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Editorial

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

Pursuits Vol. XVII is a compilation of articles contributed by faculty and research scholars from various colleges and research centres in the country. The current issue brings together research papers relating to diverse areas such as Cultural Studies, Film Studies, Environmentalism, Theatre, Gender and Space, Critical Race Theory, and Marxian Analysis. The papers focus on the various issues that engage literary studies, criticism, and theory, and present serious academic deliberations on topics pertinent to our times.

We gratefully acknowledge the support we have received from our contributors and subscribers. Hope our research journal will help foster a positive research culture and provide a conducive environment for productive research.

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EMERGING MODERNITY AND THE TRIAL OF KURIYEDATH THATRI

Dr. Nisha M. and Mr. Rajesh K.

The colonial administrators all over the world used their mechanisms to “know” their subjects. Anthropological works that were written during this period serve to instantiate this. The practices of the local populace were minutely studied. Close scrutiny of the sexual practices of various communities were studied and included in the “civilizing” mission. *Sambadham*¹ and polyandry were two such practices. *Smarthavicharam*, being a caste inquisition, was the local practice of trying Nambuthiri women suspected of adultery. This paper attempts to show that the trial of Kuuriyedath Thatri (Savitri) in the *Smarthavicharam* of 1905 is as an example of the regimentation of the Nambuthiri woman through not merely caste inquisition but also through modern discourses aimed at social reformation. In the process, the tussle between the traditional law based on religious texts and modern judicial procedures was strengthened. So, the actual question was about the authority that could regulate the female sexuality.

Governable subjects during colonial modernity in Kerala required understanding of the economic relations. In Kerala the agricultural lands of landed communities like Nair and Nambuthiri remained undivided because of the family practices. In the case of Nairs, it was *sambadham*² where women could stay at their natal

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- 1 Sambandhams were conjugal unions where Nambuthiri men would “visit” their Nair women but had no right over children produced in such unions.
 - 2 Sambandhams were conjugal unions where Nambuthiri men would “visit” their Nair women but had no right over children produced in such unions.

homes and receive *sambandhams*. The landed property was managed by the eldest *karanavar*³. In the case of Nambuthiri, the law of primogeniture was followed. Only the eldest male member could marry and the younger brother or Aphan could engage in *sambandham* with Nair women. In order to break this consolidation of property, colonial administration struck at the structure of the family and bestialized the prevalent practice. *Sambandham* thus became mere concubinage. Polygamy of the eldest son in the Nambuthiri household and polyandry of Nair women were looked down. *Smarthavicharam* becomes significant in this context as it was the trial to regulate female sexuality.

Smarthavicharam was conducted to try Namboothiri women who were suspected of adultery. If the charges were proved against her, public pronouncements were made and she was excommunicated from the community and was treated as equivalent to dead. Rituals were conducted to this effect which was termed *irrikkepindam*⁴. The trial of KuriyedathThatri was the most sensational trial in Kerala which ran for seven months and the verdict was pronounced on the night of 13 July, 1905. She had named several prominent men and it has been noted that the Rajah of Cochin Rama Varma XV ordered that the trial be stopped after she had named sixty four men.

KuriyedathThatri⁵ is a familiar name in Kerala. She was an *antherjanam*⁶ who was tried under *Smarthavicharam* in 1905, and

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3. The patriarch who was the head of the family.
 4. 'Irikke' means when alive and 'pindam' is the rice ball offered to the dead.
 5. KuriyedathThatri was a woman of the Brahmin Namboothiri community of Kerala. She was tried in a caste inquisition in 1905 for adultery. She named 64 men in the trial who were excommunicated with her. This trial lasted for 7 months. For the first time purushavicharam was allowed.
 6. This literally means the people inside. The term was used to refer to Namboothiri women who were to remain inside their houses.

was turned into an outcaste. In the trial she had named 64 paramours, most of them prominent men, with whom she had secret liaisons. She has been recreated by many authors like Lalithambika Antharjanam, Matampu Kunhukuttan, Alankode Leelakrishnan and V.T.Nandakumar to mention a few writers. MatampuKunhukuttan's 1976 novel *Bhrashtu* was translated as *Outcaste* by Vasanthi Sankaranarayanan, which saw a second edition in 2019. Thatri's story has also been recast in films like *Parinayam* (1994) and *Vanaprastham* (1999). The films highlight the aesthetic quality in her, especially, her relationship with Kathakali artists⁸.

For *Smarthavicharam* to be initiated, the accusation of “*adukkaladosham*” was levelled against the woman. Though the term refers to adultery, literally it refers to the pollution of the kitchen. The *antharjanam*, as the Nambuthiri woman was referred to, had to remain inside, and the space prescribed in the *illam* (house) was the kitchen. She was responsible for maintaining the caste purity of the household and family through various rituals. As Gita Krishnankutty notes, “since the ritual purity of the kitchen, crucial for maintaining the household's caste status was in the hands of women, it was called into question the moment a woman of the household was suspected of an illicit relationship” (xxii). Accusation of adultery thus directly referred to the loss of caste, especially due to a possible “pollution” of the blood line.

The permission of the king was essential to initiate the *smarthavicharam*. Thatri lived under the jurisdiction of the Maharaja of Cochin. The king during this period in Kochi was Rama Varma XV, also referred to as Rajarshi. He had accorded permission for the

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7. A ritualistic caste inquisition, the rules of which are found in Chapter VIII, Padom I Shlokas 1-35 Laghudharmaprakashika in SankaraSmriti, an ancient text.
 8. The most notable relationships was with the famous Kathakali artist Kavungal Sankara Panickar.

conduct of the trial under the *Smarthan*⁹ Jatavedan Namboothiri, other Mimamsakas and the royal representative the *Purakoyma*. Matampu Kunhukuttan was the grandson of the Smarthan Jatavedan Namboothiri. He records the trial of Thatri in his novel *Bhrashtu* (1976), translated as *Outcaste*. Two detailed accounts of this ritualised trial are found in Shungoony Menon's *Thiruvitamkur Charitram* (1878) and the anthropologist William Logan's *Malabar Manual* (1887).

The first stage of the trial was the *dasivicharam*¹⁰. If the accusation alleged was proven to be wrong, the officials prostrated before the accused, and did a *kshamanamaskaram*. *Kshama* is the seeking of forgiveness from the *antharjanam*. This is recorded in the book by Shangunny. It is not clear how many such instances of *kshama* were reported. But several instances of *smarthavicharam* have been reported. In the trial of Thatri, it was established at the stage of *dasivicharam* itself that she committed adultery. Once this was established, the *antharjanam* lost the status of being a *kulastree*¹¹ or even a woman. From thence, she was referred to as a *sadhanam*.

Sadhanam means a thing or an object. All those who were associated with the “thing” were considered “polluted.” The *Smarthan* could then proceed to question her in detail about the adulterers who were known as *jaransor* paramours. When Thatri was questioned, she mentioned, in addition to her husband, her husband's brother, her brother-in-law, her brother, eminent Kathakali artists,

9 Only three families had the right to conduct a trial namely Pattachomayarathmana, Vellaykatmana and Moothamana. Jatave^s 44 Jatavedan Namboothiri belonged to the Pattachomayarathmana.

10 Dasi refers to a servant. A namboothiri woman could travel, only accompanied by a chaperone/s who was known as *dasi* or *thozhi*. Since she always was with her mistress it was presumed that she would know about her clandestine affairs, if any. So she was questioned first at the trial. Moreover no man, even the Smarthan, could approach the *antharjanam* directly.

11 An honorific given to an upper caste woman especially one who enforces the norms of the caste.

singers, fellow student and mahouts. The most shocking revelation was the name of her father. Lalithambika Antharjanam in her 1938 short story “Goddess of Revenge” (*Prathikara Devata*) presented Thatri's actions as that of revenge as she was asked by her own husband to turn into a prostitute. Madambu Kunhukuttan in *Outcaste*, gives the reason as rape by her husband's brother on the nuptial night. Scholar K. M. Sheeba notes that Thatri was only ten when she was forced into intercourse by a man who later became related to her as husband's elder brother. The trial of Thatri took place when she was twenty three. Though the reasons for her sexual excesses has never been understood clearly, many explanations have been forwarded like revenge, lustful nature and even love of various art forms. It must be noted that whether it was fornication or adultery, Thatri, being a learned woman was aware of the consequences of her actions. During the trial she reports of her brother-in-law, who had requested her to answer in a trial (if it arose) in such a way that the excommunication could not affect his children.

Following the confession, usually the concerned parties were excommunicated and purificatory rituals or expiatory rituals, as the case may be, were done. For the first time in the history of *Smarthavicharam*, a *purushavicharam*¹² was allowed. The motives of such an exemption are analyzed here to connect it to the concern of this paper. It has been noted earlier that the colonial administration was keen on studying the sexual practices and more of the people. The print sphere in the form of magazines and newspapers were instrumental in aiding with the “reforming” mission. The print media took an active interest in such a sensational case and began reporting the trial with attention to even minute details. While garnering the

12 *A purushavicharam* refers to a defence by the men involved. They could question Thatri to prove their innocence.

opinion of Thatri being a sinful woman the unfairness of such a caste trial towards men was also highlighted. The men, it was argued, were denied the chance of cross examination, to prove their innocence. The need was for 'modern' procedures of the court like fair hearing and cross examination. It must be remembered that modern courts of justice were in existence during the time and the ritual trials were "procedures [not] acceptable to civil courts" (Sheeba 117). The trial thus became a tussle between premodern and modern judicial processes.

Thrippoonithura was the capital of Cochin at the time. Thatri's trial was re-conducted here at the Hill Palace. Sixty out of the sixty four accused men took part in the trial but only one attempted to refute the charges levelled. Thathri, on her part provided details referring to dates of temple festivals, *kathakali* performances, menstrual periods, pregnancies of her sister and harvesting periods. In modern judicial systems, these are not proof enough to show that adultery took place on the said days. But the ritual - bound *Smarthan* took them as evidence and ostracized the men along with her. Hence, the trial could not be considered modern in the true sense.

Moreover, in the traditional practice, complete silence was to be strictly adhered to. Even the royal representative, the *Purakoyil*, was only a mute witness to the proceedings. If he had a difference of opinion, he would take off the piece of cloth from his shoulder and put it on the floor to indicate his dissatisfaction with the question. The *Smarthan* would then reframe his questions, and if satisfied, the representative would replace the cloth on the shoulder. By allowing the *purushavicharam* in this trial, the Raja was curtailing the hitherto sovereign right of the *Smarthan*. Also, in keeping with modern practices, the whole procedure was documented. The king, anxious of transparency, included certain new "acceptable" practices.

During the trial, the king provided the services of the State machinery which was at his disposal like police protection, services of the apothecary and officials to document the proceedings. This can be read as the assurance of a trial based on the procedures of the civil court. It must be observed that Thatri, who was the *Sadhanam* (object), could not question the men as she was in the object position. Termed as such, she did not have the agency to act. It is only in literary works that she raises her concerns. There, she questions the rigid orthodoxy. For instance, in Madambu Kunhukuttan's version, she questions the *pundits* as to whether her crime was merely being born an *antharjanam*. She is given the status of a victim who seeks revenge. In his version, she questions the innumerable number of secret liaisons of men and poignantly asks if even one Namboothiri would remain unaffected if they had a *smarthavicharam* initiated against them. Lalithambika Antharjanam treats her as the goddess of revenge albeit in the form of a ghost. In reality, though it was reported that she answered like a “barrister,” (Malayala Manorama qtd.in Devika *Kochi Post*) she couldn't counter question. Given the previous knowledge of the unfairness of all such trials (a *smarthavicharam* could be initiated only if the *antharjanam* confessed to her guilt), perhaps her questioning would not have had any effect at all.

The print sphere was a part of colonial modernity in shaping the opinions of its readers. The surge in reformation across communities was sadly only the reformation of the woman. The vehemence with which the trial was attacked was seen here. Neither the State not the *Smarthan* condemned the actions of Kuriyedath Thatri. It was the print sphere that likened her to a “prostitute” and as a sexual offender. The *Malayala Manorama* daily wrote, “The number of men involved indicates that she was worse

than a prostitute. She moved about freely and did what she liked. How can truth be expected of such a woman with absolutely no morals?" (qtd. in Devika). The repeated circulation of Thatri as a shameless, sinful woman in the dailies, in fact, only strengthened the need for a monogamous relationship.

Any explanation of why Thatri was accused of adultery several years after her actions began seems unsatisfactory. Some accounts put forth a controversy theory on the part of the king against the English- educated youngsters, especially by pointing out the number of young men involved in the case. Other accounts suggest that the neighbour who levelled charges of accusation had economic motives behind this. That she did not bear any children even after involving herself in multiple relationships has been taken to show that the whole story was concocted especially after the hearsay after the trial. K.M. Sheeba notes, "Thathrikkutty was becoming an instrument in the hands of the emerging Malayali public sphere to consolidate the modern notions of sex and aberrance, chastity and punishment, and of the changing definitions of private and public" (127).

Caste orthodoxy and colonial modernity were grappling with the idea of female sexuality in different ways from late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. Representatives of caste resorted to the *Smritis* and *Manu* for the chaste woman, whereas colonialists resorted to Victorian ideals of the chaste woman. Both required women to be chaste, offering her services to the household. The timing of the *Thathrikkutty* incident was decisive in transforming it into a central issue to be taken up by the reformers and the print media to abandon *debauched* social practices rooted in Kerala. The inability of the woman in gaining sovereignty on her body was strengthened by the print sphere, the State machinery and religion alike. The new

value order that emerged focussed on a new body and self that was suitable for the emerging modernity.

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**A VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS:
PROBLEMATIZING THE HUMAN
TEMPERAMENT IN BEJOY NAMBIAR'S FILM,
*SOLO***

Dr. Mary Paul Chakkachamparambil

Hindu philosophy postulates that *prakriti* or nature is the primary source out of which the universe has evolved. Twenty four *gunas* have been conceived of within *prakriti* by the *Sakhya*, *Yoga* and *Vedanta* schools. They include: the *panchabhutas*, the *panchatantras*, the *jnanendriyas*, the *karmendriyas* and the four internal organs.

The *panchabhutas* or the *panchamahabhutas* are the five elements *Pritvi* (Earth), *Jal/Apas* (Water), *Agni* (Fire), *Vayu* (Air) and *Akasha* (Aether). The quest of the cosmic world begins with uncovering the secrets of the *panchabhutas*. These elements are considered to be the base matter of everything in the world. Plants and animals maintain their poise by the harmonious balance of these elements in the right proportions. *Ayurveda* and *yoga* postulate that disease and disorder in the human body can be ascribed to the imbalance of one or more of these elements. Even our thoughts and emotions are closely related to them. Thus, holistic health can be maintained by the proper balance of these elements. Many branches related to holistic healthcare base their studies in relation to the *panchabhutas*. *Sadhana*, the practice of gaining mastery over oneself in *yoga*, can be effectively done by learning to control the emotions and manipulate the basic elements. *Hasta Mudra*, in the *yoga* tradition also attempts to stimulate the five different fingers in the hand, as they are closely connected with the five elements. The six human tastes are also associated with the *panchabhutas*. The seven

chakras in the human body, the three *dosas* in *ayurveda* and the various methods of revival and recuperation used in naturopathy are the other fields of study associated with the *panchabhutas*.

The *panchabhutas* have different characteristics and are associated with different facets of human experience. The first element is earth (*prithvi* or *bhumi*). Associated with the quality of *gandha* (sense of smell) and *sparsha* (Touch), earth represents the solid materials that build up plants and animals. Symbolically, the human body is composed of two kinds of earth: the perishable part which dies and decays after death and the eternal part which is composed of atoms that disintegrate after death, only to go back to its original eternal form, the atom. Earth is used to create all types of buildings and when this element is out of balance, the consequences may lead to explosions or earthquakes.

The complex web of life revolves around the second element, water (*jal* or *apas*) associated with the quality of *rasa* or taste and touch. Water is the lifeline of plant and animal existence. Blood flowing through the human body and water bodies (ponds, lakes, rivers, seas, and ocean) are composed of liquid forms of matter that are crucial for the survival of flora and fauna. Like the earth, water is also composed of the eternal and the perishable form. Water encompasses not only planetary but also human time scales and when this element is out of proportion, drought, floods and tsunamis can occur.

The third element, air (*vayu*), is what we breathe in and breathe out to sustain our life. Associated with the quality of touch (*sparsha*) and recognized by the sense organ *tvak* (touch), *vayu* manifests itself in so many different forms breeze, winds, whirlwinds etc. Thus, both as *pranavayu* (breath for mankind) and in other forms (carbon di oxide, oxygen for plants), *vayu* is an essential link to

life, and also has two levels as earth and water i.e. the eternal atom and the perishable *karya* (work). Imbalance of this element could lead to storms, cyclones and hurricanes. *Yoga* attributes prime importance to the control of *pranavayu*, not only for sustaining a healthy body but also for treatment of various kinds of diseases. On a cosmic level, *vayu* represents electromagnetic energy.

Fire (*agni* or *tejas*) is the fourth element of the *panchabhuta*. The source of heat and light, fire is associated with warmth, enlightenment and knowledge. It also has eternal and perishable elements and Indian mythology posits four kinds of fire—fire of the sky, fire of the earth, fire of the stomach (hunger or digestive power) and ordinary fire. The rays of the sun warm the planet and electricity is indispensable in the modern IT dominated world. Fire, manifested as light energy in the visible spectrum, is perceived by the eye and the absence of this element would lead the world to an impasse.

The last element, aether (*akasha*), the highest and the most subtle, has only one character. It is eternal. Also translated as sound, space or sky, aether connects all other elements together. Associated with the human ear, aether is the medium of sound. Sound or *shabda*, either man made or otherwise, cannot travel through vacuum. Man hears a sound when speech is carried to the ears through air. Sound waves reverberate through a medium, and transfer the energy to the tympanum in the ear. These impulses are then carried through the auditory nerves to the brain and the sound is heard. Thus sound is of prime importance and is also the prime quality of *akasha* or space.

The cosmic world thus resonates in the flux created by the elements. On the microcosmic level, the five elements have always punctuated and dictated the dynamics of human health, temperament, experiences and relationships. Within the planet, on a macrocosmic

level, the harmony or disharmony within the elements is incidental in determining the shifting universal paradigms of chaos and peace.

Western philosophy also presents the concept of the four humours, which are the metabolic agents of the four elements. They include: Blood (air), Phlegm (water), Yellow Bile (fire) and Black Bile (earth). Greek, Medieval and Renaissance thought conceived of various physical, mental and psychological characteristics organised around the predominating vital fluid and the element it was associated with. It was believed that health could only be maintained by the right balance of the fluids and they were responsible for the nutrition, development and metabolism of the organism.

Blood and phlegm, agents of air and water were considered the moist and enriching metabolic agents necessary for growth. Yellow bile and black bile, agents of fire and earth, were the dry elements, and were only needed to serve as powerful catalysts to aid digestion within the human body. The four kinds of temperaments correspondent to the predominant humour in the body included the sanguine temperament (blood), the phlegmatic temperament (phlegm), the choleric temperament (yellow bile) and the melancholic temperament (black bile).

Blood is warm and moist; it carries the nourishment and oxygen needed to all parts of the body. Cells cannot survive without it. It promotes happiness, a sense of well being, love and enthusiasm. The sanguine personality is usually a generous, optimistic type of person. Phlegm is cold and wet; it also includes saliva, plasma and interstitial fluids. These fluids cool, protect, moisten, lubricate and flush out toxins from the body. They also help to transport vital nutrients across the body and to eliminate waste. It induces lethargy, emotionalism and promotes sensitivity. The phlegmatic

personality is usually a sluggish, cowardly and pallid type of person.

Yellow bile is hot and dry. Produced by the liver and stored in the gall bladder it enables the digestion of food, excretion of excess cholesterol, stimulates intestinal peristalsis and aids in the respiratory process. Being caustic by nature, it ignites passion and provokes powerful emotional responses. The choleric personality is usually an explosive ambitious, revengeful and short-tempered person. Black bile is cold and dry. A normal sediment in blood, black bile has condensing, coagulating and astringing properties. It aids in the clotting of blood, digestive processes, structural repairs and bone formation. It encourages prudence, pragmatism and caution. The melancholic personality is usually an introspective, pessimistic and sentimental type of person.

The human condition oscillates between *eucrasia* (when the humours are balanced and in harmony) and *dyscracia* (when any one of the humours dominates and disturbs the optimum level). These humours can also be combined to form more complex personality types for eg: choleric - sanguine, sanguine - phlegmatic, choleric - melancholic and phlegmatic - melancholic.

Having given a detailed analysis of the role of the elements in the Eastern *panchabhuta* system of thought and the ancient Western psychological theory of the four humours, the paper now proceeds to analyze the human temperament as portrayed in the 2017 Malayalam film *Solo*. This reflective paper is based on secondary data including books, articles, discussions and primary data i.e. actual viewing of the film, *Solo*. This paper does not claim to be an authoritative voice in this area. However, it presents my perspective of how the film *Solo* psychologically depicts aspects or 'voices' of the human temperament and how they are aesthetically linked to four elements .

Solo is a 2017 bilingual film, directed by Bejoy Nambiar and starring Dulquer Salmaan. Written by Bejoy Nambiar, Dhanya Suresh and Karthik Iyer, the film tells four stories, each based on different elements; earth, fire, wind and water. Starring Dulquer Salmaan in the lead role in all four stories, other actors include Dhaniska (Radhika), Neha Sharma (Akshara), Shruthi Hariharan (Rukku), Arthi Venkatesh (Ayesha), Dino Morea, Manoj K Jayan, Renji Panicker and Suhasini Maniratnam. Cinematography is handled by Girish Gangadharan and the film's soundtrack consists of twenty two songs recorded by an assortment of musicians. The film was released on 5 October 2017, both in Tamil and Malayalam. As mentioned earlier, *Solo* tells the story of four young men Shekhar, Siva, Trilok and Rudra.

World of Shekhar (Water)

The world of Shekhar dabbles in watery landscapes and fluid movements. It tells the story of a stammerer, Shekhar who falls in love with a blind dancer, Radhika. Four years into their relationship in college, Radhika's brother discovers their affair and hot exchanges ensue between both families. Radhika's revelation that she is pregnant with Shekhar's child leads to a shocked and stunned silence. When it is discovered that the baby will be blind by the age of seven or eight, Shekhar's sister pressurizes him to abandon the child and give a compensatory sum to Radhika. Shekhar is furious, Radhika is aghast and the disharmony between them is only solved, when Shekhar blindfolds himself and asserts his undying love for Radhika and his unborn daughter. The lovers, with the consent of the family, are then united in wedlock amidst the beautiful blue background of the sea. Later Radhika dies after delivering a baby girl and the story ends with Shekhar, playing with his daughter on the beach.

The film celebrates life and is a manifestation of the sanguine

temperament. It is a triumph of the human spirit over challenges (visual and vocal). The love between the blind Radhika and the stammering Shekhar is riddled by physical challenges, familial differences and mental trauma. However, they tune into what they can touch and hear and override all the other obstacles with the purity of their passion and the determination of their will power. The story brings joy and hope to those who are challenged and provides a strong message regarding the superficial relationships that dominate the world today. Tender declarations and reassurances of love between the lovers are interspersed with realistic moments of doubt and uncertainty. The joy of true friendship, interference from family members and genuine love are other themes explored in the film. The film highlights the incorrigible optimism and the power of endurance of the human spirit that often keeps life going. The water theme permeates the whole film - the heroine's entry through graceful, fluid dance movements in water; the hope and angst in the minds of the newly married couple, harmoniously synchronizing with the depiction of the turbulent waves around their basket-boat in the midst of the calm, serene sea and Shekhar's tears mingling in the rain. Lovely shades of blue that appear throughout the film - the blue swimming pool, blue clothes, walls, buckets, baby blanket, the blue curtains of the palanquin - and the sound of water dripping in the background contribute to a sense of serenity. The complex sanguine-plegmatic temperament that is inherently generous and believes that every sunset is followed by a sunrise is depicted here. It sends signals that life goes on.

World of Siva (Fire)

Burning with potent, fiery passion and hot, vengeful emotions the world of Siva is a tale of revenge. Siva's mother deserts her family. Siva is left alone with his father and younger brother. Years later, Siva

joins a gangster group led by Bhadran. He protects his brother Siddhu, who is later invited to join the gang. When Siva's father is killed in a bar, CCTV footage reveals that he was shot by Vishnu, a gangster in Mumbai. Though Siva's wife tries to stop him, Siva goes to Mumbai with two other gangsters to take revenge on Vishnu. Siddhu joins them. With the help of a few gangsters in Mumbai, Siva reaches Vishnu. In the shootout that follows, Siva eliminates most of Vishnu's men but is finally killed by Vishnu. A devastated Siddhu, who has witnessed the horrible scene of his brother being shot many times, decides to take revenge on Vishnu. However fate takes a strange twist when Siddhu realises just before killing Vishnu, that his mother is married to Vishnu. His mother begs him to escape and Siddhu runs away.

The caustic, fiery personality of the choleric temperament has been personalized through the character of Siva. The dark, gutsy character of the hitman, encompasses uncharted subtexts that reveal volumes about the complex, often misunderstood and misled minds of gangster, terrorists, and dictators. Domestic issues that lead to separation and their consequences, the delinquency of youth belonging to maladjusted families, the comradeship and code of honour among hitmen, women who survive in gangster groups and sustain their feminine instincts etc are some of the other explosive areas of human relationships explored here. The fascinating scene in which a heartbroken Siddhu seeks comfort from the strange lady, portrays the irony of a world ridden by violence, bloodshed, trauma and yet fraught by a spirit of compassion and brotherhood. Fire can be tamed for domestic purposes. Siva belongs to a broken family and turns to violence as a means of living. Though this roaring passion burns within him, there are moments in the film that give us glimpses of the tenderness hidden within him his love for Rukku's daughter, the

protection he offers Siddhu , his mixed emotions for Rukku and the final confrontation with his mother. Fire can also blaze furiously; devouring everything within its reach till it dies down and is reduced to charred ashes. Siva's rage is ignited at the murder of his father, then blazes into a vengeful blazing firebomb, consuming everything and everyone in his path and finally smoulders to a gradual, fatal finale. Fire appears everywhere in the film a blaze in which the photographs are burned, lighted cigarettes and burning lamps used for devotional purposes. Red, yellow and black hues, associated with fire predominate in visually rich hues that evoke images of revenge, repressed emotions and retribution. Romance also rears up in the background. Through compelling images of the Other the anti hero, the antisocial and the angry young man Dulquer Salmaan showcases a powerful, provoking portrait of the choleric temperament.

World of Trilok (Air)

A thriller that soars on the wings of young romance, the world of Trilok then plummets to the murky depths of human nature selfishness, indifference and a lapse in human judgment that proves to be too costly. Dr Trilok Menon, a young veterinary doctor is out to take revenge on a father and son who were responsible for his wife's (Ayesha) death. Ayesha's cycle collides with a car driven by Thomas Zachariah. Zachariah's son-in-law, Anson wants to save her but Zachariah persuades him to leave the bleeding body of Ayesha on the road. Ayesha gasps for breath and dies in Trilok's arms. Within four years, Trilok hunts down Zachariah, poisons his food and Zachariah suffocates to death. He then pursues Justin, injects a drug into his drip and leaves him to die.

The pick of the lot, the world of Trilok keeps us suspended in

air, on tenterhooks, holding our breath. The slow suspense is steadily maintained till the suffocating end. The innate human instinct to protect oneself at the expense of others is explored in this dark tale. From the breezy world of romance to the tumultuous whirlwind of heartless indifference to a dying accident victim, the film is intricately associated with the element of air, as the three characters who pass away do so due to lack of oxygen. The joy and zest for life of a young couple, deeply in love, has been beautifully captured in the opening cycling scenes. The film gradually ascends to a crescendo from the sanguine young husband, Dr. Trilok Menon, through a choleric phase, as he deliberately and steadily plots revenge to a final melancholic state when the pensive doctor calmly informs the dying man that his wife had been pregnant at the time of her death. Guilt associated with the melancholic temperament is also problematised in the film.

World of Rudra (Earth)

The eternal and much acclaimed tolerance associated with earth *bhumidevi* - forms the subject matter of this film. Rudhra Ramachandren, an army trainee is in love with Akshara. Their affair is a turbulent one as they have to face severe opposition from both their families. Later, Akshara leaves for Australia to pursue further studies, promising Rudra that she will always be faithful to him. Four years later, Rudra, now an army officer receives Akshara's marriage invitation. Rudra, accompanied by his colleagues, go to meet Akshara, who tells him that his father had requested her to end their relationship. Rudra pursues his quest for clarification and finally realizes the shocking truth that Akshara could be his half-sister.

Rudra represents the phlegmatic and melancholic temperament. Reluctant and sluggish at first to go in search of clarity,

he has to be persuaded by his team mates to find Akshara. Later, when the stunning secret is revealed to him by his mother, he reconciles to the situation and the melancholic penchant for introspection and sentiment is highlighted here. The magnificent capacity of the earth to suffer in silence and to bury secrets forever is symbolically presented through his reconciliation to a painful family secret and the stoicism with which he generously lets his former girlfriend build a new life with another man.

Conclusion

Solo deserves credit for the innovative approach in design and the superb roles, pulled off with élan by the hero. The thematic connection to the four elements has also been explained through various premises - explanatory prefaces connecting the elements and striking illustrations introducing each section of the film. Though not without 'grey' areas, the film strikes a chord in the viewer. Subtle nuances of body language, stylized rendering of the four characters and a wide range of varying emotions offer ample scope for the actors to enact the complexities of the human temperament. The love theme that binds all the four stories together is obvious. None of the protagonists seem to achieve a satisfying relationship as Shekhar is left bereaved, Siva's life is cut short, Trilok has to be content with his revenge and Rudra has to accept reality as it is. Each voice seems to be a cry in the wilderness of 'life,' a yearning from the soul for recognition, understanding and dignity. The four differing voices encompass proactive and malignant forces that not only cause turbulence in the world, but also lead to peace and harmony.

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**ENVIRONMENTAL CRIMES AND RESISTANCE:
APPROPRIATION OF POSTCOLONIAL ECOSYSTEM
IN JAMES CAMERON'S FILM, *AVATAR***

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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**ARTISTIC CAMPAIGNING FOR SOCIETAL CONCERNS:
MAHESH DATTANI'S *TARA* AND *THIRTY DAYS
IN SEPTEMBER***

Dr. M. K. Praseeda, Assistant Professor

India is a country known for its cultural divergence and traditional practices. India is a nation where familial ties and relationships are given great importance. But the very traditional country has a darker side too. India stands second among the most dangerous country for women; India has registered cases of caste based violence standing on par with some of the most violent countries of the world. These are some of the sensitive issues that are handled by the Indian writers with quick and sure hands. But what is left unsaid are the abuse and violence undergone by children be it emotional, sexual, physical or psychological. It is taken for granted that children do not undergo such feelings or they exaggerate to protect the name and the modesty of the family. A recent survey by Save the Children India says that 94.8% of rape cases saw children being raped by someone they knew, not strangers. These acquaintances include neighbors (3,149 cases) who were the biggest abusers (35.8%). 10% of cases saw children being raped by their own direct family members and relatives. The conclusion of the report is that a child is being abused every 4 minutes. The darker side of the nation has come to light in the recent months wherein parents have started to report cases of abuse.

Mahesh Dattani is a writer who has deftly handled the issue of child abuse long before the public awareness about it started. He was one of the earlier writers to write on child abuse, more specifically on the psychological and sexual abuse of girl children in the Indian

familial set up. Dattani is a man of multi-dimensional personality. He is an Indian director, actor, playwright and a writer. His plays emerged as fresh arrival in the domain of Indian English Drama in the last decade of the twentieth century. The plays have great contemporary value. “They are plays of today,” writes John McRae in his Introduction to Dattani's plays, “[they]sometimes ... cause controversy, but at the same time they are plays which embody many of the classic concerns of world drama” (Souza 163).

Dattani has a number of plays to his credit such as *Where There's a Will, Dance Like a Man, Tara, Bravely Fought the Queen, Final Solutions, On a Muggy Night in Mumbai, Thirty Days in September, Seven Steps Around The Fire, The Murder that Never Was* etc. He is the first playwright in English to be awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award. He won it for his play *Final Solutions*. *Dance like a Man* won the award for the Best Picture in English awarded by the National Panorama in 1998. Dattani's plays deal with social issues. They portray the deep-seated prejudices and problems that society usually chooses to remain silent. His plays deal with gender identity, gender discrimination, and communal tension. The Sahitya Akademi Award citation says: [Dattani's work] probes tangled attitudes in contemporary India towards communal differences, consumerism and gender ... [they are] a brilliant contribution to India drama in English.”

In *Tara*, Dattani explores the life of conjoined twins, Tara and Chandan, born with three legs. Patriarchal society deals cruelly with them and in the process ruining Tara's life forever. His argument is that, from time immemorial, society favours boys over girls, more so in case of a crippled girl child:

A scan showed that a major part of the blood supply to the

third leg was provided by the girl. The chances were slightly better that the leg would survive on the girl ... they would risk giving both legs to the boy ... Chandan had two legs for two days. It didn't take them very long to realize what a great mistake they have made. The leg was amputated. A piece of dead fish which could have- might have-been Tara. (378)

The abuse of a child need not be sexual. Psychologists say that even the smallest act of emotionally putting down a child or making them feel unwanted can be considered as an abuse. Tara, in this case, had to live a crippled life till her death, because of the decisions taken by her family to provide a better life to a boy child. She faces emotional and physiological trauma throughout her life, and finally breaks when she learns the reason for her misery.

Thirty Days in September explores the life of a woman who had undergone sexual abuse as a child. Dattani initially shows the psychological state of a girl who has trouble holding onto a relationship for more than a month. She never trusts any man she dates, and has a secret pleasure in breaking up the relationship. When finally confronted, she opens up about her past. She was raped by her uncle in her own house. Hence, she developed a personality that secretly loves hurting men:

Shhh! don't cry you want to come here in your holidays, no? Then don't cry. This is your seventh birthday, no? You are seven now. Ready for a real birthday present. Lie down. Come on, quickly. If they hear you they will say you are a bad girl. This is our secret... Relax and look into my eyes. I am not going to harm you. Help me and I will love you more than your mummy or daddy. (43)

Dattani shows the emotional trauma of the child in the last scene. The

fact is that most of the cases of child abuse or rape are not registered. The abuser is someone the child is familiar with either a very close family friend or a relation. The child is usually blackmailed using some little mistake she did earlier or bribed with some trivial thing she likes. In most cases, the child is afraid of speaking things or does not speak about it, because the child is not aware of being abused or presumes that what is happening to her is right because an elder whom her parents know or respects is doing these things to her. Only a very few are able to understand that what is happening to her is wrong. In some unfortunate cases, where the child is able to understand that it is wrong and inform the parents, they fail to take action and let it slide. Mala, the protagonist of *Thirty Days in September*, suffers the same fate and blames her mother for her plight:

Where were you when he locked the door to your bedroom while I was napping in there? Where were you during those fifteen minutes when he was destroying my soul? Fifteen minutes every day of my summer holidays, add them up. Fifteen minutes multiplied by thirty or thirty-one... That's how long or how little it took for you to send me to hell for the rest of my life! (52-53)

Mala was raped when she was seven years old by her maternal uncle and later on, by her cousin. Her mother, who was a victim of child abuse herself, identifies what is happening to her daughter but does nothing to confront her brother or prevent her daughter from being abused. Her inaction is the most thought provoking part of Dattani's play. As in most cases, she is afraid of the society getting a wrong idea about her daughter. She also fears losing the affection of her brother. As a result of her silence, she loses her daughter in the most horrible way imaginable. Mala develops an aversion to affection, and takes pleasure in having short term relationships with men and ending

it when she desires.

Though Dattani, in his work *Tara* and *Thirty Days in September*, talks about the abuse of children in 2000, the issue is still relevant. He says,

I write for my milieu, for my time and placemiddle class and urban Indian My dramatic tensions arise from people who aspire to freedom from society. . . . I am not looking for something sensational, which are under-explored, deserve their space . . . It's no use brushing them under the carpet. We have to understand the marginalized, including the gays. Each of us has a sense of isolation within given contexts. That's what makes us individuals. (The Hindu)

In present times, where familial structures are nuclear and parents work outside homes, children are open and vulnerable to abuses more than ever. Girl children are subjected to more than sexual abuse. They are given a secondary place in families and denied basic needs and educational opportunities. It is time that the younger generation is given opportunity to express their discomfort of psychological problems, at the least to their parents or a trusted teacher. It is necessary to understand that children subjected to mental, physical or sexual trauma may come out as adults with complex psychological problems or may lose or ruin their very lives.

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ENVIRONMENTAL RETERRITORIALIZATION IN LINDA HOGAN'S NOVEL, *POWER*

Ms. Rose Mary K. R. and Dr. Nila N.

*“Mystery is a form of Power”
(Power)*

Linda Hogan's novel, *Power*, published in 1998, begins with this epilogue. As a writer, Hogan opposes the western ideological constructs of nature, by giving prominence to the mysteries in nature. She belongs to the group of reinhabitory writers. Gary Snyder, in his book, *A Place in Space*, defined reinhabitory writers as “people who come out of the industrial societies and then start to turn back to the land, back to place” (190). Such people maintain an intimate relation with nature and believe in the interdependence of all living things in that place. The works of Hogan, the Native American Chickasaw writer, focus on Native American communities and their connection to nature, spirituality and cultural identity. Her mixed blood origin and her acquaintance with the dominant white culture and the American Indian culture give her a double perspective, which is reflected in her works. She spent her childhood days in Colorado and Germany. Her longing to be part of life in her native Oklahoma is fulfilled through her fictional narratives.

Reterritorialization is an attempt to overcome the cultural alienation and to retrieve and re-establish the lost identity. Physical, emotional and cultural dislocation result in the loss of self and traditions. According to Donelle Drees, “Environmental reterritorialization involves writers who position themselves in natural settings in order to reinhabit a landscape or place that is

intrinsic to their philosophies of being in the world”(19). Hogan, through her fictional characters, emphasizes the relationship between human beings and the natural world and attempts to retrace the lost self and cultural traditions.

In the novel, *Power*, Hogan tells the story of the Taiga tribe living in the wild lands of Florida. The life of Taiga land and its people is given through the perspective of a sixteen-year old girl, Omishto, who comes from the city to live in the wilderness with her Aunt Ama. The meaning of the word “Omishto” in Taiga language is “the one who watches” (4). She becomes a witness to the mysterious events that take place in the Taiga land. Omishto decides to spend her days with Aunt Ama, a character who lives in close relationship with nature and its beings. The novel begins with the description of a hurricane, which transforms the entire physical world and also the lives of these characters. Ama speaks Taiga language, knows old stories and traditions and can track animals. In Omishto's words, “She can track anything. She hears animals and smells them” (165). After the hurricane, she tracks a panther and kills it. Omishto struggles to explain this mysterious act of Ama as “the panther is important to the old people. For thousands of years, they are connected to it, intricately, intimately” (166). She somehow manages to understand this shocking act on the part of her aunt as a noble sacrifice to save Taiga land and its inhabitants: “It is a sacrifice, It all is .This whole thing” (71). The conflict in laws of the white world and the native world is brought out during the trial of Ama. The court of the white man sets Ama free, while the jury of old men banishes Ama from her land and asks her to go for four years of walking. The novel ends with Omishto taking up the role of Ama Eaton and deciding to live in the Taiga land. Omishto identifies herself with the land and nature and she is heard saying, “I am the land , I am Ama and the Panther” (173).

Hogan, the activist who is sensitive to environmental concerns, maintains a kind of physical, moral and spiritual existence with nature. She stresses the need to maintain an intimate spiritual connection with nature, which she argues, is essential for the sustenance of the living world. For Hogan, the environment is an extension of self. She challenges the western constructs of nature and its elements. Hogan interprets the symbolic significance of animals, trees and other elements of nature. The tree Metheusaleh, which is described in the novel, is related to Taiga life and has symbolic significance. Animals and other elements of nature act as intermediaries between this world and the next world. She uses these symbols to dismantle the existing western notions, which, according to her, is destructive for nature. As Ama puts it, “Snakes are a sign of God” (39). They are the symbol of regeneration and not wicked or evil. “Oni,” which is the Taiga word for “hurricane,” is “like god,” and is not destructive.

Hogan's characters maintain a spiritual relationship with the land. According to Snyder, living an inhibitory life is not only a physical action, but also a spiritual and moral choice. He defines spirituality as “a feeling of gratitude to all; taking responsibility for your own acts; keeping contact with the sources of energy that flow into your own life” (188). Through this spiritual relationship with land and its beings, Hogan's characters show respect for the wisdom it contains, which is called terrestrial intelligence. As Omishto believes, “the animals have eyes that see us. The birds, trees, everything knows what we do” (52), and Aunt Ama “can read the tracks of all the animals. She has a different intelligence than the rest of us” (133). The respect for such a terrestrial intelligence is essential, according to Hogan, to maintain a balanced relationship between the human world and world of nature. Hogan, as Dreese comments in her

book *Ecocriticism*, “demonstrates that by studying this form of intelligence, we can learn how to take better care of our environment and one another” (73).

Hogan also uses creation stories and origin stories to dismantle the western notions of creation and birth. Through Omishto's words, Hogan retraces the old stories, and connects the past with the present. The passage reads: “This was how the world created,” Ama told me once, out of wind and lashing rain. “We were blown together by a storm in the first place”. It was all created out of storms” (43). Taigas call the Panther “Sisa;” their elder sister. The birth of the Sisa is another creation story in the novel. “There is a hole in the sky, the way the old stories say about the hole pecked by a bird, a hole through which our older sister, the panther Sisa is what we call her in our Taiga language entered this world” (55). From an ecofeminist point of view, it can be said that Omishto identifies Ama and herself with the Panther, when she says, “Sisa like the woman who wears boy's old shoe because she is poor, we are diminished and endangered” (69). Hogan brings together women and animal imagery to expose the suffering injustices against women and non-human natural world.

Hogan, as an environmental activist, also demonstrates stewardship for the earth. She stresses the need to protect earth's creatures and to heal the gap between the human and the non human world. As she muses in her book, *Dwellings*, “Caretaking is the utmost spiritual and physical responsibility of our time and perhaps that stewardship is the solution to mystery of what we are” (115). Hogan reterritorializes the lost environment by challenging the destructive western constructs of nature, by decentering human beings, and placing them at the guest table along with other living beings.

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SUBALTERN GAZE IN MULK RAJ ANAND'S *UNTOUCHABLE*

Sr. Sithara Joseph and Dr. Bhuvana N.

Bakha had looked at the Tommies, stared at them with wonder and amazement when he first went to live at the British regiment barracks with his uncle. He had glimpses, during his sojourn there, of the life the Tommies lived, sleeping on strange, low canvas beds covered tightly with blankets, eating eggs, drinking tea and wine ... and he had soon become possessed with an overwhelming desire to live their life. (*Untouchable* 3)

Subaltern, as part of literary studies, analyses the power consciousness of the elite towards the powerless. Subaltern studies, according to Spivak, is a strategy for our times. In *Subalternity and Repression: Argument in Cultural Theory*, John Beverly states, “Subaltern studies is an intervention along subordination not only in the past but also in the present” (Introduction 7). Subaltern studies deal with the notion of one dominating the other, which existed not only in the past but has continued even into the present.

In *Subalternity and Repression*, Beverly voices the opinion of David Forgacs: “Culture in Gramsci is the sphere in which ideologies are different and organized in which hegemony is constructed and can be broken reconstructed” (13). Culture into which one is born plays a significant role. It defines one's identity. Culture is predominant in forming a society. According to Guha, subaltern studies is “. . . listening to the small voice of history” (qtd. in 15). This paper tries to analyse and listen to the small voices of

people living in a caste-dominated society.

Subalternity existed in caste-dominated society. A member of the lower class did not have the right to raise their voice against injustices. The sad plight of the lower caste was that they were not considered human beings. In *Dalit as Subalterns*, Guha defines subalterns as “a name for the general attribute of subordination in South Asian Society where this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way” (5).

Indian society, being caste predominant, the people belonging to the lower stratum of the society can be considered subaltern. Even the sight of the lower caste was considered an abomination by the upper caste people. Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* is set in an atmosphere that portrays the poor condition of lower caste people. Anand clearly draws a picture of their inhuman experience, which leads to humiliation, both physical and psychological. In “Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*: A Triumph of Narrative Skill,” U. S. Rukhaiyar states that, “Two of the key notes of the novel are pathos and irony, or better say, irony upon pathos. But though the novel begins on a note of despair, it ends on a note of hope” (51).

Mulk Raj Anand is an acclaimed Indo-Anglian novelist of the period who has gained recognition globally. He has authored number of novels, short stories, wrote various number of books with different themes. He artistically used literature to criticise the existing social stigmas in the society. Society becomes the main place of evaluation in his work. For Anand, literature is an expression of society. His notable works are *Untouchable* (1935), *Coolie* (1937), *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937), a trilogy, *The Village* (1939), *Across the Black Waters* (1941), *The Sword and the Sickle* (1942), *The Big Heart* (1945), *The Road* (1963), *Death of a Hero* (1964) and his seven-

volume fiction, *Seven Ages of Man*.

The novel opens with a detailed description of the external atmosphere of the people belonging to the lower caste. The lack of hygiene and cleanliness marks the presence of unhealthy environs of the outcast people. The story revolves around Bakha, the sweeper boy who represents the people of his caste. Bakha, though an Indian, never wished to imitate the elites of his society; instead, he imitates the Britishers. His gaze falls on the Britishers and their way of living. In *Theories of the Gaze*, Jeremy Hwathorn states, “Looking is far from being a neutral process of information gathering: our looking activities are saturated with the residues of our social and cultural existence—for example, those relating to class, sexuality, economics” (508). Bakha's look is mainly because of his social and cultural existence and having born into a lower culture.

Bakha's gaze is merged with his class and caste distinction. He imitates the colonial masters. Gazing constantly at the Britishers, their way of life gets imprinted in his mind. Anand describes Bakha thus:

But Bakha was a child of modern India. The clear-cut styles of European dress had impressed his naïve mind. This stark simplicity had furrowed his old Indian consciousness and cut deep new lines where all the consideration which made India evolve a skirted costume as best fitted for the human body, lay dormant. Bakha had looked at the Tommies stared at them with wonder and amazement when he first went to live at the British regiment Barracks with his uncle. (*Untouchable* 3)

Bakha's view of the colonizer and imitating them is disturbing because of the colonial power. The colonizers imposed colonial power but Bakha did not experience the humiliation for being born in

a lower caste. Constant gazing at the imperial master affected Bakha psychologically. He wished to be like them. It is Bakha's keen desire to emancipate himself from the existing caste system and the mentality of his work that defined his human identity that led him to imitate the colonial masters. Anand depicts Bakha's desires to have a better future and thus escape being taunted by the upper caste elite:

Bakha felt the keen edge of his sense of anticipation draw before his eyes the horrible prospect of all the future days of service in the town and the insults that would come with them. He could see himself being shouted at by a crowd; he could see a little priest fling his arms in the air and cry, 'defiled, defiled.' He could see the lady who had thrown the bread down at him reprimanding him for not cleaning the gutter. 'No, no,' his mind seemed to say, 'never,' ... It was a queer mixture of awe and romance, the alteration of his hatred for his own town and the love for the world which he looked out. . .. He didn't like his home, his street, his town, because he had been to work at the Tommies' barracks and obtained glimpses of another world, strange and beautiful grown out of his native shoes into ammunition boots that he had secured as a gift. (68-69)

The narrative describes a single day. The unpleasant experiences that Bakha encounters in one single day is heart wrenching. He represents the community into which he is born. Bakha becomes the voice of his voiceless community. Though Bakha apes the style of the Britshers, he was still loyal to the religion that he belonged to. He does not give into Col. Hutchinson's efforts to convert him to Christianity. He remains faithful to the religion that he was born into in spite of being treated as an untouchable.

The humiliating experiences that he suffers awaken Bakha.

This experience makes him understand the object position, where he becomes the victim of oppression and subjected to all kinds of heinous things. This awareness in Bakha awakens his “subaltern consciousness” (55). The novel *Untouchable* opens with a day's experience in the life of Bakha in the season of autumn. He is the eighteen-year old son of Lakha, who is the *jamindar* of sweepers. He is in charge of three rows of public latrines built at the end of the colony. G. N. Aghnihotri, praising the works of Anand, states that his heroes are the downtrodden sweepers, coolies, the unemployed, coppersmiths, the indebted farmers, and poor simple soldiers, poverty and suffering are the badges of their class. He notes that they live and die, unwept, unhonoured and unsung .

Realism is the hallmark of Anand's novels. He alludes to the bad effects of *Varnashrama* system. Though Bakha is a fictional character, the story is based on the real life incident. Anand had a friend by name Uka, a sweeper boy. Anand could not forget this friend because of the social and psychological turmoil that he underwent being born in a lower caste. The sad plight of the lower caste has been enumerated by E. M. Forster in the Preface to Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*:

On the other hand, they have evolved a hideous nightmare unknown to the west: the belief that the products are ritually unclean as well as physically unpleasant, and that those who carry them away or otherwise help to dispose of them are outcasts from people. Really, it takes the human mind to evolve anything so devilish. No animal could have hit on it. As one of Mr. Anand's Characters says: 'They think we are dirt because we clean their dirt' (Introduction vi)

E. M. Forster portrays the existing condition of the society. Bakha, born in to a lower caste, begins his work at dawn and

continues till dusk. When he fails to clean the washrooms, he is humiliated and insulted by Charat Singh. It is through Bakha that the world witnesses the inhumanity and insults hurled at the lower caste community by the upper caste, which is evident in the words of Charat Singh: “Oh, Bakhya! Oh, Bakhya! Oh, you scoundrel of a sweepers son! Come and clear a latrine for me! (7). The *Varnashrama* system that ruled the Indian society made life miserable for the people belonging to the lower strata of the society. People valued others for their caste and not as a human being. For an upper caste Hindu, the sight of the outcaste polluted them. The saddest plight is the division within the caste system itself. The washerwoman and the cobblers belonged to the lower caste but higher to those belonging to the sweeper class. Through Bakha's sister, the division within the caste is visible, as Sohini gets into trouble with the washer woman. The washer woman hands out immeasurable amount of abuses:

Think of it! Think of it ! You bitch! You prostitute! wanton!
And your mother hardly dead. Think of laughing in my face,
laughing at me who am old enough to be your mother. Bitch!
the washer woman exploded ... 'Bitch, why don't you speak!
Prostitute, why don't you answer me?' Gulabo insisted. 17)

The attitude of Gulaboo enumerates the attitudes of people among the lower caste people. As B. R. Agarwal notes:

Anand not only criticizes the higher caste people for ill-treating and exploiting the untouchables but also is conscious that even the lower higher in the hierarchal caste scale consider the lower ones to be inferior to them and exploit them. Sohini, being the lowest caste among the outcast, is naturally looked down upon by Gulabo, a washer woman. . . she wants to use Sohini's lower caste as a handle to keep her away so that she may appear to advantage before menfolk,

and attract them without Sohini coming her way. (90)

Bakha is praised for his cleanliness but he is dehumanized because of his birth into the lower caste family. Bakha faces humiliation in all the spheres of his life. Bakha is a subaltern voice, who voices out the sorrows of his subaltern community. The shopkeeper throws the “Red Lamp cigarettes,” and a specified place is reserved to place the money. The shopkeeper sprinkles the holy water on it as a mark of purification. Throwing the cigarettes at Bakha indicates that the lower caste people were looked upon as animals.

The outcast people also got themselves cheated very easily. They were aware of it, but they lacked the courage and right to raise questions against them. The *jalebis* are thrown at Bakha, and he catches it like a cricket ball. Adding to this, Bakha was also cheated by the shopkeeper: “He knew that he had been cheated, but dared not complain. He caught the *jalebis* which the confectioner threw at him like a cricket ball, placed the nickel coins at the shoe-board. . . and walked away embarrassed” (50). The superior attitude of the upper caste deprives the lower caste people their freedom to enjoy their personal space.

The people belonging to the lower strata were also denied freedom of movement. Their arrival on a scene was meant to be announced. The people announced their arrival either by ringing the bell or crying out loudly. During one such occasion, Bakha fails to announce his arrival, and becomes the victim of abuses from a *Brahmin*. “You've touched me,” he heard the Lalla say to Bakha, “I will have to bathe now and purify myself anyhow. Well, take this for your damned irresponsibility, you son of a swine! And the tonga-wallah heard a sharp, clear slap through the air” (41). Bakha is slapped by the Brahmin. He lacks courage to reprimand the Brahmin. In the words of E. M. Forster, “The sweeper is worse off than a slave,

for the slave may change his, master and his duties and may even become free, but the sweeper is bound forever born into a state from which he cannot escape” (Introduction vi).

The members of the low caste were denied all their rights. The only work that was entrusted to them was to keep the surroundings clean. They did not have the right to education and freedom of worship.

Bakha, as a subaltern character, experiences two kinds of “gaze.” The initial gaze leads him to imitate the colonizer, and the second gaze leads him to experience aversion from his own people. The woman belonging to the upper caste gave due respect to the *sadhu* and gave a hot meal. But, for Bakha, she flung the bread and made him clean the drain. The narrative reads: “Bakha looked at the lady for a while. Then cowed down by her abuse, he set to work to sweep the gutter with a small broom ... He was too disgusted to clean the drain after this, especially as the little boy sat relieving himself before him. He threw the little broom aside and made off without saying a thank you” (64-65). The disgusting attitude of the lady, and the humiliation he suffered led him to turn away from his own people. As Jeremy Hawthron says in *Theories of the Gaze*, “Looking is a cumulative process: each look we give is informed by- and displays the fruits of previous looks” (508). Bakha's previous experience leads him to hate his own people and he tries to imitate the colonial master.

As a subaltern, his gaze falls on people who treated him as a human. He has experienced that from the colonial master. Since gaze has much to do with the psychology of a person, Bakha's psyche was in a wounded state due to his birth, and he found solace in looking at the Tommies and imitating them.

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GENDER AND SPACE IN ANITA DESAI'S *CRY, THE PEACOCK*

Ms. Reeshma R., Assistant Professor

This paper is a critical examination of gender space in Anita Desai's novel *Cry, the Peacock*, from the point of view of feminism. Desai emphasizes on the miserable state of highly sensitive and emotional women who are tortured by negligence and loneliness. Through the character, Maya, Anita Desai confirms a new vista of feminist writing.

Feminist realism began when women started to complain about the domestic and public violence that was happening in the society. It opened spaces for the victims to transform their torments in to gratification of their dreams. All people have their own space in the society. Women's claims to social space will be complete only when they are positioned comfortably in society and are able to create their own identity. Both gender and space are defined by society. Women now are engaged in creating new spaces for themselves. The writings of famous feminist Indian English writers like Shashi Deshpande, Kamala Markandeya, Anita Desai, and Anita Nair portray their efforts to equalize gender differences.

Anita Desai portrays rebellious characters who are in patriarchal bondage. In her works, she portrays a world of disappointment, where a woman suffers as a lonely protagonist. Ego is the cause of dissatisfaction for most of her characters. Thus, a communication gap occurs in their interactions and her characters are often in search of fulfilment.

In *Cry, the Peacock*, Maya belongs to a middle class Indian family. She feels depressed and isolated from her husband, who is

busy with his clients. She falls into a state of depression and it begins to affect all her relationships. Maya feels insecure because she is economically dependent and she wants to get freedom. Through internal monologues, Desai expresses the mental trauma of Maya. Moving on, we find that the protagonist is trying to move from the inner space of her mind to the exterior world of conflicts. Through the novel, Maya explores the interior space of Indian woman, who feels that her role as a woman is fulfilled only when she becomes a wife, mother, and daughter-in-law. Maya is barren and this hurts her deeply. She cannot relate to the reality around her. When she tries to distract herself through a pet dog Totu, Gautama tells her that it is a childish act. When this dog dies, he does not even look at its dead body. Maya confronts all her agonies using silence as the weapon. Maya speaks to her husband thus: “Don't you know that I will never mind if I die right now? No one word is necessary and all is over” (46). The sharpness of her words reveals the power of her silence and the gap in her relationship with her husband. Desai successfully presents Maya's predicament through these lines. The husband and wife do not share anything. Maya states that “he was not on my side at all” even while Gautama is sitting beside her, “but across a river, across a mountain, and would always remain so” (114).

Maya wishes for companionship and romance in her life, but Gautama is pragmatic and practical. If she is sensitive and emotional, Gautama is rational and congruent. She wants to escape from the realities of life, but her physical self holds her back. Gautama is unresponsive to her feelings. The emotional incompatibility that characterizes their relationship brings about an unbridgeable gulf between them causing acute mental distress to sensitive Maya whose condition is worsened by her father-fixation. As Gautama points out,

If you know your Freud, it would be very straightforward [...]

you have a very obvious father-obsession which is also the reason why you married me, a man so much older than yourself. It is a complex that, unless you mature rapidly, you will not be able to deal with, to destroy. But then, it will probably destroy itself in the end, since passion of this sort is almost always self-consuming, having no object within its range that it can safely consume. Any little setback destroys it (168-69).

Her neurotic condition is worsened by her recollection of a prediction made by an albino astrologer in her childhood. She is aware of her being confined to her private hell: “Torture, guilt, dread, imprisoned these were the four walls of my private hell, one that no one could survive in long. Death was certain” (117). She becomes insane. As she says, “This is not natural, I told myself, this cannot be natural. There is something weird about me now, wherever I go, whatever I see, whatever I listen to has this unnaturalness to it. This is insanity. But who, what is insane? I myself? Or the world around me? (167).

She is faced with a terrible choice. She decides that Gautama has to die, as he is detached from her. Before she becomes insane, she contemplates about murder thus, “only for the sake of money, or property or anything solid, and dirty. Not for love, or life or basic things” (23). She thinks that she will get freedom only if Gautama dies. Ironically enough, she acquires freedom by murdering her husband. Maya understands that her marriage is a façade, an institution that is forced on people by the society:

It was discouraging to reflect as how much in your marriage was based upon a nobility forced upon us from outside and therefore, neither true nor lasting. It was broken repeatedly and repeatedly the pieces were picked up and put together

again as of a sacred icon with which out of a prettiest superstition, we could not bear to part. (45)

The lack of communication creates a void between them. Her psychological and physical needs make her over-possessive of her husband. So, she is not able to have a meaningful life with him. She limits herself into the world of her husband and forgets to dream about her life. These frustrations drive her to extreme levels of neurosis and she pushes Gautama from the parapet. She too jumps from the balcony. Maya's suicide represents her release from her mental agonies.

Lack of communication was the chief cause of torment for Maya and Gautama. Her father fixation shatters her life. She does not understand the value of relationships. She becomes neurotic because she cannot understand the difference in the characters of her father and Gautama. Anita Desai excels in throwing light upon the miserable condition of highly sensitive and emotional women who suffer because of negligence and loneliness. Through her protagonist, Maya, Anita Desai underscores the relationship between gender and space, and its debilitating effects on the psyche of Indian women.

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**WALLS AND BOUNDARIES:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE PORTRAYAL OF RACISM
IN JAMES BALDWIN'S
*GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN***

Ms. Sneha K., Assistant Professor

Race is a socially constructed artifact that categorizes people based on visual differences. These categorisations are amorphous and fluid over time which reflects their social rather than physical basis. Its significance arouses out of the meaning we as societies assign to it, and the way we structure race in our societies. (Rowan Wolf)

In America, the blacks were considered as slaves, and they were suppressed for a long period. In an illuminating study of the origin of racism in the United States, Joel Kovel says that the white master first reduced the human self of his black slave to a body and then the body to a thing. In other words, he dehumanised his slave, made him quantifiable, and there by absorbed him into a rising world market of productive exchange. On the psychological level, 'whiteness' was automatically equated with beauty and culture and 'blackness' with ugliness and slavery. Being black, the African woman suffered from racism; being females, they were the victims of sexual atrocities at the hands of the white patriarchs as well as the blacks. In fact, the black women in America were made victims of triple consciousness racism, sexism, and classism. Black men, on the other hand, were tortured by the whites, and they were treated as subhuman. Though they were physically strong, the whites suppressed them in all ways possible. The whites had already foreseen that, in the future, the blacks will seek emancipation and

attain equal stature to the whites. Hence, they tried to suppress them by planting the thought in the minds of the blacks that they are unworthy. The result of this power play penetrated in the depths of the African psyche, evoking the sense of subordination. Through their writings, the black writers again and again tried to prove to the world that the blacks are also human beings and they also have their own feelings and emotions like other human beings.

The topic of racial discrimination is not new in literature. It is a widely discussed topic in literature across the globe. Some writers have expressed their own experiences and sufferings, while some others wrote in order to awaken the conscience of both the blacks as well as the whites. The whites analysed the blacks on the basis of their standard of living and always considered them as “the other.” The whites discriminated against the blacks on the basis of colour, class, creed, wealth etc. For the whites, the blacks are always “the slaves.” The whites had a stereotyped belief that the blacks are incapable of doing intelligent activities. They were always ignorant and indifferent towards the blacks. Though legally these blacks were set free, in the minds of the whites, they were never let free. They always tried to suppress the blacks when they felt that they would rise above them. Power was always concentrated in the hands of the whites. The discourse they created was exclusively for the whites. African Americans have attempted to resist these prejudices and to reposition themselves in society through writing, literature or political speeches. By contesting the commonly accepted stereotypes about their race and by presenting the newer forms of violence they were being subjected to, they tried to comment on the stereotypical presentation of blacks and expose the realities of their people. Through writings, many writers expressed their understanding of the problems of the blacks, including economical and educational issues, identity crisis

etc.

Go Tell it on the Mountain, by James Baldwin, is an autobiographical novel. Through small incidents, Baldwin depicts the realities of the racist American society in this novel. This is, in fact, Baldwin's first novel. The protagonist of the novel is John Grimes. His life resembles the early life of Baldwin himself. The characters of the novel are second and third generation slaves. Therefore, most of the characters in the novel, including John, do not directly experience the harsh effects of slavery. The novel depicts the time of Great Migration that happened in America. As part of the migration, almost all blacks migrated to Harlem, in Northern America, hoping to enjoy the freedom that they were denied in the South.

The novel takes place in 1935, seventy three years after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. The novel is divided in to three sections titled, "The Seventh Day," "The Prayers of the Saints," and "The Threshing Floor." The second section is again divided in to three chapters, dealing with the prayers of Florence, Gabriel, and Elizabeth. Through these prayers, the writer brings forth the important events happening in the lives of the protagonist, John Grimes. Baldwin has used flashback technique in this part. The third section deals with the pain that John undergoes before attaining spiritual salvation. Except for Richard, John's biological father, no other character in the novel experiences any harsh realities of racial issue. Florence and Gabriel's mother, Rachel, is a slave. She suffers lot. Her back is bent down by washing clothes. When she is sick, she sends Florence to work in the white man's house. The white man asks Florence to come the next day to sleep with him. But Florence decides that she will not go to him. The next day itself, Florence leaves the house, leaving her sick mother alone. She plans to go to Harlem.

Instead of silently suffering her plight, as a woman, she dares to leave her home, and go to North at the age of twenty six. This act itself shows the freedom and security for the blacks in the North as compared to the South. Rachel treats Gabriel, her son, well and educates him. She is of the view that educating a girl child is of no use because it is the man who needs knowledge. She sends him to school and gives him decent clothes. But Gabriel is a full time drunkard. Also, Florence and Gabriel have siblings. Rachel sadly recalls the loss of her other children: "... all of whom had been taken from her, one by sickness, two by auction; and one, whom she had not been allowed to call her own, had been raised in the master's house" (64).

The novel also shows the second and third generation slave psyche. Gabriel is a drunkard, and it is through drinking the blacks tried to escape the harsh realities of their lives. But they are considered as savages. Gabriel considered whites as wicked and untrustworthy. The novel opens with John's quest for identity. It is his fourteenth birthday. He hopes for love, birthday wishes, and a special breakfast. But nothing happens. Except for his mother Elizabeth, nobody wishes him and he gets the usual breakfast to eat. Without knowing the fact that Gabriel is not John's biological father, he continues to hate him. He waits for the day his father will die. Gabriel becomes a preacher at the age of twenty. He and the family want John to become a preacher. The novel is full of biblical symbols. The characters in the novel have biblical names; e.g., Gabriel, Elizabeth, John etc. Elizabeth's inner self is revealed in her prayer. Elizabeth loved a man named Richard. She had left her aunt and went with him to a far place, where the two lived happily. Elizabeth hid the truth that she is pregnant from Richard. She thought that he will become happy if she told this good news after he gets a job. One day, when Richard was waiting for the train, he saw two black people running, and they

came, and stood near him. The police arrested all of them, including Richard, though he had not committed any crime. The other two blacks were arrested for a theft. When the white owner came to identify the thieves, he included Richard also because he was a black. The other thieves apologized and the police released them. But Richard was not ready to apologize because he had not committed any crime. The police beat him and when he was released, he committed suicide because of humiliation: “That night he cut his wrists with his razor and he was found in the morning by his landlady, his eyes staring upward with no light, dead among the scarlet sheets” (176). He never knew that Elizabeth is pregnant. He might not have committed suicide if he had known that. Elizabeth, unable to go back to her aunt, decided to live alone. She gave birth to a baby boy, John, and went for work in the night. In the work place, she met Florence. Through Florence, she met Gabriel. Gabriel and Elizabeth get married when he promises that he will take care of John as his first child. But after the marriage and the birth of their two children, Gabriel begins to behave very rudely to both Elizabeth and John. As a black and as a woman, she is doubly marginalized. Gabriel always tortured her by speaking about her past, though his past was worse. This is a striking example of power play. Gabriel is a man and he is the breadwinner of the family, so he feels he can hurt Elizabeth. She is unable to counter him. So she becomes the stereotypical, silent sufferer.

Gabriel was a drunkard and his mother prayed a lot for him on her death bed. He married Deborah who was older than him. She was the victim of the cruelty of the whites. In her childhood, she was raped by a group of whites. Gabrielle later fell in love with Esther, a cook in the work place. He made her pregnant, and asked her to leave the place. She gave birth to Royal, who died at the hands of white youth.

He is not able to accept John as his first son, instead of Royal.

It is because of the rigid laws in the South that John's biological parents, Elizabeth and Richard, had moved to New York. This incident is an example of the Great Migration that happened in the United States. Another incident of racism portrayed in the novel is that Gabriel's son Royal getting killed by a group of white men. The boy hadn't committed anything wrong but the whites chased and killed him for no fault of his:

... as they stood there, that death and destruction rushed toward them: two black men alone in the dark and silent town where White men prowled like lions- what mercy would they hope for, should they be found here, talking together? It would surely be believed that they were plotting vengeance.
(142)

It is this incident that made Gabriel hate the whites. He always said to his children not to trust the whites. His other son Roy is also stabbed by the whites.

In a dialogue with American cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead, James Baldwin remarked: "...the salvation of America lies in whether or not it is able to embrace the Black face. If it cannot do that, I do not think the country has a future" (*A Rap on Race* 70). Even after years of attaining legal freedom, blacks continue to be victims of random brutality. The most recent example for this is the institutional murder of George Floyd, an African American, by a white police officer. The bitter realities depicted in James Baldwin's novel may be read as a thing of the past but, in truth, the shadows of that great history continues to exist in one way or the other in America. Baldwin's writings explore what hatred can do not only to society as a whole but also to the individuals who bear the brunt of it. James

Baldwin attributes these divisions in the society to the widespread blindness to our own humanity.

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**DIVULGING THE IDEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK IN
BIRACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT:
A MARXIAN READING OF JESSIE REDMON FAUSET'S
*PLUM BUN: A NOVEL WITHOUT A MORAL***

Ms. Resmi R. and Dr. Praseedha G.

Racial identity in America has been a much contested issue across centuries. 'What are we?' is the significant question that troubled people's minds ever since the society was segregated on the basis of race. This can be seen as the consequence of the notions of identity set by the ruling class according to the various aspects of phenotype to establish their power. Throughout the history of America, manifestation of borders, which is termed the "colour line," on the basis of factors like racial lineage, skin colour etc., can be witnessed. The colour line has been conceived as a social practice of segregation in terms of race, colour, lineage etc. and, it has always maintained an absolute distinction on both the sides of the frontier, between the dominant and the marginalized societies. Biracial people whose parents belong to two ethnic lineages are often caught up in the whirlwind of interrogations, justifications, stereotyping etc. which actually land them into the abyss of identity concerns. This happens due to the several assumptions and expectations from the society that wants everyone to conform to the "ideological."

Racial lineage is one of the deciding factors for acceptance in the American society. White men being the dominant race, any other colour is viewed as a total disgrace. Each aspect of an individual defined by this stereotypical agenda expresses the class positions in the most obvious manner possible, thereby heightening the insecurities within the biracial. Marxian critic Louis Althusser

elaborates upon the concept of ideology in his essay, “Marxism and Humanism” thus: “An ideology is a system (with its own logic and rigor) of representations (images, myths, ideas or concepts, depending on the case) endowed with a historical existence and a role within a given society” (qtd. in Ferretter 76).

American society, when viewed from a Marxian perspective, reflects the ideologies of an exploitative dominant class. This hierarchy is evidenced in the society as a racial and class structured culture. Ideologies are those ideas, depictions etc. which dominate the minds of people or social groups. They are thought of as imaginary constructions which assert class positions no matter whatever form they assume religious, ethical, legal, political etc. Therefore, in the American multi-ethnic literature, identity formation becomes an important area of concern.

Jessie Redmon Fauset is an African-American editor, poet, essayist, novelist, and educator, whose works have added to the growth of African-American literature in the 1920s. A positive and realistic representation of the African-American community, unlike the conventional portrayal, has been the major aim of her career. Her four major novels include, *There is Confusion* (1921), *Plum Bun: A Novel without a Moral* (1928), *The Chinaberry Tree* (1931), and *Comedy: American Style* (1933). *Plum Bun: A Novel without a Moral*, published in 1928, has been a noteworthy contribution to Harlem Renaissance. It is a classic *bildungsroman* that traces the journey of self-identification of the biracial protagonist, Angela Murray.

Angela Murray's sense of self-actualization that commences from a very young age is associated with skin colour. She dreams of making big in New York, thereby attaining a socio-economically

stable life, leaving behind her humble existence in Philadelphia. The identity consciousness that she develops in her childhood is in no way linked to her sense of her racial or ethnic lineage; rather, it springs from the mere idea of her skin colour. “Colour or rather the lack of it seemed to the child the one absolute prerequisite to the life of which she was always dreaming” (Fauset 13). This is mainly because of her earlier misunderstandings regarding race and ethnicity. Althusser validates this unconscious working of the dominant modes of ideology as follows: “Ideology is indeed a system of representations, but in the majority of cases these representations have nothing to do with 'consciousness': they are usually images and occasionally concepts, but it is above all as *structures* that they impose on the vast majority of men, not via their 'consciousness'” (qtd. in Ferretter 77).

Perception of skin colour as an ideology comes into play in the identity formation of Angela. In relation to the slavery which has been an important aspect of the American history, there has always existed the invisible colour line that separated blacks and whites from intermingling or miscegenation. As a light-skinned girl, Angela can cross the colour line or can attempt 'passing' over. When she does so, people perceive her as white, which she identifies with freedom and socio-economic stability. Angela is interpellated by the dominant dictum of “white is right,” which is the ideology that governs the structure of American society.

Parents and their actions also influence the children and their identity construction a lot. It is from her mother, Mattie Murray, a lady with mixed blood, that Angela develops the strong perception of freedom and comforts associated with the white phenotype. Angela once witnesses Mattie's failure to acknowledge in public her husband Junius and daughter Virginia, as the conversation between a black woman and white lady would have alarmed the public. This instills in

Angela the belief that the privilege that she and her mom enjoys is the result of their white skin, and she even goes to the extent of making conclusions that “the great rewards of life riches, glamour, pleasure are for white skinned people only,” and that “Junius and Virginia were denied these privileges because they were dark” (17). All kinds of beliefs, values and norms that form the basis of the social and political system of a society are instilled in the minds of the people and propagated in the form of ideologies to establish the dominance of the ruling class. Althusser notes that the concrete individuals become the carriers of ideology. These carriers are produced by the social force and are thereby interpellated into being subjects by the ideology even before they are part of it. All the ideological categories and concepts are founded on a single aspect i.e., the 'subject,' and as Althusser observes in “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: (Notes Towards an Investigation),” “ideology hails or interpellates individuals as subjects” (175). Mattie becomes the carrier of white ideology, thereby getting transformed into a subject, leading Angela to tread the same path.

Various institutions like family and church also aim at teaching the individuals “the 'know-how' of life, but in forms which ensure subjection to the ruling ideology or the mastery of their practice” (Althusser 133). Virginia Murray, Angela's sister, who possesses a dark phenotype, is a total contrast to Angela, but she is totally content with her coloured existence. She asserts her black identity throughout the course of the novel. She always keeps a high impulse to discover, perfect, and possess a strong-minded attitude. She thoroughly enjoys the church visits on Sundays, as she senses an immense cosmic rightness in the whole affair unlike Angela, who finds the whole thing rather stupid. Virginia also loves the church-like purity that surrounds her modest family and has immense respect for

the struggle undergone by her parents to construct their lives. As the narrator observes, she even “meant to live the same kind of life; she would marry a man exactly as like her father and she would conduct her home exactly as did her mother” (22). The institution of family instills in Virginia, the idea of being a “good subject,” and plays an important role in the development of her identity as well.

Educational institutions also function as an agent of Ideological State Apparatuses in the novel. They play a dominant role in a capitalist economy and mask the ideology of the ruling lot behind the values instilled by education. When Angela attends grade school, she is identified as black at once, which pains her immensely, though her appearance and manners do not reveal her true identity. She had just begun to go through the extreme happiness and gratification by being the chosen friend of a popular, powerful white figure, Miss Mary Hastings. She had started to escape from the experiences of being left out of groups and class plans just by being Mary's close friend, as the latter could not be left out of any plans made. Angela's coloured existence is revealed to herself for the first time through the eyes of the white world in her school. This unfortunate incident happens when her classmates suspect her of mishandling the association amount. They doubt her integrity because she belongs to a mixed race. Her coloured existence gets questioned, and an indifferent sort of amazement is expressed by Miss Hastings whose friendship meant a lot to Angela. Public places such as restaurants, shops, theatres etc. also function as agents of the dominant ideology and stand for the ideals of segregation. Marxian theory considers and terms the State primarily as the 'State apparatus' and it is “the sum of the institutions by which the ruling class maintains its economic dominance the government, the civil service, the courts, the police, the prisons, and the army, and so on” (qtd. in Ferreter 82). Althusser

observes that the relations of production, which the societies reproduce, have always been relations of exploitation. It is to address this issue that the concept of Ideological State Apparatus or ISA has been developed by him. He identifies various specialized institutions under the ISA such as the religious, the educational, the family, the political, the trade union, the communications and the cultural.

The attitude of the dominant class that black people are immoral and untrustworthy is revealed in the class mates' attitude towards Angela. This results in the total isolation created by the peer group. Angela experiences a sea change in the perception when she befriends the white girl, Miss Hastings. Prejudiced notions towards the mixed race people deliberately get instilled in students' minds by means of the educational institutions that perform its social function of promoting class dominance. Here, financial status also becomes a strong factor. Miss Hastings openly expresses her displeasure when she realizes that Angela had not revealed her black identity. Angela says, "Coloured! Of course I never told you that I was coloured. Why should I?" (43). Children are made to think, act, and perform according to the ways of the superior class, which results in the segregation among the students on the basis of race, class etc. Later, Angela understands that Mary had withdrawn herself from her not because of her colour. Mary withdrew because she was not informed regarding the same. She wonders about the most important aspect of her life as a biracial person. She wonders whether to insist on her colour and lead a normal life or to accept all the elegant things of life which America has to offer her. She is convinced that these offers by the American society are the things that she truly deserves but she will have to keep her coloured identity a secret.

An Art Academy in Philadelphia, where Angela later joins to pursue her passion, also acts as an agent to promote the white

sovereignty and establish white ideology. Angela aims to broaden her horizons and, in the process, becomes more and more affiliated to the dominant order and their dogma. She is well received by her peers and instructors, who perceive her as white. Her physical appearance and pleasant demeanour help her to get easily accepted in the circle. She even receives invitations from her classmates to visit their homes. She deliberately avoids the invitations because she knows that she will have to extend the same courtesy to them. It meant that they would see her coloured sister, Virginia. Just like her mother, who once ignored her husband and daughter in public, Angela too wants to avoid her sister and secure the privilege of belonging to the dominant group.

Fauset mentions an unwritten law in educational institutions in Philadelphia, wherein the ideological discourses function strongly against the coloured teachers along with the students. She says, “Strictly speaking there are no coloured schools in Philadelphia. Yet, by an unwritten law, although coloured children may be taught by white teachers, white children must never receive knowledge at the hands of coloured instructors” (48). Angela considers Virginia fortunate when the latter announces her appointment as a teacher in the school, where earlier she was denied opportunity, because a white teacher was working in the concerned vacancy. The white ideology takes a superior hand here as well. Educational institutions also become the sites of class struggle. They even become platforms for the articulation of ideologies of the exploited classes as well. While it becomes difficult for a coloured woman to get a job as a teacher in Philadelphia, it is difficult for a coloured man to get into any other profession other than teaching. One of the characters, Arthur Sawyer remarks:

I'm sick of planning my life with regard to being coloured. I'm

not a bit ashamed of my race. I don't mind in the least that once we were slaves. Every race in the world has at some time occupied a servile position. But I do mind having to take it into consideration every time I want to eat outside of my home, every time I enter a theatre, every time I think of a profession. (52-53)

Angela's inclination towards white identity becomes her definite choice at a later stage when she decides to leave for New York. This occurs following her inability to gain acceptance from her peer group as well as the empathy that she develops for one of her dark friends, Matthew Henson, who is denied entry into theatres, while Angela is allowed because of her white phenotype. She declares, "Now be practical Jinny; after all I am both white and Negro and look white. Why shouldn't I declare for the one that will bring me the greatest happiness, prosperity and respect?" (Fauset 80). Racial ideology predominates at this point, when she makes a decision which she thinks would provide her a secure future.

Angela changes her second name to "Mory" and makes the most of her white identity in New York. The advantage of the same is propelled by her rich, white New York lover, Roger, who presents her with several opportunities. He is unaware of her black identity. While in the city, Angela becomes a witness to several instances of racism through Roger. During a lunch date, he sees three black people about to take a table close to where he and Angela are seated. He begins to assert his authority and dominance by angrily informing the head waiter that he could not stand them. He is triumphant as he rejoins Angela and adds insult to her injury by saying, "Well I put a spoke in the wheel of those 'coons'! They forget themselves so quickly, coming in here spoiling white people's appetites" (134). He addresses them as

“darkies” and continues to recount the various ways he had spoked the wheels of various coloured people. He behaves in this manner as he is very confident in his position as a high class white American.

Roger's basic attitude towards the coloured people, right from the childhood, has been backed by his dominant background and living conditions. He becomes an agent of the dominant ideology. Althusser points out another distinctive set of institutions identified as a part of the State Apparatus and he terms it the Repressive State Apparatus or RSA, through which the ruling class imposes its decrees and establishes its ascendancy. In other words, RSA can be considered as the repressive institutions that function by violence. Roger's functional mode as an RSA is evident from his reaction to the coloured people. To him, the coloured people must be treated as weak subjects and excluded from either joining or being in the same platform with the prestigious groups. Though Roger's attitude disturbs Angela, she acts as a mute spectator and dismisses it as typical white, male behaviour. She dismisses her ties with black community to ensure a successful life. She too becomes an agent of white ideology. When she goes to meet Virginia at the train station, Roger arrives at the same place unexpectedly. Angela prays hard for a miracle to happen that will delay Virginia's arrival. The childhood game of mistaken identity that follows the sisters' meeting and Roger's rude dismissal of Virginia saves the situation. Angela, though she truly loves Roger, is rejected by him eventually, making her realise that, “in his eyes, she was separated from him by race and by more than race” (299). Loneliness and dejection make her reconsider her choice of identity. Angela finds her white existence futile, following the break up with Roger. She soon establishes herself as a successful teacher in New York and starts reaching out to her community by getting involved in the activities of Harlem. Her

alignment with the black side of her identity starts here. She even reconciles and reconnects with her sister Virginia and regrets her earlier mistakes.

Coloured people's talents rarely get the recognition they deserve. Angela's black classmate at the Art Academy, Miss Powell, receives negative treatment from the white authorities. Angela understands the racial responsibility that lies upon Miss Powell and her struggle to overcome the same. The Nehemiah Sloan Prize, an Arts scholarship to study abroad, won by Miss Powell, is withdrawn by the committee on discovering that she is coloured. She is warned by the committee about the inconvenience that her presence would cause the fellow travellers during the boat journey. She is further reminded about the embarrassment that the whole incident would have caused her and the need to maintain the segregation ideals by being the ideal subject who follows the essentialist ideology, which in Althusserian terms, is a "representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (162). Angela changes her position from a mute spectator to that of an active spokesperson for her community when she witnesses the injustice towards Miss Powell. She reacts strongly and declares her coloured lineage before the Award Committee, further deciding not to leave for France, thereby giving up the John T. Stewart Prize that she won along with Miss Powell. She says, ". . . Miss Powell isn't going to France on the American Committee Fund and I'm not going either. . . . And for the same reason. . . . I mean that if Miss Powell isn't wanted, I'm not wanted either. You imply that she's not wanted because she's coloured. Well, I'm coloured too" (348-49). While Angela's choice of identity has been triggered by her personal motives earlier, she takes a stand for the entire community through her choice of identity at this point.

Final part of Angela's identity development is characterized by her decision to adhere to a flexible existence by integrating the essential features of both sides of her identity. The segregation ideals on the basis of skin colour instilled to maintain racial purity in the society continue to haunt biracial individuals throughout. This becomes clear when Angela finally declares to one of her friends that, though she has chosen the coloured side for the time being, there can be possibilities of her passing over the colour line in Paris, where she has decided to pursue art.

It is an ever-continuing struggle for a biracial individual in the U. S. to put his/her identity under constant trial and framing it according to the dominant racial ideologies set by the society. Various internal and external forces such as phenotype, family, peer culture, socio-historical context, cultural knowledge etc. lead to the interpellation of a biracial individual. This makes them choose their identities. They are expected to choose any one side of her lineage, completely denying the other. Jessie Redmon Fauset has discussed the issues of self-identification and the point-to-point survival strategies of biracial individuals in *Plum Bun: A Novel without a Moral*, by depicting the trials and tribulations that Angela Murray faces at various stages of her life. The novel also stands as testimony for the ideologies of the superior strata, their strategy of interpellation and the mechanism of ISA and RSA at work in the identity construction of the biracial individuals.

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