and mystic symbolism, *A Passage to India* is a collection of dissonances” (143).

The caves and the echo as cultural tropes, represent what fascinates and appalls at the same time, thus becoming the site of ambivalence in a colonial discourse. Forster's interest in the obliquities and misrepresentations of English-Indian relation is real, but the writer is unable to release himself from a Euro-typical representation of India as an impenetrable “muddle” (43). To the questioning westerner, this even effects a warning that India can offer nothing more than moral confusion. The experience of the infinitely recurring nothingness in the Marabar caves plays out this suspicion.

The tropes of negation that Forster presents declare the entire land of India as unknowable and formless much like Conrad's Africa. So, while Forster gives vent to liberal discomforts honestly, he does lean on colonialist preconceptions to represent those discomforts. While avoiding several stereotypical conceptions of race and nationality, the novel succumbs to the construction of the Orient as strange, fantastic and bizarre. Edward Said's theory of the construction of binary opposites in the history of Orientalism stands

disrupted in some ways in *The Passage to India* considering that the West is not assumed to be a seat of knowledge and learning as against the Orient as a place of ignorance and naiveté. Yet, the exploration of India as a land of spiritual options ends up in the western perception of the East as indefinable and bizarre against the rational spirit. Unequal dichotomies, as critiqued by Said, do get constructed here, adding to the substantial power and influence of colonial literature in westerners' views of other peoples. Thus, *A Passage to India* continues to be a historically important novel for its scathing exposition of social and ethical presumptions under the Raj and ends up reiterating yet another specific and well-worn cultural opposition, where the West is described as the cradle of the humane values, contrary to the “monstrous and extraordinary” in the East.

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**AESTHETICS IN POPE FRANCIS'S  
“LAUDATO SI”**

**Dr. Sr. A. Princy Anto, Assistant Professor**

*The best and most beautiful things in the world  
cannot be seen or even touched  
they must be felt with the heart  
- Helen Keller.*

Beauty is often associated with something aesthetically pleasing and something that gives us a certain feeling of pleasure. In our society, ideas of beauty are socially constructed. Every culture has its own beauty ideal, and every period of history held its own standards on what is considered beautiful. Beauty is much more than cosmetics; beauty is a measure of affect, a measure of emotion. Beauty is the capacity of an artifact to evoke a pleasurable emotional response. People sense beauty in many things, and aesthetics is the study of how the mind beholds beautiful objects. The experience itself is purely a mindful event. One important purpose of art is to instil an aesthetic response. Aesthetics is the branch of philosophy concerned with the nature and appreciation of art, beauty and good taste. The nature of beauty is one of the most permanent and disruptive themes in Western philosophy. It is a primary theme among ancient Greek, Hellenistic, and medieval philosophers and was central to eighteenth and nineteenth-century thought, as represented in treatments by such thinkers as Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Hume, Burke, Kant, Schiller, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Santayana and Theodor Adorno. Immanuel Kant, a prominent eighteenth-century German philosopher's work initiated dramatic changes in the field of aesthetics.



Like Kant, Schopenhauer, another German philosopher of nineteenth century, held that the phenomenon of beauty would only be illuminated through a careful scrutiny of its effects on the subject. For Schopenhauer, aesthetic experience comes in two main varieties—the beautiful and the sublime, and can be had through perception of both nature and art. Schopenhauer states that aesthetic contemplation is characterized by *objectivity*. The intellect in its normal functioning is in the service of the will. He opines that our normal perception is always tainted by our subjective strivings. The aesthetic point of view, since it is freed from such strivings, is more objective than any other ways of regarding an object. Art does not transport the viewer to an imaginary or even ideal realm. Rather, it affords the opportunity to view life without the distorting influence of his will.

After a century appeared Theodor Adorno with his aesthetic theory and his book on aesthetics published posthumously. The idea of “truth content” is the pivotal center around which all the concentric circles of Theodor Adorno's aesthetics turn. To gain access to this center, one must temporarily suspend standard theories about the nature of truth and allow for artistic truth to be dialectical, disclosive, and non-propositional. According to Adorno, each art work has its own import by virtue of an internal dialectic between content and form. The art work has internal truth content to the extent that the art work's significance can be found internally and externally either true or false. Such truth content is not a metaphysical idea or essence hovering outside the art work. Truth content is the way in which an art work simultaneously challenges the way things are and suggests how things could be better, but leaves things practically unchanged: “Art has truth as the semblance of the illusionless” (132).

This paper intends to analyze the beauty in the Encyclical *Laudato Si'* of Pope Francis, who is the current and the 266<sup>th</sup> Pope of

the Catholic Church. He chose 'Francis' as his papal name in honour of Saint Francis of Assisi. Throughout his life, both as an individual and as a religious leader, Pope Francis has been celebrated for his humility, his concern for the poor, and his commitment to dialogue as a way to build bridges between people of all backgrounds, beliefs, and faiths. He is credited with having a less formal approach to the papacy than his predecessors, for instance choosing to reside in the ordinary guest house rather than in the papal apartments of the apostolic palace used by his predecessors. He maintains that the Church should be more open and welcoming. Pope maintains the traditional views of the Church regarding abortion, social teaching, ordination of women and clerical celibacy. He opposes consumerism, irresponsible development, and supports taking action on climate change, a focus of his papacy with the promulgation of *Laudato Si'* - the second Encyclical published on 18 June 2015.

According to its etymology, an Encyclical is a circular letter. A Papal Encyclical is the name typically given to a letter written by a Pope to a particular audience of Bishops. Encyclicals indicate high papal priority for an issue at a given time. They get their name from the Greek word for *circle*, or *circular*. Normally, Encyclicals offer important guiding principles for the faithful to reflect on. Papal Encyclicals are indeed to be taken very seriously and should challenge us all to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ. The Encyclical, *Laudato Si'* is addressed not only to Catholics but to every person living on this planet. This Encyclical is a challenging call for a bold cultural revolution in how we think about technological progress and economic growth. He says the degradation of our environment, like, rapid change, unsustainable overconsumption, indifference to the poor, and the decay of social values, is a symptom of deeper problems. He offers a variety of solutions, including a change in

lifestyles away from extreme consumerism and towards a greater sense of social responsibility. The second title of the Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, “On Care for our Common Home,” instils in the reader a commonality among all the humanity. The Pope gives awareness to his brethren, on pressing needs of the present time. As the Pope delineates such grave issues of high significance, the reader is drawn very close to his perturbing mind and is awakened with an aesthetic sense in the whole text.

In its general aspect, the beauty of the Encyclical arises yet, from the Pope's desire for a dialogue, a conversation which includes everyone, His target is to make humanity painfully aware of what is happening to the world and think of the pangs of the world as part of personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it. To quote Pope's own words, “All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents” (No. 14). He appeals to give special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions in this endeavour.

In Schopenhauer's view, almost all human beings, are capable of aesthetic experience, otherwise they would be “absolutely insensitive to beauty and sublimity - in fact these words would be meaningless for them” (218). Notwithstanding this nearly universally-shared capacity for aesthetic experience, Schopenhauer remarks that it is enjoyed only occasionally by the majority of people and is enjoyed in a much sustained manner and to a high degree only by the genius. There are two jointly necessary and sufficient conditions for any properly aesthetic experience, one subjective and one objective. According to him, aesthetic experience consists in the subject's achieving *will-less* perception of the world. In order for the subject to attain such perception, her intellect must cease viewing

things in the ordinary way - relationally and ultimately in relation to one's will- she must “stop considering the Where, When, Why and Wherefore of things but simply and exclusively consider the *What*” (201). In other words, will-less perception is perception of objects simply for the understanding of what they are essentially, in and for themselves, and without regard to the actual or possible relationships those phenomenal objects have to the striving self. In short, the beauty of a work of art consists in the fact that it holds up a clear mirror to a certain ideas inherent in the world in general. The beauty of a work of poetic art in particular is that it renders the idea inherent in mankind, and thereby leads it to knowledge of these ideas. Beauty, however, in its general aspect, is the inseparable characteristic of the idea when it has become known. In other words, everything is beautiful in which an idea is revealed; for to be beautiful means no more than to express an idea clearly.

In accordance with this perspective, the Encyclical appeals to our aesthetic sense primarily because it is pregnant with ideas the ideas which are interrelated and related to our lives and the ideas are conveyed clearly as Schopenhauer says. Inviting our attention to the patron saint of ecology, St. Francis of Assisi, the Pope elaborates on the indivisibility of the book of nature, its interconnectedness and its inseparability. The Pope encourages us to approach the nature and the environment with an openness to awe and wonder, and to speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world. If not we all will be masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters and unable to set limits on our immediate needs (No. 11). The Pope appeals us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness. Pope Francis repeatedly reminds in the Encyclical that “the world is a joyful mystery to be contemplated with gladness and praise” (No. 12).

The Pope makes his ideas incredibly clear when he talks about the beauty of the interconnectedness of ecological approach and social approach. He is equally concerned of the cry of the earth as well as the cry of the poor. The Pope is deeply conscious about the disappearance of various species of plants and animals which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost forever. The Pope laments that the great majority become extinct for reasons related to human activity. Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us. Simultaneously, he is very much bothered about people who are living on the fringes of society, who are affected by global warming, draught etc. The Pope makes it very clear that when we fail to acknowledge as part of the reality the worth of a poor person, a human embryo, a person with disabilities and he stresses that, then it becomes difficult to hear the cry of nature because everything is connected. He stresses the fact that environmental deterioration and human and ethical degradation are closely linked. Human ecology also finds a chance in the Pope's concern. The Pope recommends the relationship between human life and the moral law, which is inscribed in our nature and is necessary for the creation of a more dignified environment. Learning to accept our body, to care for it and to respect its fullest meaning, is an essential element of any genuine human ecology.

Pope Francis is fully aware of the beauty of science and appreciates the way it improves the quality of human life, from useful domestic appliances to great transportation systems, bridges, buildings and public spaces. It can also produce art and enable men and women immersed in the material world to “leap” into the world of beauty. He marvels at the beauty of an aircraft and a skyscraper. He finds beauty in the one who uses new technical instruments, and in the

contemplation of such beauty, there occurs a quantum leap, resulting in a fulfilment which is uniquely human. At the same time he recommends that it is dire time for liberation from the present technocratic paradigm. To quote the lines from the Encyclical: “In this sense, we stand naked and exposed in the face of our ever-increasing power, lacking the wherewithal to control it. We have certain superficial mechanisms, but we cannot claim to have a sound ethics, a culture and spirituality genuinely capable of setting limits and teaching clear-minded self-restraint” (No. 105).

Adorno's premise is that, each piece of art has its own “truth content” that can be discovered. There is one specific message to be discovered within an artist's creativity. Although, there will be always an individualized interpretation of that art work, both positive and negative, those interpretations need not define the artist's work. Creative expressions are essentially a form of the subconscious become part of one's daily reality. Creating art work in any form allows one to communicate a core idea that is important to the writer at that moment. This is the truth content according to Adorno. If the writer can focus on this truth content and weave the art work around it, then the writer has created a unique form of expression that makes his key points hit home.

The truth content is crystal clear in the Encyclical as it sheds light on certain issues like the deficit of present media and digital world. The Pope grieves that in spite of their omnipresence, their influence stops people from learning 'how to live wisely, to think deeply and to love generously'. The Pope is greatly bothered that in such a context, the great sages of the past run the risk of going unheard amid the noise and distraction of an information overload (No. 47). The Pope also notes that as many professionals, opinion makers, communications media and centres of power, being located in

affluent urban areas, are far removed from the poor, with little direct contact with their problems. They live and reason from the comfortable position of a high level of development and a quality of life well beyond the reach of the majority of the world's population. This lack of physical contact and encounter, encouraged at times by the disintegration of our cities, can lead to a numbing of conscience and negation of parts of reality (No. 49).

Conveyance of ideas and the truth content are unified when the Pope speaks of the tyrannical anthropocentrism which is at work, unconcerned of other creatures. So there is disappearance of certain cultures and consequently imposition of certain other cultures. At the same time he enforces the need for an adequate anthropology. In the Pope's observation, there are too many special interests, and economic interests easily end up trumping the common good and manipulating information so that their own plans will not be affected. The Pope remarks in one of his earlier writings, "Whatever is fragile, like the environment, is defenceless before the interests of a defied market, which become the only rule" (No. 56). Pope Francis says we lack the culture needed to confront the crisis; we lack leadership capable of striking out on new paths and meeting the needs of the present with concern for all and without prejudice towards coming generations. The establishment of a legal framework which can set clear boundaries and ensure the protection of ecosystems has become indispensable (No. 53). The Pope promotes a stewardship among human beings in his relation to other living beings of the world.

The Pope emphasizes the indispensable beauty of unity in diversity. He pleads us to strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family. There are no frontiers or barriers, political or social, behind which we can hide, still less is there room for the globalization of indifference (No.52). But we need only take a frank

look at the facts to see that our common home is falling into serious disrepair. The Pope still encourages having hope in redirecting our steps, to solve our problems. As a remedy, the Pope suggests we have to show respect for the various cultural riches of different peoples, their art and poetry, their interior life and spirituality. If we are truly concerned to develop an ecology capable of remedying the damage we have done, no branch of the sciences and no form of wisdom can be left out, and that includes religion and the language particular to it. There needs to be a distinctive way of looking at things, a way of thinking, policies, an educational programme, a lifestyle and a spirituality which together generate resistance to the assault of the technocratic paradigm. Otherwise, even the best ecological initiatives can find themselves caught up in the same globalized logic. To seek only a technical remedy to each environmental problem which comes up is to separate what is in reality interconnected and to mask the true and deepest problems of the global system.

As conclusion, the Pope stimulates a deep reflection in the readers and thereby a renewal of the human heart. As the Pope unleashes his heart in the Encyclical so that human race may handle the delicate equilibrium with better care and concern in future times, the ideas are communicated meticulously well. In short, the Pope illustrates the beauty of creation, dignity of every person, mystery of the universe, message of each creature in the harmony of creation, universal communion, integral ecology, principle of the common good, transparency in decision making, etc. in the successive pages of his Encyclical. He says there is nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions. He encourages us to have education in environmental responsibility. The Pope also persuades us to adopt the culture of reusing, revamping and recycling instead of the use and throw culture. The Pope advocates in the Encyclical, a good aesthetic education and a maintenance of healthy environment. The



Encyclical's beauty is apparent in its exterior and in its core.

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**LIVING LIKE THE TSANCHIFINS:  
ANALYZING ROOTEDNESS OF THE NATIVE  
AMERICANS IN BARRY LOPEZ'S FICTION**

**Dr. Praseedha G., Assistant Professor**

Every tribe across the world have their own sanctified individual order, a certain way of living. This paper attempts a reading into an Indigenous Native Indian Tsanchifins tribe, using Barry Lopez's short fictional work titled, "The Language of Animals." The paper also makes a comparison between the Indigene point of view as against the Western Eurocentric worldview on matters concerning land, religion and spirituality, the animal and human kind, the concept of continuum, the power of animals, education etc.

Barry Holstun Lopez, an American photographer and writer, focuses mainly on the natural history of the McKenzie River Valley region, including the Clear Lake in the high Cascades of Eastern Linn County in the Willamette National Forest. He is best known for his books on natural history and the environment such as *Giving Birth to Thunder and Sleeping with His Daughter: Coyote Builds North America*. His work titled *Of Wolves and Men* includes scientific information, folklore, and essays on the wolf's role in human culture. Lopez's other works include the fictional narratives *Desert Notes: Reflections in the Eye of a Raven* (1976) and *River Notes: The Dance of Herons* (1979); a volume of short fiction, *Winter Count* (1981) and the collections of essays *Crossing Open Ground* (1988) and *About This Life* (1998).

Lopez's close proximity with the Tsanchifins, an indigenous group, makes him a powerful advocate of the Native way of life. The

Tsanchifins, a part of the Kalapuyans who lived around the Oregon region, are an American Indian group who, in the late eighteenth century, numbered about three thousand, and occupied the Willamette Valley of Western Oregon. A smallpox epidemic in 1782-1783 had wiped out an estimated two thousand Kalapuya, and between 1850 and 1853, large numbers were again taken by the disease. After being removed to reservation lands in 1854 and 1855, the Kalapuya dwindled to near extinction by the early- twentieth century and, today, they number no more than about a hundred. The tribes were known for their strong ties to natural history of the region. In the present times, Lopez writes in his “The Language of Animals” that, “Only rarely, as I hear it, does someone stumble upon an old, or very old, campsite... I've lingered in such camps, in a respectful and deferential mood, as though the sites were shrines...” (159). This reverence for the Tsanchifins' way of life, helps him gain access to their theology of life-one that focuses on the life on earth and not on man- that is realigning the anthropocentric to make it the bio-centric.

### **A. The Native Indian Vs. Eurocentered View of the Land:**

Lopez feels lucky to have lived in a place that was too steep for agriculture to develop, too heavily wooded to be good for grazing, and too poor in commercial quantities of minerals for mining (though the evidence that all three occurred on a small scale is present). In short, the place was not fit for human exploitation. When he moved into the McKenzie Valley, he learnt to feel the place with a child-like curiosity, where he learnt to identify indigenous plants and animals and birds migrating and slowly began to expand the foundation of his observations of these lives, which helped him feel and alter the nature of his assumptions. Slowly, he writes in “The Language of Animals” that he began to recognize that “clusters of life in the valley (were) as opposed to individual, isolated species” (160), thereby recognised the

interrelatedness between men and their environment, the flora and the fauna.

While the Native man looks at the land as sacred and given by a creator or Supreme Being, the West looks upon land and its resources as being available for development and extraction for the benefit of humans. Lopez looks about his locale and writes: “Pressure is building locally now to develop retirement real estate trailer parks, RV parks, condominiums; but, for the moment, it's still relatively easy to walk for hours across stretches of land that have never been farmed, logged, mined, grazed, or homesteaded” (160). This, in turn, forces the focus from the land to the needs of the human community—one that is pleasure-driven and business motivated, making humans the most important entity in the whole world. Interconnectedness and relatedness are invalid concepts in the present day and everything gets weighted according to the purpose the land serves the 'man.' While amassing wealth is valued as important for personal gain, there is an indirect sanction for greed and selfish monopoly. To the modern man, comfort and worth in life was related to how successful one was in achieving his/her goals. To Native Americans, on the other hand, comfort was measured by the quality of your relationships with environment and its community. Barry Lopez lives in a clapboard cottage within that river valley, forty miles upstream of Eugene, Oregon. He has lived in that house in that valley for thirty-five years, and he writes, “When I walk in the woods or along the creeks,” “I'm looking for integration, not conversation. I want to be bound more deeply into the place, to be included, even if only as a witness, in events that animate the landscape” (“Language of Animals” 162).

### **B. Religion and Spirituality:**

One of the major characteristics of the Native American religious belief system is the concept of animism—the belief that all

living things have souls-and this includes the wild animals and plants. It is also believed that natural phenomena such as lightning, fire, or thunder have souls. This majorly affects their relationship with nature. Animism has many forms, which reflect the geographical environment, the religious or spiritual cultural history, and the distinct worldview of the people groups who practice its various expressions. Native American tribes embrace the belief that each of their people have animal totems-animal that is believed by a particular society to have spiritual significance and that is adopted by it as an emblem. These totems are spirit guides that might appear in dreams, or Vision Quests, in the form of an animal. These animal totems, or spirit guides, walk through life with the animists, teaching and guiding them and, in some instances protecting them. This takes us to the realm of eco-spirituality which is a manifestation of the spiritual connection between human beings and the environment. Eco-spirituality incorporates an intuitive and embodied awareness of all life and engages a relational view of person to planet, inner to outer landscape, and soul to soil.

### **C. Concept of Continuum:**

Paul Watson, in his essay, "A Call for Biocentric Religion," posits the concept of 'continuum' as living within the understanding of the connectedness of all things. All that came before and all that will come later are seen as one and the same. Past, present, and future are different stretches of the same river. Like the molecules of water in a river, the living beings of the past remain connected to the living beings of the future through the living beings of the present (177). This thought holds true with the Native Americans, who observe and discover that the natural history of a place is interconnected using the concept of continuum. To the Eurocentered man, who has not been influenced by this concept, Lopez suggests two possible methods,

chiefly to realise first hand and experience this concept of continuum: one, to enter it repeatedly and attentively on your own, or to give ones attention instead-or alternately-to its occupants. The most trustworthy occupants, he believes, are those with no commercial ties; beings whose sense of ownership is guided not by profit but by responsible occupancy.

#### **D. The Animals and Human kind:**

Barry Lopez is of the opinion that the focus should be on wild animals, and not domesticated ones. He says in his “The Language of Animals”:

Coyotes, rattlesnakes, mountain lion, deer, and bear I came upon in the surrounding mountains and deserts. These creatures seemed more vital than domestic animals. They seemed to tremble in the aura of their own light... Wild animals are lean. They have no burden of possessions, no need for extra clothing, eating utensils, elaborate dwellings. They are so much more integrated into the landscape than human beings are, swooping its contours and bolting down its pathways with bewildering speed. They travel unerringly through the dark. Holding their gaze, I saw the intensity and clarity I associated with the presence of a soul. (Lopez 162)

The group of wild animals is referred to as the “indigenous” animals (161), making them a species like human with a shared past related to land. To observe and learn from the animals, it is necessary to find a common language by which we can converse with each other. This idea may seem absurd and Lopez points out that he doesn't mean this to be like a Socratic dialogue with animals. On the other hand, he affirms that what needs to be done is, “To listen to what is already being communicated” (162). To insist on a conversation with the unknown, according to the Western Eurocentric viewpoint,

is to demonstrate impatience and it is to imply that any such encounter must include your being heard. To the Native on the other hand, it is a way of reiterating his interconnectedness; acknowledging the continuum and the membership of multi-species that encompasses all ecosystems.

### **E. The power of animals:**

According to native belief animals have the power to connect with nature and with man, if man is patient and willing. This idea then opens up a more profound space where communication can take place, when the focus on the man's position on earth is realigned in relation to the animal and the spiritual realm. Using this belief-as opposed to the usual human-oriented one-it can be observed that animals have volition; they have intention and the power to influence; and they have the capacity to intervene in man's life. The Natives who believe in the spirituality of animals, assert that the purpose of the conversation is to affirm a spirituality shared by both humans and animals. Their observation also brings alive the idea that animals are engaged in the world at a deep level. There is an acceptance of interspecies equality that allows a sense of planetary belonging. To be part of the whole is to be free of the alienation caused by an individual species like our own becoming divorced and alienated from the bio-centric family of life.

Lopez, by including animals in his idea of way of life, explores the ways in which animals illuminate and teach attentive people. In his short non-fictional essay titled, "Renegotiating the Contracts," he observes that, if we were to enter once again into a moral relationship with animals, we might learn to love ourselves: "If we could establish an atmosphere of respect in our relationships, simple awe for the complexities of animal's lives, I think we would feel revived

as a species. And we would know more, deeply more, about what we are fighting for when we raise our voices against tyranny of any sort” (386). To Borrowing the words of Adkins, “If man's history demonstrates that man has brought upon himself the evils from which he suffers, then by eschewing the complex and effete civilizations of Europe and learning as a nation to live more nearly in accord with nature's simple plan, we may perhaps hope to see the dawn of a new day” (24).

### **F. Education:**

Lopez draws upon his own formal education at a Jesuit Prep School in New York City, and then New York University and the Universities of Notre Dame and Oregon. He adds that he had encountered the full range of Western philosophy, including the philosophy of science, in those classrooms and studied the theological foundations of Christianity. He says that he does not feel compelled to rebut these Eurocentric notions, but he regards them as being incomplete, for his proximity with nature in general, and animals in particular, has made him think of an alternate re-visioning of these norms. He asserts in his “The Language of Animals”:

I left the university with two ideas strong in my mind. One was the belief that a person had to enter the world to know it, that it couldn't be got from a book. The other was that there were other epistemologies out there, as rigorous and valid as the ones I learned in school. Not convinced of the superiority of the latter, I felt ready to consider these other epistemologies, no matter how at odds. (160)

These words that come from the exposure to the 'other'- the indigene's point of view, which makes Lopez realise that unlike the Eurocentric notion of a single truth based on scientific theory which



compartmentalizes society, there can be many truths; truths that are dependent upon individual experiences. To the indigenous groups, tribes operate in a state of relatedness, everything and everyone is related. They believe that people, objects and the environment are all connected. Law, kinship and spirituality reinforce this connectedness and identity comes from connections.

### **Conclusion:**

At a time when the world faces severe ecological volatility due to the flood and severe rainfall, all its land forms, including all its living and non-living entities, are healing at a slow pace to overcome the havoc caused Barry Lopez's short fiction reveals to us certain basic facts that humans need to take care of, with regard to peaceful co-existence for all species. If what man claims as a distinction from other animal forms is based on the marked difference in terms of the human mind as being reasonable, altruistic and also of possessing linguistic ability, it is high time that each and every individual, the society on the whole at different hierarchical levels take up responsibility for the consequences of our actions towards our planet, and borrow a leaf from the practices by our ancestors who practised biocentrism and eco-spirituality, to provide us with alternate approaches and ways of life.

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**'[H]UNT WITH THE HOUNDS AND RUN  
WITH THE HARE': BAPSI SIDHWA'S  
ICE-CANDY-MAN AS A CASE STUDY OF  
SITUATIONAL ETHNICITY**

**Dr. Monecy Mathew**

Ethnic identities are constructed and maintained by collectivities to maximise social, economic and political benefits and hence are fluid and situational. The present article discusses the changing contours of the ethnic identity of the Parsi community during the partition with reference to Bapsi Sidhwa's novel, *Ice-Candy-Man*. The Parsi community, which rose to prominence during the colonial period, had to confront a sudden change in their fortune when the British decided to declare independence. They had to prepare for the sudden decline from the zenith of their social, political and economic prosperity which required serious reconfiguration of their ethnic identity. This article analyses the dynamics involved in such a reconfiguration of identity, drawing certain general conclusions about the nature of ethnic identity itself.

The Lahore-born, Pakistani-Punjabi Parsi writer Bapsi Sidhwa is credited with popularising the new genre of English fiction called the Parsi English Novel. Sidhwa has given a new and refreshing presence to the Parsi community in the mindscape of the Indian English reader. Three of her five novels directly deal with the life of Parsi community before, during and after Independence. Her first novel, *The Crow Eaters*, was self-published in 1978 amidst threats and protests from sections of her own community, allegedly for the caricatured representation of it. Her second published novel, *The Pakistani Bride* (1983), which deals with non-Parsi subject matter, is chronologically her first written novel. Her third novel, *Ice-*

*Candy-Man* (1988), deals with the Partition of India, narrated from the perspective of a Parsi girl. Her fourth novel, *An American Brat* (2006), again foregrounds the Parsi theme. Her last novel, *Water* (2006), is a fictional rendering of the movie of the same name by Deepa Mehta. Even though she has written two novels dealing with non Parsi themes, *Pakistani Bride* and *Water*, Sidhwa is identified mainly as a Parsi writer. There is a definite attempt, in her novels, at portraying the community in certain stereotypical ways. The objective was to give her community an identity along ethnic lines. She realises a clear need for highlighting the ethnic identity of her small community and does it quite successfully. This article analyses the nature of ethnic identity in general and how Sidhwa portrays the changing contours of Parsi ethnic identity during the partition with reference to *Ice-Candy-Man*. It also attempts to provide a Parsi-Pakistani perspective of partition, and refutes the claim of the novelist that it is a neutral account of partition.

Three of Sidhwa's Parsi novels, *The Crow Eaters*, *Ice-Candy-Man* and *An American Brat*, are set against the milieu of pre-independence and post-Independence Pakistan, which has a small Parsi community that had come and settled there during the British rule, primarily for trading purposes. During the British rule, the Parsis of Pakistan who had settled primarily in Karachi, a thriving port then, felt safe and secure, and carried out their trade very successfully. But, with the independence of India and the formation of Pakistan, the Parsis lost the advantage they once had in trade, and became an insignificant minority in Pakistan. Sidhwa reflects on some of the difficulties faced by the minorities in general and the Parsis in particular in her fiction. The community is at the centre of Sidhwa's fiction even though her novels deal with diverse themes. As she claims in the "Author's Note" of *The Crow Eaters*, the novel was

written out of a “deep rooted admiration” for her “diminishing community and an enormous affection for it.” All her novels dealing with the Parsi theme invariably stress the centrality of ethnic identity to the community and her unquestionable love for her community. In the process of writing novels, she has explored issues of identity, status and the problems faced by her community and the possible future of her community which, she realises, is seriously under threat.

For Sidhwa, writing is an attempt at creating an identity for her community and presenting it to the world at large. *The Crow Eaters*, *Ice-Candy-Man* and *An American Brat* in particular, are three novels that discuss, in detail, the various factors involved in the construction of the present Parsi ethnic identity and the difficulties posed by such an ethnic identity after the Partition in 1947. They record the zenith of Parsi glory after migrating to India, the period of transformation, indecision, and passage to a relatively insignificant and subordinate role, and the conflict within and the threats from outside after the withdrawal of the British from the Indian subcontinent. The first phase is picturesquely drawn in *The Crow Eaters*, which is set in pre-Partition India, and presents the zenith of Parsi success in India. The second novel dealing with Parsi life, *Ice-Candy-Man*, discusses the transformational phase of the Parsi identity in India, as the community was forced to choose between India and Pakistan during Partition. The novel incorporates the turmoil within the Parsi community, regarding the choices they needed to make as the country was preparing itself for the post British period. *An American Brat* positions the Parsi identity in the contemporary world where, the community, recovering from the loss of social prestige in the post-Independence phase, is trying to remap its priorities and assimilate into the host society.

The Parsis had come to India from Persia, fearing forced

religious conversion and extinction under the Muslim rulers of Persia during the ninth century AD. They remained largely unnoticed in India and adopted Indian ways of life to the extent that was necessary for them to be in harmony with the host society while retaining customs and practices that were fundamental to their Persian and Zoroastrian identity. The insignificance of their presence in India, despite the memories of their great ancestral achievements in Persia and martial traits, could be explained by their small numbers or the possibility of being visible to the enemies (Muslim rulers of India) who once had dispossessed them of their homeland. The Parsis remained rather invisible till the arrival of the British (Hodivala 52, Briggs 6, Kreyenbroek and Shehnaz Neville 45). However invisible the Parsis were in the political, economic and social life of India, they prospered and increased in numbers. They took to many professions, chiefly agriculture and small scale trading.

The Parsis were not part of the rigid Indian caste system, but were well equipped to handle the social and economic hierarchies of India. However, it must be said that they had internalised the norms of Indian caste system and were quite like the upper class Hindus or Muslims in their interactions with the members of various castes especially the lower castes. The road to Parsi identity that Bapsi Sidhwa portrays in her earlier novels is however a phenomenon of the colonial period. This is an identity rooted in the commercial success of the Parsis after they were given special preferences by the Europeans. By the 1930s, the Parsi community had risen to such significant social, economic and religious heights that they had become very visible as a community. During the early centuries of colonial rule, they made use of the possibilities offered by their distinct ethnic identity as a non-Indian community, and tried to become the cronies of the British by imitating them in very possible

way. The popularity of cricket among the early Parsis is an example.

Parsi ethnic resurrection coincided with their rise in economic, political and social significance. They felt the need for a visible and powerful ethnic identity to advance their interests, especially in commerce. This drove them to look back at their past and construct a history which, in spite of many oppositions and debates within the community regarding the authenticity of various past and present practices, helped to project an ethnically distinct identity. As Eriksen points out, “knowledge of one's own history (whether fabricated or not) can be highly important in the fashioning of ethnic identity” (85). Kreyenbroek and Shehnaz Neville draw the attention of readers to the relatively unreliable historical documents on which Parsi history is constructed: “A description of the earliest phases of Parsi history would in any case be a hazardous undertaking, since very few reliable sources are available at present” (44). Primordial myths and blood ties seemed to suddenly get an emphasis in their literature and debates. They refused to admit new converts into their fold, and endogamy became central to their religious and social practice. Throughout colonial rule, they drifted away from mainstream Indian society. The assimilation that had characterised this community was looked down upon as a weak strategy. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the Parsis were definitely far removed from their original and secondary identities; their original identity being the one that they carried when they came to India, which they renounced in exchange for safety and shelter and their second identity was the one that they assumed and lived with from the time of their settling down in India until the point of their encounter with the British. When they agreed to discard the original identity as the Persian Zoroastrian community, it was an act of sudden transformation forced by circumstances. They had to give assurance

to the local Raja who gave them asylum that the community would live by the law of the land. This commitment was not only a political act, accepting the sovereignty of a local Hindu king over their life, but it also carried cultural and religious implications. They agreed not to project a visible cultural and religious life. This promise, according to Parsi historiography, was kept under all the rulers who ruled them till the arrival of the British. There was hardly any effort shown by the community to keep their religious, cultural and political heritage intact. This martial race, that claims to have fought the Greeks once, never seriously tried to celebrate their heroes and warlike traits. Despite one or two instances to the contrary, they celebrated peace as the visible trait of the community.

However, the patronage of the European powers changed all these. History became very important to them both in the aftermath of serious attempts at conversion by the European missionaries, and as an internal dynamic towards gaining respectability from the colonial masters. A new ethnic identity as a superior Indian community was constructed, and a new history was created to champion the new claims of the community. Kreyenbroek and Shehnaz Neville rightly observe:

For a long time, it seems, the religious life of Zoroastrian communities was such that this caused few problems; this changed in the early nineteenth century, when confrontations with Christianity and challenges posed by western religious concepts and attitudes had the effect of calling into question the validity of traditional religion generally, and priestly learning in particular” (Preface viii).

Their new economic prosperity, brought through the generous patronage of the British, was used to create and sustain this new identity. New schools for religious education were founded, the



pay for the clergy was increased, schools that encouraged a western system of education were funded and a lot of charity acts were done. This definitely had the intended effect, namely, to raise the status of the community in society. Even though they were always loyal to the British, they used constitutional means of gaining political power within and outside India. By the turn of the twentieth century, they were no doubt one of the most important economic and political powers in India. It is this identity that Sidhwa celebrates in her first published novel, *The Crow Eaters*.

The novel, *Ice-Candy-Man* (published under the title *Cracking India* in America), set in the 1940's Lahore, begins with the treatment of the narrator Lenny, who has a foot deformed by Polio. Despite the best efforts of the Parsi doctor Bharucha, it cannot be cured and she has to live with her deformed foot for the rest of her life. Shanta, the ayah, whose main responsibility is to look after Lenny, provides the narrator with enough opportunities to observe the world around with its changing political and religious contours, and to mingle with different characters representing various faiths. The novelist, in an interview with Bhalla explains her attempt at portraying the communal composition of Lahore, a city which she calls “a sort of mosaic of different religious communities,” and the character of Ayah who has Sikh, Afghan, Muslim and Hindu admirers, provides the perfect opportunity to sketch the “complex social and cultural mosaic” of Lahore. The various communities of Lahore lived in their own *mohallas* before Partition “but the boundaries drawn around them were never rigid. People had learnt to coexist. There was a lot of intermingling and exchange” (Bhalla 225). But Partition changes everything. Lenny witnesses the sudden change of Lahore from a very peaceful city to a place where the Sikhs, Hindus and the Muslims fight for selfish reasons patronised by their

political and religious leaders.

As the Partition mania grips the nation, violence becomes commonplace and corpses lie unburied all over Lahore. Just like Lenny and her dazed Parsi community of Lahore, most people are too shocked to understand the reason for such a sudden resurgence of violence. Deep rooted ethnic loyalties, in combination with the greed for the spoils of riots, had erased the strong inter-ethnic bonds that existed among Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs for centuries. The lines read, “It is sudden. One day everybody is themselves and the next day they are Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian. People shrink, dwindling into symbols” (93). The stories of mass murder, rape and looting are narrated from the Pakistani perspective as the author admits in an interview with David Montenegro (Kanal 39). Even though the Parsis rightly fear long term problems, Partition did not hurt them immediately as much as it hurt the Muslims, the Sikhs and the Hindus. Being a non-Hindu, non-Muslim community benefitted them during the partition crisis because they were not subjected to violence. But the Parsi meeting called to discuss the issues of Partition did bring out the fear of the Parsis that they will no longer be the successful community they were till date. Contrary to what scholars like Hinnells argue, there was definitely an atmosphere of fear among the Parsis as they got closer to the reality of Partition. Like most minorities, the Parsis also felt insecure and helpless. “The young states of India and Pakistan were born in an atmosphere of mutual suspicions and disputes over boundaries, assets, and the future status of religious minorities left on both sides,” observes Malik (129). They realised that, in the scramble for power, they would be the losers. In the midst of the chaos and brutality created by Partition, the Parsis tried to help the victims of rioting, irrespective of their religion. The family of Lenny painfully collects all the petrol they can to transport the victims to places of safety. Godmother

emerges as the most powerful character in the last quarter of the novel. She uses her influence to rescue Ayah from Hira Mandi, and sends her to her family in Amritsar.

*Ice-Candy-Man* is definitely the story of Partition and the murder of millions of people on both sides of the newly created border. But the Parsi community is very important to the novel, as the whole catastrophe is filtered through the consciousness of Parsi characters and especially through the consciousness of the eight year old narrator, Lenny. From the perspective of the community, this story is not another success tale like *The Crow Eaters*; on the contrary it is the story of the beginning of the decline of the community. The Parsis are on the verge of losing the advantages of the identity that they had carefully constructed during the British rule. They painfully realise the alienation of their community from the surroundings which, in the past, had helped them gain significant concessions from the British. It is not the partition that affected them as much as the withdrawal of the British from India. They had to hastily prepare themselves for the reduced role they are sure to play in the post-Independence period. The handicap of the narrator, which cannot be cured by even the best doctors among the Parsis, metaphorically predicts the handicaps of the community in the new era. Characters like Colonel Bharucha and the Godmother, who represent the old generation influential Parsis, are succeeded by the new generation Parsis represented by the parents of Lenny, who can only hope that the reputation of their ancestors would help them cope with the new scenario.

Sidhwa captures the transitional phase of the Parsi community identity from its golden age to its relative insignificance with humour in her novels. The author very effectively questions some of the fundamental notions of ethnicity, its resurgence at crucial

historical moments like the Partition, and the durability of ethnic rivalry despite long traditions of friendship, cooperation and interactions. A minuscule community like the Parsis feared getting assimilated into the host population and thus losing their identity and even chance to exact special concessions from the state. They have to identify themselves as separate from the rest of the population and one of the best ways of doing so is to claim their distinctiveness on the basis of blood ties and peculiar customs: “These congruities of blood, speech, custom, and so on, are seen to have an ineffable, and at times overpowering, coerciveness in and of themselves” (Hutchinson and Smith 42).

The Parsis maintained a distinct religious and social identity throughout the period of their stay in India but the specific nature of their collective identity prior to the seventeenth century cannot be established as there are not enough historical documents. The claim of the community in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that they are a non-Indian group with Persian origins, who survived in India without getting assimilated into Indian society, is very difficult to establish. Such claims advanced by Karaka and other Parsi historians like Modi, S. K. Hodivala and S. H. Hodivala are more in the nature of ethnic propaganda for a distinctive identity than of truth. As India was preparing itself for the postcolonial period, the Parsis became very conscious about the problems involved in such an identity. This crisis is well documented in the *Ice-Candy- Man*. There is relatively less space occupied by the Parsi story in the narrative indicating the insignificance of the community in the larger politics of India. The mythical status of the Parsi characters like Freddy in *The Crow Eaters* is replaced by ordinary Parsi characters like Dr. Bharucha, Godmother, Dr. Modi, and Lenny's parents who, despite being still influential, are not in control of their lives. These characters are the first representatives of the postcolonial Parsis. They are not sure

about the course their life should take, their loyalties and their futures. They are as helpless as their forefathers were centuries earlier, when they landed in India seeking asylum.

The declaration of Independence was a huge event in the history of the Parsis in India. A small group of Parsis was active in the freedom movement but, most of them were against the British granting freedom to India. Prior to Independence, the Parsis were divided over the political future: they were worried about their position in a land that had been divided over religion.

The discussion among the prominent Parsis in the meeting that follows the *Jashan* prayer held by the Parsis of Lahore for celebrating the victory of the British in the Second World War is a record of the Parsi conflict and confusion during the time of Indian independence and Partition. Bapsi Sidhwa very delicately portrays the identity of the Parsis before Independence in the words of Sir Easymoney: “One leg in India and one leg in England. We are citizens of the world” (*The Crow Eaters* 222). The Parsis were free to choose their identity as Indians with a declared loyalty to the British and felt secure as the citizens of the world under the protection of the British crown. But their loyalty was divided and their condition was safe only so long as the British stayed in India.

With the departure of the British, the carefully maintained balance was lost. The Parsis started questioning the wisdom of many of the decisions of their forefathers. Many of the present-day Parsis question the very logic of their forefathers' decision to sail towards India after abandoning their homeland; they criticise the British, who were held in great respect by their previous generations, for bringing polio and syphilis to India. The Parsis of Lahore hastily attempt to reconfigure their identity to remain in India after Independence. They

consider the option of migrating to England but soon realise the folly of such a move: “And what do we do?” he asks, “when the English king's Vazir stands before us with a glass full of milk? Tell him we are brown English men, come to sweeten their lives with a dash of color?” (40). The Parsis, who had boasted that they were the greatest toadies of the British (*The Crow Eaters* 12), realise that they could not migrate to England even though they were the subjects of the British queen. They hastily draw up plans for the future. From the superior sounding Parsi characters of Sidhwa's previous novel, there is a sudden transition to the helpless and frustrated characters in *Ice-Candy-Man*.

The Parsis understood their precarious position once Independence became a reality and, having nowhere else to go, they had to resign themselves to the lesser role they would have to play in the new nation. The Parsis realised the danger of having travelled far from their Indian identity during the colonial period and were now in no position to assert their Indianness. They would have to live as strangers in a land where they lived for more than a thousand years. They would once again be ruled by the communities that they once considered inferior in all respects. They realized that they did not have many options. They can neither remain loyal to the British nor to any single community of India which would invite the displeasure of other communities. The option of not getting involved in the developments taking place outside is also a difficult choice as that might send wrong messages about their loyalty: “I don't see how we can remain uninvolved,” says Dr Mody.” He says, “Our neighbours will think we are betraying them and siding with the English” (*Ice-Candy-Man* 37). Dr. Bharucha, the President of the Parsi community at Lahore, reminds them that the Parsis must be very careful not to involve themselves in the post British struggle for power among the

Muslims, Hindus and the Sikhs. “Hindus, Muslims and even the Sikhs are going to jockey for power: and if you jokers jump into the middle you'll be mangled into chutney!”(36). The ethnocentric pride of the Parsis seems to have been drained out of their systems; Bharucha calls them “jokers” with no power and pride to hang on to.

The criticism of the Parsis regarding their loyalty has roots in the Parsi dilemma of choosing a consistent ideological and political position during the freedom struggle. While discussing *Ice-Candy-Man*, Novy Kapadia argues that the Parsis have no fixed ideological commitment: “Ideological concerns are limited and the only concern is to preserve the status quo that class interests remain unaffected”. He criticises Bapsi Sidhwa for presenting Parsi characters whose only concern is the survival of the community. He argues that, according to Sidhwa, “. . . for most Parsis the primary concern about major upheavals is how changing political events will affect their business and class interests” (76). This lack of ideological concern is very evident in the meeting where most Parsi characters decide to stick to a neutral political stance. Sidhwa admits in an interview given to Feroza Jussawalla that, by employing a Parsi narrator, she could be objective by not being one of the affected parties, and the Parsis, as she understood them, “made the best of things. If they were in India they became patriotic Indians. Those that were left in Pakistan remained there and were loyal to Pakistanis” (201). Sangeeta Ray also thinks that, by using the Parsi narrator, the author provides a “sidelong, yet penetrating look at the events leading up to the partition” from a Parsi perspective, rather than from the usual Hindu or Muslim narrations (131). In her preference for Jinnah over Nehru and Gandhi, Sidhwa is reasserting her identity as a Pakistani chronicler, who rectifies the injustice of the Indian and western historians through her novels, by portraying the father of Pakistan as a

liberal man who advocated Hindu- Muslim unity. She states that she was aware of the sympathy of the Parsis of Lahore for Jinnah, as they considered him a “protégé of Dadabhai Naoroji” and being the husband of a Parsi girl, very secular (Bhalla 229-231). Sidhwa traces the transition of the Parsi attitude from the doubtless and firm loyalty to the British seen in *The Crow Eaters*, to the acceptance of the Swaraj, and the rule of the natives in *Ice-Candy-Man*.

What is enlightening from the perspective of the ethnic understanding of a community is that, when circumstances change, the communities can adapt themselves very quickly. Dr. Bharucha is asking the Parsis, many of whom are still not ready to accept the loss of their glory, to understand and adapt to the new situation arising out of the British decision to declare independence to India. This adaptation involves a restructuring of the present ethnic identity and a partial or complete rejection of many attributes which the community holds in great respect at present. Dr. Bharucha, who is so well respected within and outside the community, knows that the time has come for the community to prepare for the transition. Dr. Bharucha, who had earlier in the novel sharply admonished a Muslim man and wife for not bringing a sick child to him earlier than they did in the following words, “And you all want Pakistan! How will you govern a country when you don't know what goes on in your own house?” (12), has to come to terms with the reality that he is going to live in a country ruled by these people whom he had despised.

As the reconfiguration of community's perceptions and definitions of friend and foe becomes a necessity, the leaders analyse the options available to them. They discuss which community they should choose to be friends with in the new political scenario: “If we're stuck with the Hindus they'll swipe our business from under our noses and sell our grandfathers in the bargain: if we're stuck with the



Muslims they will convert us by the sword! And God help us if we're stuck with the Sikhs! ” (37). This fear of the Parsis expressed by a member in the meeting defines the Parsi ethnic identity in opposition to all the three major religions of India. The Parsi community which had no history of religious persecution in India, as Karaka himself says (1: xviii ), is beginning to sense the possibility of religious conflicts and victimisation in the future. Adversity is an important factor in defining and uniting ethnic groups (Sarna). Threats from outside, real or imagined, can serve to unite the members of a group. The above conversation articulates the sense of hostility the Parsi community feels towards the Muslims and the Hindus, not only in terms of the present but also in terms of the past. The Parsi community psyche keeps the wounds of the past alive in order to generate a level of antagonism which would suffice to create a sense of ethnic unity. The reference to the Muslims as a community that would “convert them by the sword” has roots in the events that led to their exodus from Iran thirteen centuries ago. Their long stay in India has not erased the memories of the genocide of the sixth century AD. Ethnic communities keep such stories of mythical and historical hostility alive as part of their racial memory. Sidhwa says in an interview with Bhalla that the Parsis have “memories of what happened to them thirteen hundred years ago still deeply embedded in their psyches. They can't forget the Arab invasion of Persia. It is part of their mythologies.” The logic that it happened long back and is not relevant to contemporary communal equations and relations does not help the present generation forget those painful memories, a fact which Sidhwa admits: “It doesn't help if the young men protest and say that they weren't even alive thirteen hundred years ago and that past has nothing to do with them”. Personal memories fade easily but “historical memories of atrocities refuse to fade away” (Bhalla 238).

Invoking the historical memories of the community at the crucial juncture of Partition, and sensing a potential threat in the Hindus, Muslims and the Sikhs, whom they can neither resist nor match powers with, the Parsis are desperately trying to regroup themselves as a community. Hence they summarise their plan of action to stay in independent India “we must hunt with the hounds and run with the hare” (16). The same meeting provides the occasion for redefining the myths of arrival in India and the subsequent interaction with Indian communities.

In the previous novel, *The Crow Eaters*, Freddy recollects the Parsi household version of the history of their arrival in India and the benevolence of the local Raja and the subsequent prosperity of the Parsis. But the stress of the story falls on its concluding line: “To this day we do not allow conversion to our faith or mixed marriages” (11). There is an obvious attempt in the story narrated by Freddy to emphasise how Parsis have maintained their ethnic identity without getting assimilated into the host nation. This ethnic purity that they maintained was hall mark of their superiority over the Indians during the British rule. In *Ice-Candy-Man* the same story of the Parsi arrival is ritualistically recounted but with a stress on a different aspect of their identity. The story, in Dr. Bharucha's version, ends with the very popular Parsi myth of how the local Raja symbolically indicated his refusal to accept the Parsi refugees into his kingdom by sending a bowl filled with milk suggesting that there is no space for the refugees to which the Parsi Dasturs responded by stirring a teaspoon of sugar into the milk, indicating that they would assimilate into the host society and sweeten their lives (39). This stress on the act of stirring a teaspoon of sugar into the milk is prompted by circumstances that demand that the community re-emphasise its ability to assimilate with the populations, rather than underline its

supposed cultural and genetic exclusivity. This is a case of situational ethnicity, a theory of identity which suggests that individuals or groups may adopt any of the many identities which is most useful for them in the given context (Okamura 452). There are several other instances of situational ethnicity in the novel; for example, in *Ice-Candy-Man*, Moti and Papoo convert to Christianity and Hari becomes a Muslim and changes his name to Himat Ali in order to escape from the violence of the Muslim mob; many Muslim families escaped from the attacks of the Sikhs disguised as Hindus and Sikhs. Dost Muhammad, realising that he would be killed by the violent Sikh mob pleads with the mob to convert his son to Sikhism if they so desire and spare his life: "I beg you in the name of all you hold sacred, don't kill the little ones,' Ranna heard his father plead. 'Make them Sikhs... Let them live... they are so little...'" (*Ice-Candy-Man* 201).

When Partition was imminent, the Parsis once again needed to project an image of a community which is loyal to the rulers of the land: "Let whoever wishes rule! Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian! We will abide by the rules of their land!" says Dr. Bharucha. The use of the word "their" by Dr. Bharucha constitutes a tacit admission of the reality that Parsis are going to be strangers in the new nation. The Parsis have, for various reasons, found it difficult to consider themselves Indians. They fear getting absorbed into Indian society. This fear could be the result of losing their identity. As Freddy puts it in a remarkably striking metaphor, they fear being "a dispersed pinch of snuff sneezed from the heterogeneous nostrils of India!" (*The Crow Eaters* 12). The "us" versus "them" opposition, which is very fundamental to the survival of ethnic communities, is strengthened in every discourse.

Novy Kapadia summarises the fear expressed by the Parsis in the meeting thus: "Through this animated conversation, Bapsi

Sidhwa reveals the implicit, lurking fear of the Parsis, a vulnerable minority losing their identity and getting swamped by the majority communities either Hindus in India or Muslims in Pakistan” (94).

The narrative of the novel *Ice-Candy-Man*, despite being an addition to the exhaustive collection of partition stories and a unique third community perspective on Partition, gains its power by being an intense depiction of the varying shades of ethnicity. It is a wonderful testimony to the fact that ethnic identity could be situational and hence not fixed. Sidhwa attempts to project the role played by the community during the partition in terms of the help rendered by them in taking the victims to places of safety, risking their lives. *Ice-Candy-Man* is also a fine example of an ethnic writing that shows how identities are circumstantial and hence fluid. The Parsis reconfigured their identity by stressing qualities like honesty, intelligence, etc during the British raj (*The Crow Eaters*) in place of their previous ethnic traits like military skill and agricultural intelligence. Identities can also be situational; that is, members of ethnic groups can for various reasons adopt identities of other groups under certain situations as discussed above. Situational ethnicity in many ways reveals the survival instinct of a community facing serious threat. However, the very possibility of such an identity transformation reveals the flexible nature of identity itself.

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**REFLECTIONS OF ANTI-WAR PERSPECTIVES  
IN ISMAIL KADARE'S  
*THE GENERAL OF THE DEAD ARMY***

**Sri. Sijo George P. and Dr. Elizabeth Abraham**

According to the review of Petri Liukkonen entitled “Ismail Kadare”, many of his books have made their entry into the realm of cinema. Broken April has been filmed three times. The General of the Dead Army, entitled *Il generale dell'armata morte* (1983), was a highly acclaimed Italian film, starring Marcello Mastroianni as General Aristo. Shirin Neshath, who won the Silver Lion for Best Director at the Venice Film Festival in 2009. . . (Archived by Kuusankoski Public Library). Kadare bagged the first Man Booker International Prize in 2005, and established a confirmed status among the best authors of the world. Peter R. Prifti, a writer of Albanian scholarly journals, writes on Ismail Kadare:

Ismail Kadare, (born January 28, 1936, Gjirokastër, Albania), Albanian novelist and poet whose work explored his country's history and culture... Kadare, whose father was a post office employee, attended the University of Tirana. He later went to study at the Gorky Institute of World Literature. Upon returning to Albania in 1960, he worked as a journalist and then embarked on a literary career. The themes of Kadare's works, which often draw heavily on his own life, include Albanian history, politics, and folklore, blood-feud tradition, and ethnicity. (Britanica.com)

Ever since the origin of humanity, there existed a devastating enigma of war crimes. As a vicious phenomenon, this has perished innumerable lives, and imposed its ramifications on every aspect of life. Robert Greene in his work, *The 33 Strategies of War*, points out: “In the beginning, war was not at all strategic. Battles between tribes

were fought in a brutal manner . . . . But as tribes expanded and evolved into states . . . . That waging it blindly often led to exhaustion and self-destruction, even for the victor” (xvi). *The General of the Dead Army* is a renowned novel by the acclaimed writer Ismail Kadare of Albanian origin. The incidents which are described in the narrative took place in 1955, almost twenty years after the World War II. The narrative elucidates an ostentatious mission of Italian government to retrieve the remains of the dead soldiers, and the mission to Albania consist an army General, a Colonel-priest, a team of work men and other experts related. In addition to the irritant colonel-priest of his own army, the General had to face the pertinent menace of the antagonistic natives. Meanwhile, the General meets a German General who is on a similar mission in Albania. The mere presence of an Italian General in uniform invokes the uncut war memories of the past, and in response, they react with menacing interrogations and life-threatening warnings. Eventually, he has a mock-heroic an army of dead soldiers, and a disgracing memory of the Colonel Z, and an invariable repulsion towards the entire system of war. Despite the apparent denial of the priest, through gestures, the noble General had expressed his heart-felt apology for the Colonel Z's war crimes. As stated in the publication details of the Arcade Publishing; the novel was first published in 1963 as *Gjeneralii ushtërisë së vdekur*, and the first French publication in 1970 as *Le Général de l'armée morte*, and first English language translation in 1971. Kadare has written number of other works like, *Agamemnon's Daughter*, *Chronicle in Stone*, *The Concert*, *Elegy for Kosovo*, *The File on H.*, *The Palace of Dreams*, *The Pyramid*, *Spring Flowers*, *Spring Frost*, *The Successor*, and *The Three-Arched Bridge* (Kadare, *The General of the Dead Army*).

The narrative of Ismail Kadare's *The General of the Dead Army*, gives a crystal-clear view of a nation, which was brutally



defected by the World War II. The narrative-reality occurs twenty years after the war, yet the reminiscence of the terrible past has been rekindled by an Italian General in uniform. The socio-cultural spheres are crammed up with innumerable psychic traumas of yesterdays. The bilateral impacts of the war are equitable to both the Generals of Italy and Germany, who are on a mission in Albania to retrieve the remains of the dead soldiers intact. As for the Albanians, the very presence of the Italian army officers ignites the old recollections of despicable past; hence, both the General and his team had to meet totally hostile natives who were traumatized by the reminiscences dreadful war. Gradually, the war-past is brought into the present scenario in terms of people who are churned out by the wounded past.

With Chapter Two, the narrative stands for the “cause” of the mission ahead. The smooth flow of narrative is impeded by the actual incidents that occurred in the past, which links the present to the past in “broken narratives.” The diary entries of an Italian deserter has already foretold the hypocrisy behind the present mission ahead “O.K., so let's suppose they do search one day. Do you think I get any consolation out of that thought? There's nothing more hypocritical, if you ask me, than going around looking for bones when the war over” (16).

The extrapolation vividly depicts the very anti-thesis of war in situation; anyhow, the General burdened with many such stories ventures up his hopeless mission with a team of men consisting a colonel-priest, a group of gravediggers, and an Albanian expert. In the depth of his heart, the General disliked the search for a “dead-army” besides; this was a war against his own will, and also against the hostile Albanians. He has to examine and classify thousands of graves in Albania. Many such adversities have destabilized him to hate his

own odd fate: “What a damned business this is we've got on our hands!” the general said. “I can't even pass anyone in the street or see anyone in a café now without automatically checking to see what type his skull is” (23). The harrowing thoughts of the dead soldiers are also really bothering: “I feel like a foster father trying to make it up to children that others have abandoned... How can I avenge them?” (24). Whatever be the cause of war, more or less, the aftermath would be same to the both sides. It is axiomatic that the Italians bore a deep-cut wound of shame on account of Albanian set back in World WarII; besides, for Italians, it was a matter of the national pride. As the narrative delves into the very heart of Albanian countryside, both the General and the priest face many harrowing and disheartening incidents. As typical of a General and the priest in the armed forces, they justify the Italian front, and illustrate the Albanian resistance in brutal manners. On the contrary, the Albanian country side still thrives on a deep sense of hatred and contempt towards Italian officers in uniform. Sigmund Freud in his decisive work, *Reflections on War and Death* disseminates a ground breaking notion on the concept of war, which is the most equitable quote on the subject of war so far:

War strips off the later deposits of civilization and allows the primitive man in us to reappear. It forces us again to be heroes who cannot believe in their own death, it stamps all strangers as enemies whose death we ought to cause or wish; it counsels us to rise above the death of those whom we love. But war cannot be abolished; as long as the conditions of existence among races are so varied and the repulsions between them are so vehement, there will have to be wars. The question then arises whether we shall be the ones to yield and adapt ourselves to it. Shall we not admit that in our civilized attitude towards death we have again lived psychologically beyond our means? Shall we not turn around and avow the truth? Were it not

better to give death the place to which it is entitled both in reality and in our thoughts and to reveal a little more of our unconscious attitude towards death which up to now we have so carefully suppressed? This may not appear a very high achievement and in some respects rather a step backwards, a kind of regression, but at least it has the advantage of taking the truth into account a little more and of making life more bearable again. To bear life remains, after all, the first duty of the living. The illusion becomes worthless if it disturbs us in this. (*Our Attitude towards Death II*)

The colonial pride of the General is defeated at the face of dead Italian soldiers' grave among the "martyrs' graveyard" (43). On a stone plaque nearby had the inscription: "These foreign soldiers died heroes' deaths, fighting beside Albanian partisans against the forces of the blue battalion, 17 March 1943" (43). The battalion was led by Colonel Z, evidently a notorious one. One day, during their return in the evening, the priest was startled by the scrawls in charcoal on the wall of cemetery saying, "such is the fate of our enemies" (48). The warning was unbearable and "contemptible insult" (48) to the Italian officers but for the natives, which was a token of protest against the colonial past. Even a common peasant is shown to be bold enough to interrogate the authenticity of the Italian team and their mission of grave-digging. The war has also disrupted and disoriented many well-kept traditions so far, especially with the arrival of brothel. This new anomaly gradually devours many of the male folk, which also hasten the downfall of Albanian culture and its coveted values. Despite the acrid treatment of Albanian women, especially with curse and insults, the first native visitor Lame Spiri visits the brothel. The natives were inept to curtail the further flow of the men folk. In the café owner's words:

It was war time for one thing, and we were hearing incredible,

fantastic stories every day. And we all thought there was nothing left in the world that could surprise us after that day when we saw the anti-tank guns and anti-aircraft guns with their long barrels rolling through our streets for the first time.... And yet, somehow the news that they were going to open a licensed brothel here shattered everyone no end. (64)

The conservative and traditional-minded Albanians detested the opening of brothel, and this causes troubles in the relationship with the army men. The affair of Ramiz Kurti's son with one of the prostitutes, rejecting his own engagement, paves way for its immediate closure. The noble father, who could not accept the affair, shoots down the prostitute. In return, the army men hang him and force the people to follow the coffin of the prostitute. A shop keeper says: "... She had been placed on the back of a small army lorry in a fine red coffin ... who could say what destiny had driven that poor woman to follow so far in the wake of those helmeted soldiers"(74). As a matter of fact war, as system of destruction, always unleashes an unprecedented rise in the rate of rape and prostitution in toto. It is excruciating for the General to watch over the digging up and the exposure of dead soldiers' remains with their identifying medallion be confined in a blue bag bearing the trade mark name "Olympia" (76). The team is met with a war monument having some words carved: "There passed the infamous Blue Battalion that burned and massacred his village, killed our women and children, and hanged our men from these poles; To the memory of its dead the people have raised this movements" (78). In Chapter One of the *Reflections on War and Death*, Sigmund Freud formulates a pertinent perspective on war- trauma:

For psychic evolution shows a peculiarity which is not found in any other process of development. When a town becomes a city or a

child grows into a man, town and child disappear in the city and in the man. Only memory can sketch in the old features in the new picture; in reality the old materials and forms have been replaced by new ones. It is different in the case of psychic evolution. One can describe this unique state of affairs only by saying that every previous stage of development is preserved next to the following one from which it has evolved; the succession stipulates a co-existence although the material in which the whole series of changes has taken place remains the same. (*The Disappointment of War I*)

Chapters Ten and Eleven OF Kadare's novel gives a detailed account of the soldiers, and narrates how they remained in the servitude of Albanian peasants during the World War II. In the midst of their expedition, an old man, who was a miller, stops them, and gives a diary and the remains of a dead soldier. The soldier had deserted the army and took refuge in the mill, and served as his servant till the "Blue Battalion" murdered him. Everyday, the soldier wrote his experiences in Italian. Losing all his hope, he had given his medallion to the miller's daughter Christine. The entries in the diary give a moving as well as shocking account of war, and also about lives of deserted soldiers. The very first diary entry of the deserted-soldier interrogates the future vainglorious task ahead: "That was how I gave her the only thing I still possessed. And what good was it to me? Whatever happens I am lost. I am living, but lost, and what good of being found once you're dead" (116). The final entry dated on 5<sup>th</sup> September 1943 about the "hundreds of planes flew over" (117) is a strong indictment on the futility of war: "who knows what part of the world they've come from and what other part they're on their way to bomb?" (117).

The General is much offended by the strange turn of the events: "all those soldiers in uniform, with their weapons, their

badges of rank, their braid and medals, transformed into domestic servants, menials, farm labourers.... Do you remember how they even told us in one place about that colonel who did laundry and knitted socks for an Albanian family?" (122). More than anyone else, the General is much afflicted and disillusioned by the entire expedition itself. When intoxicated with liquor, he illustrates a "make-believe" world of heroic expeditions and elevates him as ever-winning General of all time. The narrative of his delusional mind is turned against his own ironic Generalship, "At first there had been just a few sections of coffins, the, gradually, companies and battalions were formed.... An entire army clothed in nylon" (128). Vatsal G. Thakkar sketches a pertinent view of depressive disposition of this sort in his book, *Depression and Bipolar Disorder*:

A major depressive episode (MDE) is at the core of major depressive disorder. This is an episode in which various neurological, psychological, and physical symptoms of depression are experienced for at least most of the day, every day, for a duration of *at least two weeks*. One of these symptoms must include either a depressed mood or seriously diminished interest, although both can occur at the same time. Other symptoms include a sharp change in appetite or sleep patterns, excessive fatigue, significant change in weight (usually a loss of weight), feelings of worthlessness or guilt, difficulty concentrating, and recurrent thoughts of death or suicide. (9)

It is too excruciating for the General to deal with real-life incidents of Albanian past in present. He is bewildered by the inhuman conduct and the indecent end of Colonel Z in the Albanian countryside. Colonel Z murdered a father only to rape his daughter. Later, traumatized by rape, the girl had committed suicide. Unaware of her death, the Colonel revisits her house and is killed by the dead girl's mother, Nice. Meanwhile, seeing a wedding party, they reach at

the same house where the colonel was murdered. The mother hands over the remains of the colonel in a sack. But the gentle General is gravely struck by the shameful deed of Colonel Z, and he even wants to apologize for the Colonel's misconduct. Defying the unwillingness of the priest, and also being ignorant of their language, he expresses his sense of humiliation through his gestures. On their return journey, the General throws sack which contained the remains of Colonel Z into a river.

J.E. Trenholm, has put forward a theory incorporating various views of Seifert, Synder, et. al., who state that in patriarchal society a woman's body is always viewed as the property of the nation. Thus, to seize her body in the war is almost similar to establish the ultimate victory over the enemy, and also serves as an “element of communication” to the patriarchy of that nation that they have failed to defend her. These are cultures which embrace the belief that the seat of male honour is mirrored in the sexual purity of their female relations. So, raping a woman could cause more lasting damage not just to her but also to her male relations (140). From very ancient period, there existed a heinous practice of raping the subjugated women to legitimize the victory in toto.

Eventually, disillusioned with the two-year long expedition in Albania, the General is seen to have uttered these words to his German counterpart on the same mission for Germany: “incompetent officers. I am here to sweep up the debris of your defeats! The General threw the crumpled telegram which was the list of 'unidentified soldiers' ” (262). The narrative is apt with the concluding stoic note: “The wind continued to blow, without respite” (264).

After witnessing the terrors and torments of the World War First, King George V of England stated in 1922: “I have many times asked myself whether there can be more potent advocates of peace

upon earth through the years to come than this massed multitude of silent witness to the desolation of war” (qtd. in Barwick, Editorial 249).

The narrative unravels the trauma of war in general, thus prompting the readers to rethink about the notion of fascism and its scathing ramifications in whole world. The novel also makes the readers rethink about the relevance of Second World War in the present scenario. Albania has witnessed a traumatic war, cultural rape, disintegration, loss, and a haunting memory. In a sense, Ismail Kadare's is an Albanian narrative of *past-in-present*.

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**RACE, BIGOTRY AND PREJUDICE  
IN HARPER LEE'S  
*TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD***

**Ms. Deepa Nair and Dr. Nila N., (Bharatiar University)**

Racial profiling is a very common and hazardous aspect of our complex, globalised world. When a person is assumed to have committed a crime on the basis of stereotypical assumptions associated with that person's colour, race, religion, caste, community, ethnicity or place of origin, he or she is a victim of racial profiling. An individual being singled out for careful scrutiny and discriminatory treatment on the basis of assumptions often wrongly attributed to a particular race, colour or community entails racial profiling. The term 'profiling' first came into use in the 1970s in the USA in connection with drug trafficking. The profiles of drug runners, drug mules and drug carriers were supplied to American law enforcement agencies and these were used to catch the offenders. These race and colour based profiles of individuals were used by the authorities to check whether they were drug runners. Drivers and individuals of Black and Hispanic origin were subjected to such checks and inspections on the basis of the assumption that they were generally responsible for carrying out drug peddling.

The American Civil Rights movement and desegregation policies have brought about significant positive developments in race relations. But even under a Black American President like Barack Obama, who surmounted innumerable obstacles and hurdles to become the first African American President of a country like USA, there have been many unpardonable acts of violence against Blacks and deaths of Black people on the basis of racial profiling. Over the years, the acquittal of all those associated with such violence has

fuelled deep wedges between the Black and White community in USA. There is deep distrust, doubt, fear and suspicion between both races. Blacks are often subjected to alienation and horrific and mindless violence on the basis of their colour and race.

In February 2012, a seventeen-year old young, unarmed, Black boy Trayvon Martin was walking through a gated community. He was wearing a hood and the Hispanic guard George Zimmerman confronted him, because he was hooded. In the ensuing confrontation, Zimmerman shot dead the boy and he was subsequently acquitted. American race history is replete with such instances of murders on the basis of racial profiling. Through the ages, White Americans have looked at Black Americans with distrust and fear. Literature has always responded to contemporary reality and acted as a mirror for society. Literature has in many ways, played the role of a conscience-keeper and provided a reminder that there is always another side to every story. *To Kill a Mockingbird* is a classic novel that continues to have enduring appeal and relevance in a society fractured by violence and discrimination on the basis of troubled race relations. Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* won the Pulitzer Prize in 1961. This novel, in many ways, reflects American race relations in the difficult 1960s and also presages the troubled contemporary period.

The term 'racial profiling' was not coined in the 1960s, but it forms one of the most important themes of this seminal classic with enduring appeal in a world riven by prejudice and bigotry. Born on April 28, 1926 in the small town of Monroeville, South-Western Alabama, Harper Lee's father, Amasa Coleman Lee, was a newspaper editor, lawyer, and politician. Harper Lee studied at Monroe County High School and was interested in English literature. She then went on to study at the all-female Huntingdon College at Montgomery and

then took her degree in law from the University of Alabama in 1949. She spent the summer of 1948 at Oxford University taking a course in European Civilization. Her father hoped that she would take up her legal studies, but his expectations remained unfulfilled and Harper Lee went on to write one of the greatest modern classics.

Lee has set her novel in Alabama, in the Deep South of America. In the 1930s, Alabama was a racially segregated state with a very tough and discriminatory anti- Black policy. The Black American community in Alabama was subjected to exploitation, harassment and strict segregation that deprived them of human dignity and decency. White Americans detested the change in the social position of Blacks from plantation slaves to that of citizens with some basic human rights. Resentment and feeling of racial superiority drove the Whites to harass the Black population, and the Black people could not hope for any aid or support from the law or from the police. In April 1931, Ruby Bates and Victoria Price, two white women, alleged that a group of nine Black teenage boys had gang-raped them. These boys, who later came to be known as the Scottsboro boys, were found guilty of having committed the purported crime. The boys were implicated, a trial was quickly conducted and they were sentenced to death. The two women later confessed that they had wrongly accused the boys. But the boys were subjected to repeated trials by White juries that functioned like kangaroo courts. They managed to escape the death sentence, but their lives had been ruined forever. Harper Lee was five years old when the Scottsboro trials began, but the proceedings haunted her, and motivated her to write a novel.

In 1955, a fourteen-year old boy Emmett Till had been brutally murdered by White supreme racists for talking to a White woman in Money, Mississippi. The killers were not punished. Lee

was also inspired by the fact that her own father had unsuccessfully tried to defend a Black father-son duo, who had been falsely accused of murder, and then had been sentenced to death. Harper Lee was motivated and inspired by all these momentous events to write *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Set in the fictional town of Maycomb, in the 1930s, the novel depicts life in a segregated and prejudiced society that sets apart human beings on the basis of their colour and race. Scout Finch, the narrator, is actually Harper Lee herself. She is six-years old and lives with her ten-year old brother, Jem, and her widower father, Atticus Finch, a lawyer. Scout and Jem have a relatively happy and interesting childhood, and both children are close to their father.

The peace and calm of the community is shattered when Mayella Ewell, a member of a poor White family accuses a young Black man called Tom Robinson of assaulting and raping her. Her father, Bob Ewell, is a drunkard and a deeply prejudiced man. He is evil personified and hates Blacks. The poor whites, often disparagingly referred to as White trash, are above the Black population in the social order in many Southern American towns. The Finches and their neighbours and friends are at the top of the social ladder. The case of the Black man raping the White woman jolts the small town of Maycomb, and the relative peace and calm is disturbed. Atticus Finch decides to defend Tom Robinson for he firmly believes in the innocence of Robinson and also prevents a possible lynching by taking the decision to protect Tom at all costs.

Tom's conviction and punishment is a foregone conclusion in a heavily prejudiced white-only court of law. Atticus Finch is a man with a strong moral compass and he knows the implications of defending a Black man in a town that is dominated by anti- Black sentiment. Atticus is aware that he will be alone in his fight to save the

innocent Tom, who happens to be a victim of circumstances. He tells his children that they must keep their heads high and be courageous, in spite of the entire town turning against them. Tom Robinson is arrested, and he is imprisoned in the town jailhouse. On the eve of the trial a white mob arrives to lynch Tom. Atticus and his children manage to avert the lynching and Tom is able to appear for the trial.

Atticus is a man of conscience, and he is unafraid to stand alone in his fight for justice. He does not look upon himself as a crusader. Rather, he respects the voice of his conscience above everything else and this is his enduring advice to his children. The children are disillusioned and shocked by the harshness and viciousness of the adult world. Jem, Scout and their friend Dill witness the trial and the prejudiced reactions of the adults disturb them. Atticus Finch tells Scout that

When summer comes, you will have to keep your head about far worse things... It is not fair for you and Jem ... but sometimes we have to make the best of things, and the way we conduct ourselves when the chips are down...when you and Jem are grown, may be you will look on this with some compassion and some feeling that I didn't let you down... Tom Robinson's case is something that goes to the essence of a man's conscience Scout, I couldn't go to church and worship God if I didn't try to help that man. (104)

Atticus explains to his children the need for honesty to one's self. He tells them that they must respect other people's opinions and yet abide by the dictates of their own conscience. Atticus' defence of the innocent Tom is based on the powerful argument of the "evil assumption...that all Negroes lie; that all Negroes are basically immoral beings...that all Negro men are not to be trusted around our women..." (217). Atticus shreds apart Mayella's claims that she had

been raped by Tom. Instead, he subtly hints at the fact that Bob Ewell himself had been responsible for assaulting his daughter. Tom's left arm hangs useless after an accident, and he could not be responsible for the grievous bruises on the right side of Mayella's face. Despite Atticus' defence of Tom, he is sentenced to death.

The judgement is a foregone conclusion, and Tom is punished because he is black in colour. Tom becomes a victim of racial profiling and colour-based discrimination. An innocent man, incapable of harming anyone, is accused by a racially oppressive system that brands him a rapist. He had reached out to an affection starved Mayella in a moment of human compassion. They had been seen by Bob Ewell. Mayella had betrayed Tom, in order to protect herself from her father's wrath. She had unthinkingly destroyed his lie in her attempt to save herself from her father's savagery. Jem's faith in the nobility and goodness of human beings is lost. When Tom Robinson is proclaimed guilty by the blindly biased white jury, Jem asks Atticus "How could they do it, how could they?" Atticus replies, "I don't know, but they did it. They have done it before, and they did it tonight and they will do it again, and when they do, it seems that only children will weep" (213).

Atticus is optimistic about Tom escaping the death sentence. But, Tom has lost all faith in the white man's prejudiced and colour driven judicial system. He tries to escape from Enfield Prison Farm. He is shot dead by the guards. The editor of 'The Maycomb Tribune' "likened Tom's death to the senseless slaughter of song birds by hunters and children" (241).

Maycomb returns to a state of deceptive calm. Mayella's father, Bob Ewell, is a man who nurses a grudge against Atticus and his children. Atticus arguments in favour of Tom Robinson had completely destroyed Bob Ewell's reputation. He attacks Jem and

Scout, but his attempt to cause further harm, is prevented by the presence of Boo Radley, their reclusive neighbour. Arthur “Boo” Radley is a quiet and harmless soul who has been emotionally damaged by his father's cruelty. His self-imposed isolation and intensely reclusive behaviour arouses fear and curiosity in the minds of the citizens of Maycomb. Jem, Scout and Dill are wary of Boo Radley and they often spy on him. Boo Radley appears at crucial moments to rescue the children, whenever they are in trouble. Boo Radley is another character in the novel who becomes a victim of assumptions, and is looked upon with fear and suspicion by his fellow compatriots.

Atticus fights for Tom Robinson, despite the fact that his failure is a foregone conclusion. The blatant miscarriage of justice is reflected in events that occur in the real world. But the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* is a positive affirmation of the goodness of ordinary people. Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* is a harsh portrait of racial profiling and discrimination. Even before the term racial profiling gained currency, Harper Lee documented the serious damage it could do to human beings, who are subjected to discrimination on the basis of their race and colour. The publication of this novel that criticized and denounced the entrenched racism in American society, coincided with the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement in America, under Martin Luther King. Real life racist attitudes, prejudices and discriminatory actions have been portrayed with great clarity and the book continuously reinforces the need for tolerance in a society that has people from so many races and colours. The writer's foresight and vision are remarkable. Her compassion and understanding of the problems inherent in a racist culture are perceptive. The novel continues to retain its relevance even today, because racial discrimination and racial profiling continue to take place in America.



Critical Race theorists believe that race is an inherent aspect of American society. It is entrenched in the system and is all pervasive. They believe that the entire power system in America is built on white racist supremacy and white privilege. Critical Race Theory was developed sometime in the late 1970s by Derrick Bell. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, in their seminal work, *Critical Race Theory*, write about the fact that racism is rampant and a universal phenomenon.

According to Critical Race theorists, we are all consciously or unconsciously involved in the sociological web of domination and subordination. We live in a multiracial and multicultural society where we forget to consider a person as an individual, rather than as the representative of a group. Multiracial societies need the much maligned virtue of tolerance to survive and move forward without giving in to stereotypical assumptions that can lead to mass social violence. *To Kill a Mockingbird* presents the universal theme of tolerance and understanding through a regional setting. The story is relevant not only for America but also for every country in the world.

Racial profiling has emerged as a universal phenomenon that can be used to target and victimize anyone and everyone. *To Kill a Mockingbird* is an important reminder of the values that ordinary human beings must have in order to be humane and civilized. Atticus Finch is a conscience keeper who functions as a reminder of our essential humanity. The comment made by a character in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* is particularly pertinent in this context. She says to Atticus' sister Alexandra, "Whether Maycomb knows it or not, we're paying the highest tribute we can pay a man. We trust him to do right" (236). That, in essence, is Harper Lee's message to one and all: one must abide by one's conscience.

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**LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS**

1. Dr. Betsy Paul, Associate Professor, Department of English, St. Aloysius College, Elthuruth, Thrissur-680011, Kerala.
2. Ms. Thankam K. Abraham, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Christian College, Chengannur, Kerala.
3. Ms. Razeena P. R., Assistant Professor, Department of English, Sri. C. Achutha Menon Government College, Thrissur, Kerala. and Dr. Praseedha G., Assistant Professor, Department of English, Mercy College, Palakkad, Kerala.
4. Ms. Shalini Rachel Varghese, Assistant Professor and Head, Department of English, Christian College, Chengannur.
5. Dr. Sr. A. Princy Anto, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Sacred Heart College, University of Calicut, Chalakudy, Kerala.
6. Dr. Praseedha G., Assistant Professor, Department of English, Mercy College, Palakkad, Kerala.
7. Dr. Moncy Mathew, Assistant Professor, PG Department of English, Government Arts and Science College, Kozhikode, Kerala.
8. Sri. Sijo George P., Full Time Research Scholar and Dr. Elizabeth Abraham, Associate Professor, Department of English, Maharaja's College, MG University, Kottayam, Kerala.
9. Ms. Deepa Nair, Assistant Professor, Ayyappa College of Arts and Science, Nagarcoil, Tamil Nadu and Dr. Nila N., Assistant Professor, Department of English, Mercy College, Palakkad, Kerala.

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