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## **Shifting Vigour: Deconstructing Dichotomies In Anne Tanyi Tang's Dramaturgy**

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**Abstract:** Colonialism did not limit itself to the physical annexation of other lands, it was also characterized by the exportation to her colonies of the British culture and ideologies. The consequence of this was the exportation of her patriarchal culture to her colonies. Many of the regions which they colonized were themselves patriarchal .This implies that indigenous patriarchy was rather consolidated with the advent of British colonization. This confirms the fact that the colonized woman was doubly colonized. Her feminine status which had subjugated her was further subjugated under colonial rule. While the situation of the European woman was different partly because she was struggling against the patriarchal nature of their society alone, for the colonized woman, she struggled first against patriarchy and secondly against colonial domination. In the colonial days, subjects that were taught to the girls were different to those that were taught to the boys. The boys were trained to, in future, occupy lower positions in the administration and the girls were trained to be essentially good wives and mothers. Their continuous domination, disenfranchisement and oppression are in varied ways similar to the domination of the colonized by the colonizer. However, this trend has changed over time. Women have also become aware and conscious of their position and have therefore engineered a shift in the perception of things thus bridging the gap that had hitherto pushed them to the margin. This is the bone of contention in this paper. The feminist postcolonial theory will be employed in this analysis.

**Key words:** Gender, deconstruction, dichotomies, empowerment, margin.

### **Introduction**

Colonialism was at its peak during the Victorian period in England and this was marked particularly by the domestication of the woman. She was expected to withdraw from public life. Her space was



thus the domestic and her career was limited to the confines of this space. Talking about the place of the woman, Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose (1994:2) argue that “in patriarchal societies the domestic was the place of women, while the public realm of culture, politics, and the economy was seen as the sphere for the men.” This implies that great limitations were placed on the woman. As indicated earlier, colonialism did not limit itself to the physical annexation of other lands. It was also characterized by the exportation to her colonies of the British culture and ideologies. The consequence of this was the exportation of her patriarchal stance to her colonies. Many of the regions which they colonized were themselves patriarchal. This would mean that with the advent of British colonization, indigenous patriarchy was rather consolidated. This confirms the fact that the colonized woman was actually doubly colonized, mistreated and under looked. In line with this, Spender Dale and Kramarae Chris (2004:190), underscore that:

The condition of women is one of the most remarkable circumstances in the manner of nations. Among rude people the women are generally degraded, among civilized people they are exalted...Relations between men and women in the colonized countries were considered symptomatic of degeneration. Colonized men were said to be brutal to women. (Spender and Kramarae 190)

There was therefore a collusion of forces (colonial and patriarchal) to dominate the woman. In the colonial days, the girls received a different educational orientation as opposed to the boys. The boys were trained to in future occupy lower positions in the administration and the girls were trained to be essentially good wives and mothers. Their continuous domination, disenfranchisement and oppression are in varied ways similar to the domination of the colonized by the colonizer. These women seem to constitute the colonies of the men. This explains why feminist discourse is more and more occupying an important position in postcolonial criticism. In connection to this, Bill Ashcroft et al (2005:233) underline that:

In many different societies, women, like colonized subjects, have been relegated to the position of “other”, ‘colonized’ by various forms of patriarchal domination. They thus share with colonized races and culture an intimate experience of the politics of oppression and repression. It is not surprising therefore that the history and concerns of feminist theory



have paralleled developments in postcolonial theory .Feminist and post-colonial discourses both seek to reinstate the marginalized in the face of the dominant. (Ashcroft et al 233)

This paper seeks to demonstrate the ways patriarchy has colluded with colonialism in the suppression and oppression of the women and how they have seriously engaged in a struggle to reconstruct their identity in a way to deconstruct the dichotomies or the gap that exists between them. It further establishes a universal canvas of patriarchy, in order to show how this problem is a historical stumbling block to women's progress in most cultures, while justifying the war which women wage against this menace. However, this study argues that the success of women's struggle against patriarchy will be possible if women take the initiative and explore specific strategies to empower themselves socially, politically and economically.

### **Theoretical Base and Patriarchal Stance**

The idea of female domination and empowerment continues to be a burning issue in the postcolonial world. Cultural taboos and societal constructs continue to perpetuate the identification and degradation of the female gender. This study therefore dwells on how women are continuously oppressed by their male or female counterpart and more especially on the strategies they have put in place to reconstruct their identity in Anne Tanyi Tang's *Ewa and Other Plays*. These plays throw a critique on the issue of female roles which have been mortgaged by societal discourses as well as cultural biases which have left them at the unpleasant side of the societal fence. Tang blends simple day to day communal life in the Bayang community to expose incessant predicaments which some women go through because of their gender as women rather than what they can give. However, even what they attempt to give becomes an offence not because it cannot be understood as 'good' or 'normal', but because society has refused to understand it as such. Informed by post-colonial and feminist theories, this paper as announced earlier harbours not only a reading of this text with regards to politics of domination and empowerment but also to re-examine and if possible re-validate a feminist critical spectrum in Tang's dramaturgy.

In *Ewa*, Tang informs us of the difficulty which the young protagonist encounters in the house where she lives with her mother and her grandmother Granny. The playwright exposes the struggle which opposes both daughter and mother. This is perceived in Ewa's words thus:



Pepper in my eyes and in my ears. Pepper everywhere. Pepper all over my body. Granny, please open the door. Granny, can I get out of this room? Granny, give me water. The pepper is too hot. Just a glass of water will help. Granny, the pepper is killing me. I can't open my eyes. Granny, please help, I will die. (7)

This excerpt, presents a scene in which Ewa, the protagonist, has been locked up in a room. She has been imprisoned by her own mother. The way in which she cries for help, shows the extent to which she is in agony and anguish. She is pleading with her grandmother to be liberated. Paradoxically, Ewa's mother is responsible for her imprisonment. This has been done without any pity or mercy the reason being that she has grudges against her biological father. Female domination within the play could partly be blamed on the fact that the grandmother has failed in her duty as a mother and this has been emulated negatively by her daughter. Granny is unable to prevent Nyango from locking up Ewa. Instead, she tries to save her out of the room with much difficulty and sincere cowardice. This is presented thus:

Granny: Your mum has locked the door and has taken the keys away.

Ewa: Please Granny, do something. I am dying.

Granny: Can you come out through the window?

Ewa: I can't open my eyes. The pepper is too hot. (7)

Granny's intention here is to help her granddaughter out of the inferno in which she finds herself, but her advanced age does not permit her to do what she might have done if she were younger. This is reminiscent of the fact that most women at an advanced age certainly due to their biological composition cannot carryout tasks which they used to carry on in their youthful ages. It is for this reason that their authority is questioned by their daughters who used to fear, respect and obey them. From a similar perspective, in *Ewa*, the idea of female domination is also seen in Nyango's behaviour towards her mother, Granny for whom she has no respect. He considers her as a house help. Granny's authority towards her daughter is plagued with doubt and fear. Her responses to her daughter's demands and orders are presented thus:

Nyango: The idiot has stopped crying. She will learn a lesson today. From now on, she will learn to eat only after my children have eaten to their satisfaction (...). What are you staring





at? Have you peeled the cocoyams? (No response). I am asking you. Have you peeled the cocoyams?

Granny: No

Nyango: Why not? Do you want my children to starve? Tell the fool to throw away the dirt and to pluck cocoyam leaves to wrap the ekpang. I am thirsty. I will be back soon. (8)

Nyango has no respect for her mother. She treats her like an outcast. This is realized when she more often questions her without any filial concern. She gives her instructions and gives her assignments with the most awkward behaviour which a daughter should in normal circumstances not put in the face of her mother. Nyango's presence epitomises female domination. Her method of imposing her dominance and authority on both her daughter and mother is by shouting and physical brutality. Her presence is always characterised by scolding and the infliction of pain. The hostile encounter between mother, daughter and grandmother is noted thus:

Nyango: (Shouting at the top of her voice). Ewa, Ewa. Where is the idiot? Ewa.

Ewa: Mami, i am coming.

Nyango: Where were you when i was shouting at the top of my voice?

Ewa: You ask me to throw away the dirt and harvest cocoyam leaves for ekpang

Nyango: And how long was that supposed to take? (Ewa remains quiet) answer the question, idiot (she picks up a piece of wood from the fire and throws it at Ewa. The wood misses Ewa's eye. Ewa sits behind the house and sobs). Fool. No wonder my husband hated you so profoundly... ( 9)

As evident above, there is no place for love in this relationship between daughter and mother. Nyango's oppressive nature is exposed here. She insults Ewa and even threatens her life with logs of wood. The domineering attitudes that are meted on Ewa are not only done verbally but the physical assaults push Ewa regretting and agonising the predicaments that have befallen her. This treatment has become a pertinent issue to the extent that Nyango justifies her reason for her oppressive attitude towards Ewa. This was developed when she got pregnant. She even notes that even before giving birth, she had nurtured hatred for her unborn baby, under the influence of her husband. This is recounted thus:



Nyango: Fool.No wonder my husband hated you son profoundly. He abandoned me throughout the pregnancy and went out for merrymaking trip with my mate when I was in labour. I almost died in childbirth. Even in his sick bed, he chased you like a cat chasing a rat, and advised that you should not be given education beyond primary school level. In order to win back his love, I had to send you home to my mother. I hate you. ( 9)

Nyango's behaviour is influenced by the patriarchal consideration in some traditional African settings that believe that the birth of a girl child within the household is a curse rather than a blessing to the family. This falls in line with Abhinandan Malas's view in "Gender Politics and Women: A Reading of Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*" that:

it is obvious that women along with their frivolities are more highlighted than the men thus becoming an uneven victim of soft, though serious, gender politics, and social ethics and norms play a huge role in motivating this discourse against these aristocratic women. (Mishra 92)

This explains why Ewa is maltreated and humiliated. Granny notes that Nyango treats Ewa like an Orphan. Her attitude may have contributed to the deterioration of moral codes and the degeneration of her mother's behaviour. This is further compounded by the fact that Nyango's hatred for her child is influenced by the negative consideration her late husband had for Ewa. Ewa is treated in the most dehumanising way. This is further sustained by Rosalyn Mutia (2009:154) in "Because of Men: A feminist interpretation of Dipoko's *Because of Women*" when she underlines that:"Woman because of the lack of education and therefore of the lack of an individualised means of subsistence, totally depends on the men of her region for existence". The fact that Ewa is not only refused access to education but is equally refused any filial love from her own parents shows the extent to which she has been degraded and fragmented. Pertaining to Nyango's behaviour,one is tempted to ask two questions: why should Nyango be influenced by her late husband to oppress and subjugate her own daughter?. Is female behaviour in our contemporary society influenced by patriarchal taboos to the extent of maintaining posthumous taboos?

Furthermore, in *Ewa and Other Plays*, the creation myths are biased and male in the sense that the woman has undergone domination even in allegorical settings. Granny affirms this thus:



Granny: Alright... once upon a time, there lived a pregnant woman who went to the forest to pick mangoes. While in the forest,... she gave birth to twins; boy and girl. Are you listening?

Ewa: I am all ears

Granny: In those days, twins were not accepted in the community. Thus, the woman had to choose between the boy and the girl. The twins were mysterious, so they could speak. The boy told the mother that the girl belongs to another family because when she reaches puberty, she will marry and that will be the end. He advised the mother to take him... in the end; the mother chose the boy and left the girl in the forest. The girl lamented. A hawk which had been watching the scene took the girl and brought her up in a fairy land. (11)

The story recounted by Granny is reminiscent of the fact that even the most important traditional and African myths are nurtured with societal and patriarchal discourses which relegate the female gender. When Granny makes use of the phrase in those days we might be tempted to look at the allegory as one which has stopped being practised in our contemporary societies. This is still farfetched because the presences of girl children continue to be evaluated from the perspective of gender roles they play in society. It is noted here that the only thing capable of giving respect to the girl children in the story is the hawk, which decides to take care of her after she is rejected by her mother. The hawk's role here, it could be said, is evil. The hawk will definitely harm the child. Considerably, Ewa's predicament becomes an issue of mockery from her mates who incessantly mock at her but retreat their mockery and instead direct their scorn to Nyango who maltreats her. This is seen in the discussion between Mary, Alice and Mariana. This is underscored thus:

Mary: Poor Ewa, she is very ill but the mother takes no notice of her illness.

Alice: She will be delighted if Ewa drops dead.

Mariana: No, she won't be delighted because she will have to look for another slave. (15)

The dialogue between the girls affirms the fact that Ewa is not only treated poorly but dehumanised. Her physical composition is described as frail due to the excess human labour which she carries on like a slave. As compared to other girls who go to the stream once daily to fetch water, Ewa goes to the stream twice a day. It is with regards to this that she is nicknamed Morah, a slave.

Alice: Morah, where are you?



Mariana: The slave has already been to the stream twice to fetch water. ( 15)

Ewa's domination is re-enforced by her mother Nyango who has succeeded in nicknaming her Ewa. She accuses Ewa of being responsible for accepting such a name, completely refuting the idea that she, Nyango is the cause of all these. She rather inflicts more pain on Ewa. To further reveal her oppressive attitude, Nyango exposes her nagging attitude thus:

Nyango: (Meets Ewa who is washing dishes and pots behind the kitchen). Follow me to my bedroom now. (She has a long cane in her hand. Ewa follows her bedroom). Sit on the floor. Now tell me everything. Don't hide anything from me. Since when did the girls start calling you Morah, slave?

Ewa: long time ago I can't remember when.

Nyango: You can't remember when? You are a fool. (Beats her with the cane). (18)

Here, more accusation and pain is inflicted on Ewa because she has been called Morah, (slave) by the other girls. Nyango expects that Ewa should defend herself by not accepting such a nickname from her mates because she understands that the insults are directed to her. Nyango's ambivalent attitude here equates her ignorance towards what she actually wants. She treats Ewa unfairly and wants the community to keep a deaf ear and a blind eye on her atrocities. Nyango's attempt to report the matter to the chief instead belittles and humiliates her more.

Nyango: My daughter is not Morah and she is not a slave

Chief: Then treat her well and the girls will stop calling her Morah, slave.

Nyango: You have taken sides.

Chief: I haven't. Have you seen any woman in this village who treats her child in the same way as you treat Ewa? If you don't want to disgrace yourself, leave this place before you attract a crowd. (5)

Nyango's complaint to the chief is meaningless as she is made to understand that she is the only person to be blamed on the consideration and pejorative appellations thrown upon Ewa. This is paradoxical for this is reaffirmed with the fact that the chief is beforehand aware of the ill-treatment Ewa is facing in the claws of her mother. But the authority of the chief is questionable and to a greater extent ambivalent in the sense that he is aware of the dehumanising treatment and the



oppressive nature Ewa is subjugated to. He however does nothing to stop this although he is the highest authority in the community. It could be concluded that it is the chief's patriarchal status which cannot allow him to take a firm decision on Ewa's fate. He is the custodian of tradition. It is understood that their tradition is a patriarchal one and so he does nothing about Ewa's problem but dismisses Nyango on the claim that he does not want her to attract the crowd. Such an escapist attitude is predominant in the contemporary society.

Moreover, female domination is further heightened when parents have to choose husbands for their girl children. This reveals that the rights of the children have been trampled upon. Ewa's marriage is imposed by her stepfather and her mother. She is quite brilliant but her father does nothing to send her to secondary school. Granny's intention is to send Ewa to school but the decision depends on Tiku and Ewa's stepfather. This is underscored in the following dialogue thus:

Tiku: Everyone knows that Ewa is a very intelligent girl. But, it's Nyango and I who know what is best for her. We have decided that she should marry. We have already chosen a husband for her. We are merely waiting for her to reach puberty. Have I answered your question? (17-18)

Tiku's conservative patriarchal ideology is evaluated here. Commenting about this issue of Patriarchy, Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose (1994:1), concur that

The social map of patriarchy created 'ground rules' for the behaviour of men and women, and that the gender roles and relations of patriarchy constructed some spaces as "feminine" and others as "masculine" and thus allocated certain kinds of (gendered) activities to certain (gendered spaces).

This explains why Tiku is against the view that Ewa should be sent to a typing school. Even though he is not the person to sponsor Ewa, he is totally against Granny's wish. He still holds strong to the patriarchal idea that the domestic is the place of the woman while the public sphere is meant for the men. He rather prefers that Ewa should be sent to a marital home instead of going to school. Tiku's role here helps to strengthen the idea of domination over Ewa which before now had been initiated by Nyango. It is for this reason that Nyango equally opposes the idea. She says "Granny has terrible ideas. Who asked her to sponsor Ewa in the typing school? There is something wrong with



her” (19). The patriarchal domination perpetuated on the woman is also linked to the fact that the women themselves are consciously not fighting against their male counterparts, this to their own detriment and to the benefit of the male. Simone de Beauvoir (1949:3) “One is Not Born a Woman” underlines that:

all human beings , regardless of biological differences, are born free and must struggle to en-gender their liberty; all human beings must rebel against traps and lures, as well as oppressive social conditions, to become all that they have potential to be in the world.

If Nyango is able to understand that the consideration she has internalised vis-a-vis her daughter is detrimental to her, then she will be able to know that she too is the cause of female domination that has almost become popular culture. There is no reason why Nyango should put up a stiff fight against Ewa. To further dominate and subjugate her, Nyango denies Ewa the right to education. Of course, he is aware that this is the weapon that she will eventually use to empower herself. Nyango is bent on the fact that she won’t send Ewa to school. He declares thus:

Ewa: I don’t know whether I will be sent to secondary school.

Nyango: Sent to secondary school. Have you worked and saved money for your education? Even if you were a boy, I won’t send you to secondary school. Secondary school is for your sisters and step brothers. Is that clear?

Ewa: Yes, it is clear. (19)

Nyango, just like Tiku, has no zeal of sending Ewa to school. She torments Ewa and even threatens Granny on the issue. Nyango informs Ewa that she is not worth having the meanest facilities or advantages from either her or her husband, Tiku. It is to this effect that her forceful marriage is arranged with Ajoh against her wish. It is noted thus:

Chief: Normally, Ewa has to say whether she likes this man or not.

Nyango: Are you suggesting that we should find out from her whether she likes this man?

Chief: Exactly.

Tiku: We are talking about my daughter. She will marry the man we have chosen, irrespective of what she thinks about him. (21)

The choice of a husband is influenced by patriarchal norms. Tiku’s decision is simply confirmed by



Nyango. They forget to know that everyone is born free and so is free to make his/her choice. In fact Ewa has no choice or voice on whether to give her point of view on the matter or not. The Chief's ambivalent role is questionable once more. He tries to play the role of a mediator but lacks the authority over Ewa's plight. He is unable to distort societal considerations with regard to forceful marriages. The Chief has rather played a passive role within the community but the questions I may be asking could be as follows: is it not pretence which characterises the Chief's behaviour? Or is it that he is unable to take fair decisions and resolutions?

It should also be emphasized that the issue of bride price also contributes to the oppression of the women in their marital homes. The heavy burden of the bride price has become a matter of insult and complete disobedience of the woman towards the man. This is because for the past decades, families have conditioned their daughters' marriages with prelude to heavy sums of money in the name of bride price. Other men have indebted themselves heavily just because they want to get married to their loved ones. However, such debts and sacrifices do not just go gratuitously for many men resort to holding their wives as solely responsible for their impoverishment. At another level, the young people cannot meet up with their obligations which sometimes lead to an atmosphere of tension and gloom. This is reminiscent of Ewa when she gets married to Ajoh. This is noted thus:

Ewa: This dress is a bit tight. Please can you purchase material?...

Ajoh: Purchase material for you? You are a fool... your family refused to educate you; instead, your parents quickly gave you for marriage. Feeding you is not enough, you want clothes. Your family was solely interested in the bride price? (...) I thought that by marrying you, I would enrich myself, instead, I have impoverished myself. (22)

A marriage relationship which was supposed to be buttered by love and harmony is roughened by quarrels and personal interests. Ajoh overtly insults Ewa because of the grudges he has for the bride price that was given to her family before getting married to her. Ewa has now been reduced to a slave who must work for him so as to reimburse his long saved earnings which he used to pay for her bride price. The behaviour which Ajoh puts on shows that he rather bought a slave for his house chores rather than a wife that he loves. In total frustration, Ewa remarks thus:



Ewa: From slavery to prisoner. If this is what marriage is, I hate it. What shall I do? I can't return to slavery. At least he gives me food and has never beaten me. Besides I must obey him. I don't want him to hurt my baby. My baby is the only precious gift from God. (23)

Evidently, Ewa understands that she has no choice but to keep tight to Ajoh's commands in order for her and her unborn baby to survive peacefully. To portray that women are generally maltreated by men, Mutia (2009:164), further emphasizes that:

Because of men, women are commodified into mere objects of sexual pleasure... This commodification conforms to the gender-based stereotyping which stipulates that women's lives are narrow in scope and depth indicating that the category of woman is nothing but a body in its largest ramification and nothing more than a sex organ in its strictest sense. The focus on the woman as a 'body' shows how in patriarchal socialization, the woman's body has been valued over her intellectual capabilities. (Mutia 164)

Ewa compares Nyango's house to Ajoh's and sees that there is no margin. She is mistreated in both contexts. Women are therefore at the threshold of effacement. In commenting on this issue, Anwadha Sharma (2001:17) in "Female Consciousness in the Postcolonial Indian English Literature" quoting Eswari has noted that: "Woman from the postcolonial world face double effacement of race and gender. Their lives are shaped not only by the western hegemonic discourse but also by the patriarchal discourse". It should be noted however, that the ideas of domination, mistreatment and brutality are very close to power and power was in the hands of men in the past. The spread of education gave rise to the individual awareness and monetary freedom to the true individuality of women (Anwadha 17). Except for the fact that she is able to have a meal in Ajoh's house and is also capable of avoiding the physical brutality which Nyango inflicts on her. However, when matters get worst, Ajoh sends her out of the house to fend for herself and her baby. This explains why postcolonial feminist criticism has come in to make an attempt at shaping female identity. It should be noted that it is not reclaiming history but looking ahead to achieve a position to stand upon. Women have generally undergone unfair criticism in literature and in the public spheres too. Their trepidations and troubles are relegated to the periphery.





## **Shifting Paradigms and the Struggle for Space**

Women have come to understand that they have to take major decisions to improve on their livelihood. This falls within the feminist standpoint. David Macey (2000:122) notes that:

Although feminism, which became one of the most important forces in twentieth-century politics and thought, can take many different forms, its common core is the thesis that the relationship between the sexes is one of inequality or oppression. All forms of feminism seek to identify the causes of that inequality and remedy it. (Macey 122)

This again falls in line with Simone de Beauvoir's opinion in "One is Not Born a Woman" wherein she intimates that:

all human beings, regardless of biological differences, are born free and must struggle to en-gender their liberty; all human beings must rebel against traps and lures, as well as oppressive social conditions, to become all that they have potential to be in the world. (3)

In line with the above argument, women have become conscious of their situation and are struggling to disentangle themselves. The idea of empowerment has become necessary because Ewa has undergone some kind of double oppression. Firstly at Nyango's house and the secondly in her marital home with Ajoh. Her struggle to resist this domination is in vain because she is continuously oppressed upon. She has to prepare herself for eventual challenges imposed on her by her patriarchal society and this can only be done through empowerment, which is, going beyond the patriarchal roles imposed on her by the society. This is part of the feminist scholarship. In talking about feminism, Macey further reveals that "Women are indeed supposed to be interdependent in the war against male domination" (1223). To concur this idea, Audre Lorde (2003:26) in her article entitled 'The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House' notes that:

Interdependence between women is the only way to freedom which allows the 'I' and 'be', not in order to be used, but in order to be creative. This is a difference between the passive 'be' and the active 'being'. Advocating the mere tolerance of difference between women is the grossest reformism. It is a total denial of the creative function of difference in our lives. For difference must not merely be tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic. (Lorde 26)



Ngong in line with this view decides to help her because she has become aware of her sufferings and domination and is ready to fight. In a conversation between them (Ngong and Ewa) Ngong decides to assist her. This is made clear in the following dialogue:

Ngong: Don't cry. Do something else.

Ewa: Like what?

Ngong: Learning a trade

Ewa: That will be after I have put to birth

Ngong: Are you expecting?

Ewa: Yes, in a few months. (24)

Ewa's plight is understood by Ngong who offers to assist her after she must have given birth. The author is in one way intervening here to show the importance of education which can help sensitise the masses in taking rational decisions which will go beyond ascribed taboos. Ewa's promise is to take on a business after she gives birth. This is because she has understood that the only way to assert and empower herself is by gaining financial independence. It should be underscored that Ajoh's intention of keeping his grip over Ewa is seen as he prevents her from going to her village meeting because he does not want her to be aware of how other girls of her age have been coping. It is thanks to this that she gets acquainted with Tua the social worker who decides to help her start a business. Still in support of this initiative, Lorde (2000:28) further quotes Simone de Beauvoir as having said:

It is in the knowledge of the genuine conditions of our lives that we must draw our strength to live and our reasons for acting. Racism and homophobia are real conditions of all our lives in this place and this time. I urge each one of us here to reach down into that deep place of knowledge inside herself and touch that terror and loathing of any difference that lives there. See whose face it wears. Then the personal as the political can begin to illuminate all our choices. (Lorde 28)

This is part of the awareness that has led to the deconstruction of the dichotomy between the male and female in the new dispensation as demonstrated by Tang. To make Ewa more aware of her status and what she could embark on to improve on her living conditions, Tua in a conversation



tells her:

Tua: Don't depend solely on your husband for financial support. Do something. In this way you will be able to provide food for yourself and for your baby.

Ewa: How?

Tua: Start a small business. A woman should not rely on her husband for everything

Ewa: I don't have money

Tua: How much will you need?

Ewa: Two thousand francs

Tua: What will you do with two thousand francs?

Ewa: I will sell puff-puff and beans. (27)

Tua's role as a social worker is exposed as she tries as much as possible to empower Ewa. She gives Ewa ten thousand francs to start up a business, but this business which has to give Ewa financial independence, is opposed by Ajoh who wants to maintain his domination over his wife. This is the act that, if taken, will illuminate Ewa and by extension the women folk. In reinforcing this idea Adrienne Rich(2003:32) in 'Notes towards a Politics of Location' has emphasized that:

Wherever people are struggling against subjection, the specific subjection of women, through our location in female body, from now on has to be addressed. The necessity to go on speaking of it, refusing to let the discussion go on as before, speaking where silence has been advised and enforced, not just about our subjection, but about our active presence and practice as women. We believed that the liberation of women is wedge driven into all other radical thought, can open out the structures of resistance, unbind the imagination, and connect what's been dangerously disconnected. Let us pay attention now, we said, to women: let men and women make a conscious act of attention when women speak; let us insist on kinds of process which allow more women to speak; let us get back to earth-not as paradigm for 'women', but as place of location. (Rich 32)

Women should definitely seek to move from the margin to the centre. This is what men do not want to understand. This is what Ajoh fails to understand. He thinks that his authority is dangling given that Ewa will become less dependent on him and his money. He decides to frustrate her way



towards empowerment and independence. This is underscored thus:

Ewa: Every day, you ask for money. The landlord has been here several times. I have been paying rents, feeding you and providing provisions ever since I started this small business...

Ajoh: I don't want to see any puff-puff and beans in this house. Have you understood? Give me the five thousand frs.(Snatches a five thousand note from Ewa).

Ewa: Back to square one. No single franc. I thought I have become financially independent. I have returned to financial dependency. Lord Jesus, what is my offense? (Sobs 29)

The idea of becoming independent is halted by Ajoh. He is against the fact that his wife should do petit commerce. Again, he does everything to seize her small savings and even warns her against selling puff-puff and beans in his house. He tries as much as possible to maintain his authority over her. Ajoh's act is a characteristic of a patriarchal society which seeks to avoid female emancipation amongst other things through self and financial independence.

Ewa's quest for self independence is further exposed as she has to free herself from the bondage of marriage and the claws of Ajoh. Ewa can equate the fact that her presence in Ajoh's house is not different from that of Nyango. This shows that she has moved from a difficult situation to a more difficult one but the distinction here is that Ewa is able to demarcate herself from patriarchal bondage.

Ewa: (To herself) what shall I do? Will I die with my baby? I can't return to slavery. Perhaps, I should go to Granny. (Ponders). I will go to Auntie Angoh. She might help. She is a kind woman. Ngong who was very dull in primary school is already in form two. (Kissing previous). If I have a bit of money, I will be selling food in the morning and attending classes in the evenings. If I succeed in the GCE Ordinary Level, our life style will change. (31)

Ewa here is re-echoing the playwright's vision on the importance of the girl child being empowered by educating herself rather than depending on a man for finances or clothing. In the monologue above, she is aware of the situation she has been facing because of male dominance. Still, she has been unable to attain fulfilment in her husband's house which makes her to take a firm decision of



going back to school. But contrary to much expectation, Ewa's quest for selfhood is questioned again by Ajoh who wants his bride price to be returned. This is noted thus:

Ajoh: What are you doing here? You have not returned the bride price I paid, have you?  
(Tries to hit Ewa) if you don't want to see me in this vicinity quite often, return the bride price. I want the money before the end of the month.

Monica: (To Ewa) Does he give financial support?

Ewa: No

Monica: After returning the bride price, will he have any claims over the child?

Ewa: He will. The child is his.

Monica: Bride price should be abolished. It serves no purpose

Ewa: We are living in a man's world. Forget about him and the bride price... ( 34)

From the above, it is noticed that Ajoh continues to threaten Ewa for his bride price as if she were the person who took his money. Instead of holding her family responsible, she is the one to suffer for a crime she did not commit. Monica who is aware of the bias pertaining to bride price condemns it vehemently saying that it gives room for psychological and physical imprisonment as it impedes female emancipation and empowerment. Thus, Ewa's decision to go back to school and become a learned person helps her free herself from her husband's domination. Her struggles and hardship are blessed with success during the GCE results reading.

2<sup>nd</sup> customer: We gave her moral support

1<sup>st</sup> customer: Silence. They are approaching our centre. Listen-passed in five papers five two...passed in four papers-seven... passed in three papers-ten...Tiku Ewa.

22<sup>nd</sup> speaker: Anyih, celebrate

Anyih: Ewa, what will you do with your GCE Advanced Level?

Ewa: I will enrol in a university. (37)

Ewa's success is celebrated by the customers in the restaurant. They believe that Ewa's success is general success to all those who have undergone domination and have succeeded in isolating themselves from male bondage and patriarchy. Still, Ewa becomes more determined and engages to go to university because she believes that education is her second husband which will not be able to dominate her or oppose her and also because she knows that complete emancipation must certainly





come when she would have broaden her scope more through education.

### Conclusion

From the above analysis, this paper has endeavoured to depict female domination and emancipation in Anne Tanyi Tang's *Ewa*. It identified and examined the ways in which female genre or the girl child is dehumanised and animalised by the patriarchal society and paradoxically supported by some women who are unable to go out of the web of archaic taboos. Informed by feminist and postcolonial theories, this study has underscored the need for isolating and completely eradicating constructs of oppression and female domination. This paper has above all espoused, argued and emphasized that female empowerment could be possible if women take the initiative and explore specific strategies to empower themselves socially, economically and politically.

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## **Memories of the Heart: Poems of Bibhu Padhi and Malsawmi Jacob**

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Creativity is an aroma of a poet's heart. There is the pleasure in the recognition of an enlightened moment in poetic creation followed by a heightened awareness and sensibility. Poetry's task is to reconcile us to the world of experiences where all-pervading loving togetherness can exist. The poet is an ardent artist of words and phrases. At times, Bibhu Padhi's poetic pool is redolent with a hurried system of questions and answers:

Words have ceased to arrive  
at your doorsteps, as they used to. ('Returning' 128)

For Padhi, all poems are doors of the mind. The poet shows us the steps of a ladder of time. Time flies around these poems:

The crows sit over yesterday's  
dead fish(.) ('Sea Dream' 15)

Poetry saves a man from moments of frustration and dejection. Mundane wishes come and go. A poet has a sensitive heart to feel all these arrivals and departures of wishes and dreams:

Every lost thing is imagined  
and wished for— ('Sea Dream' 15)

For Bibhu Padhi, only the senses are moving among the objects of senses. Thought is a mental act. The poet wants to sign in the peace accord of minds with a whirlpool of images of varying nature. Man lives with dreams, dreams for a better tomorrow. For the poet, absences stay in the midst of dreams resulting in attitudes and actions:

The smell of salt and lime  
rolls over the sand and the sky



dreams of sea rise

all about me, as I stand. ( 27)

Padhi's musings are often short, compact and witty. There are some long poems in between. Some poems show the poet's vast knowledge of life.

Poems in this collection are not just the experiences and realizations of life, the poet rather moves towards aesthetic celebration, not just physical, but spiritual. The poems are to be appreciated for their rhetoric. The poet uses a variety of linguistic devices to convey his reflections:

Summer: I shall not

call you now, when

the erratic February

rains here. ('Summer, Dhenkanal' 102)

Rain has a soul. For Padhi, each small rain drop sings. Rain binds myths in coastal Odisha. All leading poets of Odisha write about rain and rivers. Padhi's poetic sensibility navigates on hearts that comes out of the rains to the sunshine to soothe his sores.

The poetic self of Bibhu Padhi generates meaning out of dry, repetitive and prosaic terrains of life's daily acts where imagination conjures up mysteries of the heart. Most of his poems are collage of ideas effortlessly streaming from lived moments of creative pulls. Touching is knowing. Padhi is a psychological poet for whom each touch is different, more than the objects:

Touch. You can feel how

the touched words pulsate within you. ('Returning' 129)

Cuttack and Bhubaneswar, two culturally rich towns come again and again in Padhi's poetic canvas:

It is noontime

in the old town. ('A Bird About to Fly Way' 110)

Among the many talented poets of Odisha of the past and present it is an obvious fact that Padhi's poems strike a distinct note, his poems significantly break free from the overwhelming compulsions that prudes and purists the defining routes that poetry must track to remain truly poetic.

This is where everything ends,

Love. ( 'Betrayed' 138)



Odisha is the land of Jagannatha tradition. Jagannatha in a local legend was a tribal deity who was co-opted by Brahmin priests. The theology, rituals and nuances associated with the Jagannatha cult combine Vedic, Puranic and tantric themes. The sap of history of the land of Odisha is a long pedigree:

Such are the turns of history  
that what is forgotten by most  
is what troubles the mind (.) ('Looking Back' 92)

Indian poetry in English shines with showcasing a wide spectrum of natural resources, cultural diversity and linguistic plurality. Multicultural India is ethnological wonderland. Threads of Indian ways of life and society are the reservoir of poetic inspiration. Creativity is an aroma of human heart. There is the pleasure in the recognition of a shared moment in poetic creation followed by a heightened awareness and sensibility. Poetry's task is to reconcile us to the world. Malsawmi Jacob is a member of that rare and wealthy heritage. Ranging from the lyrical and sensual to the harsh and plucky, from the personal to the political, to poems about nature, the poems in *Four Gardens and other poems* are infused with rich mosaic of imagery, cultural nuances, social ethos, group laments, angst and reconciliation that confront both particular and imaginary circumstances in the daily acts of life. Her earliest exposure to poetry was in Mizo language, her mother tongue. The fact that Indian English literature are a product of a multilingual, multicultural and philosophical mélange cannot be overlooked. Today Indian literature reached at the apex of creation with the contribution of regional and national writers. Later, studying English literature, some of Malsawmi's favourite poets were Blake, Keats, Shelley, Yeats and T.S. Eliot. As an adult she grew to like Emily Bronte, G. M. Hopkins, Dylan Thomas, Sylvia Plath and Pablo Neruda.

Like Pablo Neruda and his counterparts, Malsawmi Jacob's poems shimmer with an atypical sweet touch of simplicity, openness and lucidity that mark her poetic idioms subtle, specific and razor-sharp where the poetic corpus retains as an inviting discourse. A couple of months ago I had an opportunity to read Malsawmi's novel *Zorami*, set in the peak of the Mizo National Front (MNF) movement that began in the mid 60s and ended in mid 80s. The insurgency affected every Mizo, whether in or out of Mizoram. They call it '*ram buai*,' which means 'disturbance of the land.' Violence erases our shared humanity.





Malsawmi drums up optimism. *Zorami* ends with a prophetic note of hope and renewal of humane feelings:

The flowers appear on the earth;

The time of singing has come(,)

Spiritual epiphany is the key factor in the protagonist's inner healing. Malsawmi has a poem entitled, 'Zorami' in this collection where the link is established. In the poem, 'Zorami' she vigorously asks, "Waiting for another *thim zing*?"

*Thim zing* is a time of total darkness in Mizo myth.

Themes connect genres. There are seven sections in this 'moments of passion'; all parts are planned and organized so well that the entire corpus looks like a well-knit exotic fabric. Titles of sections are loaded with meaning. Malsawmi's poems address the crisis of identity and the continental trials and tensions that are an integral part of contemporary living in cultural spaces irrespective of physical geography and cultural positions. Her musings range from identity crisis to peace in the land; dislocation to rehabilitation; death to life, and life's small acts to roadside roses. She doesn't give up dreaming, even when she accounts for the river of life passing through a gutter. She blurs territorial engagements with the state and looks at the stars.

A writer is a global citizen these days. Experience of a writer determines her range of subjectivity. If the experience is varied, it helps. We cannot deny the intermingling of thoughts, contexts, engagements and concepts of these writers, which make them unique. They are aware selves who can think beyond a definite territory and geographical plane.

Malsawmi is an avid lover of territorial peace and in-group fraternity:

No hurting no killing in this country

the place only for lovers of peace."

In Section 5, "Angst" some poems read functional:

"Why have you gone political?"

they ask, "Why don't you just do

your thing?

Poetry benefits societies. Malsawmi Jacob is aware of her literary and cultural roots. She is a socially committed artist, and she refers to her land and people, trauma her people experienced



during the days when vultures had full meal to 'keep up continuity'.

Love is a companion of the poetic soul. The poet wants to sign in the 'peace accord' of minds:

Ah, wonder of wonders!

He's here among us standing with us!

Saying "Peace to you, I am  
with you always.

P. B. Shelley said, "Poetry is a mirror which makes beautiful that which is distorted." Bullied at school and expelled from Oxford, Shelley's personal life was distorted but the poetry he wrote was a mirror which beautified his distorted life. Similarly, Malsawmi aims at a beautiful nation-state where people can live safely celebrating life's feast together. "We contain multitudes," wrote Walt Whitman, Malsawmi has poems on 'identities', 'home' and 'roots'. Identity of a person is a marker for the part of one's overarching self-concept and identification. It is an affiliative construct. The image of self we develop from membership of social groups. Many poems in the collection are rich in aesthetic responsibility towards life, contexts and manners of the time.

Malsawmi's willing leap into the pool of nostalgic past creates a sense of 'presence' through the poetic metaphors of 'absence'. The haunting presence of the metaphor of 'death' invests his poems with a sense of mystery, a sense that is indefinable, and non-negotiable by biological experience.

The river has a soul. Malsawmi, like many other poets from the North East India digs out magic in Nature, verdant with myth and dense with longing. Her poetic sensibility navigates on hearts that comes out of the rains to the sunshine, in search of poetry of the world:

Cleansing river will wash her wounds  
healing balm will soothe her sores  
she will be renewed restored.

Mamang Dai, a fellow poetess from Itanagar in the North-east Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh in 'Small Towns and the River' expresses:

Small towns always remind me of death.  
My hometown lies calmly amidst the trees(.)

For Mamang, each small rain drop sings. For Malsawmi, 'tiny flowers I bring  
adorn your crown'.



Rain and rivers give the vital dose to Pablo Neruda to overcome all kinds of solitude and anxiety. Malsawmi, an ardent lover of rain and rivers which bring a promise of renewed vitality, wants to purify the inner psyche of her people. Her aim is to achieve cleansing of the minds by purgation of pent-up emotions. The poet registers her faith, hope, dreams, and cultural memories again and again by subtle imagery, metaphors and folk myths of her homeland. Nothing charges the imagination more actively than poems on beauty what poets of all ages haunt in the purlieu of thoughts on banks of the 'river of no coasts':

Gem of rarest beauty  
calls in waking dreams  
morning sunset moonlight  
still black night  
so I must set out in quest  
leaving all I own.

There is an indomitable gusto that invites a reader or a sensitive mind to Malsawmi's first book of poems, *Four Gardens and other poems*. She is all set to blaze the trail of splendour and majesty with her poems, which move the keys of human hearts, hard hitting and ethereal.

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## **‘Right to Memory’ and Engendering Ecology: A study of select Tree poems**

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**Abstract** Memory is at its best both fatal and enlivening. The memory of the familiar is outrageously courageous in filling the void of the human heart that is continuously been created in the expanse from childhood to the adult life. The undulating life of ours finds permanency and stoicism in remembrance. The familiar memory is warm, oozing and lucid unlike the raw, rasping ones of the competitive adult life. It engenders within a sense of loyalty, a bond truly stronger than the forces of nature and creates a niche to every heart that longs home. The memory of a familiar or childhood space is encumbered with the sensuous experience of the soul which resonates deeply at every point of life. The memory so treasured is an act of emulation which follows all eternity. Thus the one who remembers and the thing or place or nature remembered becomes truly immortal then. The attempt of this paper is to analyze ‘tree poems’ of select poets and understand their relationships with them and how such a relationship could forge within the value of ecological consciousness. Here, the symbol of tree becomes an agency of change, of positivity, of hope and of values once cherished by mankind. The tree symbol becomes a force to reckon with in the face of adversity. This paper thus attempts to depict the long term relation between memory and environment and how this psychological dependence would aid in the conservation of nature, a dire need of the hour.

**Key words:** Memory, Ecological Consciousness, Eco- criticism.

“He who plants a tree, plants a hope.”

— **Lucy Larcom**



Ruskin Bond in an article on May 2 in Times of India was talking about his experience with trees. He quotes, “sitting on the turf beneath that lovely Pine, I would experience a surge in confidence in myself, a feeling that I could do all the things I’d set out to do-love and be loved, grow things, write great stories.”He talks about how the creativity is passed on to him“its resinous properties perhaps, or just its spirit. The spirit in the pine trees. Of course, all trees are places of power”. As a comeuppance for the deeds of previous life perhaps, I am destined to be a teaching in a college which is literally in profusion with trees. The picturesqueness of the campus does help people alleviate their day to day grievances. The tree becomes a sentiment; a symbol with the college is identified with. Lodged on a scenic and comfortable hill, away from the maddening crowd of the city, the campus changes colors with seasons which has paved way for innumerable artists, poets and writers. As a student too in the college, I was more attracted to these leafy-beings and dreamt like Keats or Coleridge in search of the nightingale and the solitary reaper. As an ardent pluviophile, I couldn’t complete my picture without the lush greenery around. People tell me that I am a hopeless romantic and can’t really conjure up the images of Development. They thank the democracy for the roads and bridges and what not and mock me for using the facilities provided despite my derision. My thoughts don’t stem from my wrath against the progress in a nation. I was led by the notion of the ‘right of memory’ which I think should be included as the next fundamental right. My memory is a part of my identity and if I couldn’t find it, my identity is lost. Loss is a tragic yet powerful word. It re-arranges one’s priorities.

Almost all my memories have trees in them. I still remember holding the branches of a banyan tree and swinging to and fro till my mother came from our house a few meters away and took me home. I looked back at the tree wishing for the next evening. The neem tree in front of my home was a gift, its leaves glistening in the sun is something I wish I had now. Every time I visit my ancestral home, I long to see my long-lost friend, the nutmeg tree, which was cut down for making an inconvenient extension to our house. Pondering over this for quite a while, I was led to the impression of the role of memory in shaping our perspectives. Was it a vital tool that could





either make or break the future? Can ecological consciousness thrive if we furnish it with our memory? But, today as we witness this dramatic climate change with the disappearance of almost all the major species of the world with the world at the verge of ecological imbalance. There is an immediate need to sit back and retrospect. We always place a lopsided account of our memories. If I look at development as a tree cutting massacre, another person may look at it in terms of the buttery asphalt roads. There is always a progress at the expense of another where the another is always at the losing end. From time immemorial, the people who had the narrative power wrote according to their prerogatives which propelled massive stereotypical representations and left a scar of contorted images. It is only until the last decades that suppressed nations started using the language of the colonizers to resist such misrepresentations. Likewise, the voice of the voiceless need to be heard, in this case, the flora and fauna that inhabits this planet Earth. They have had occupied this earth longer than us which justifiably makes them the rightful owner in terms of the law of succession. We have enforced ourselves upon them leaving behind large scales of deforestation and habitat destruction. I often laugh at the joke when we say that a tiger or a leopard has ‘transgressed’ into the village or city. In fact, it does so because we have taken away their habitat. Hence, our narratives should be their tongues, our perceptions their ideas. It starts by recognizing them as “alive” which correctly is emphasized by Arne Naess through his Deep Ecology.

Human beings have always marveled themselves with their exquisite ability to surpass and create a world of their own. But what we have significantly lacked is the ability to assess what we are leaving for posterity. This evolutionary process which has seen greater progress is turning into the greatest impediment the earth is yet to witness. If we analyze today’s world in terms of the environment, we find that there is no room for the consideration of the well-being of other species who also have an equal right to live and roam around this earth. When did man become so selfish and self-centered? Or is it just another incident where we use the Darwinian epithet “the survival of the fittest” to embellish our flaws. Or is it because technology has gained precedence over nature



that we tarry not in destroying the very basis of our survival? If we talk to the newer generations about the efficacy of ecological conservation, there is observed (albeit there are always exceptions). What could be the plausible reasons for them? Out of the many, the cardinal one might be what the previous generation has contributed to their memory. Our concept of progress and development is solely based on our perceptions of them which is later manifested into cultural productions. These cultural productions are accountable in understanding how nature was treated in particular generations. Our world is run by exploitative capitalism which ideally suits the stalwarts who run the economy of various nations. Money is our new motto. Everything in life which is worthy of upholding is devalued by money. Human beings as a race are neglecting their prime supporter and wishing to procure something totally futile and fleeting as money. Money rules over everything and the government, bureaucracy and all the institutions that we have developed has caved under the monetary deity.

Strangely, the proverb of the Native American community holds like a Damocles' sword.

“Only when the last tree has died  
and the last river been poisoned  
and the last fish been caught  
will we realize we cannot eat money”

-Cree Indian Proverb

Visible catastrophic changes in the ecological system propelled writers like Rachel Carson, John Muir who had voiced their concerns about the representation of nature, hence, justifiably could be considered as the inspiration behind the emergence of ecocritical study. Cheryll Glotfelty's definition in *The Ecocriticism Reader* (1996) is that "it is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Nayar, 242). It carefully analyzes the human culture-nature interaction and almost always is mutually influential. As we look around at concrete forests



and our life stemming and residing at the tip of our fingers, we need to ask ourselves what we are creating as a memory for the future. As an English literature student, I had the fortune to read and enjoy the Romantics, the writings of Indian writers like R.K.Narayan, Ruskin Bond, and the American Robert Frost and also understand the pantheism of Native American poetry. I sojourned with Frost in the snowy evenings to listen to the songs of Keats' nightingale to lie in the embalmed climate of the foothills of the Himalayas to experience the fragrance of the Frangipani. Their memory was colourful, strong and sensual. My world was "transformed". Truly, we have had poets, writers who could take inspiration from the luscious nature around back then and engage us. Rabindranath Tagore extolling the tree as a giver of the qualities of calmness, peace with of his childhood and his longing back to revert time with his "The Banyan Tree" to Toru Dutt entwining her life's legacy through her "Casuarina Tree". It is not a surprising fact at all that surrounding oneself with plants or nature can leave us with a better state of mind. Nature in itself is filled with positivity. There is no room for despair or being negative.

Though we are the most developed in comparison to our older generations or centuries perhaps, in terms of technology, we are the worst or most poorly linked in all the other facets of life. There is dwindling economy, wars, famine, droughts, bio-war, and antipathy towards fellow human beings. Who should take the blame? The blame is in lack of awareness. Education which should foster values is adulterated. There is a fault in imparting values and also there is a lack of discipline in following them. We need to understand that we aren't the cog of the machine. It is nature that drives this whole system and like any system it has a containing capacity. Once, it gets saturated nature explodes. Hence, the need for action is imminent which can only be brought by perseverance. Our actions speak louder than words. The children of the future will learn from the actions of their adults. Our actions will become memory and our memory, their value. So it is the duty of every previous generation to act smarter and take greater responsibility. Ramachandra Guha's *Environmentalism*, advocates this sentiment in acknowledging "Rasputin as, for his contemporary Vasily Belov,[who regarded] the village [as] the "wellspring of morality, religious



meaning and harmony with the natural environment, and moreover, the only reliable medium through which these values can be transmitted to future generations”(Chap 7:Socialism and environment 187). Nature therefore is a repository of knowledge, of knowledge that is everlasting and fulfilling and empowering everything and everyone that comes to its aid. The poems discussed here takes into account how trees affect human kind at the personal, societal and also at the spiritual level.

In Naomi Shihad Nye’s poem “My Father and the Fig Tree”, Naomi fondly remembers her father through this poem. Her father always craved for ‘the largest, fattest and sweetest fig in the world’. For him, the fig was everything that he has left behind, the fig was his identity and all the good things that had happened to him in his life When he puts a fig in his mouth and closes his eyes, it is magic. The fig tree was his past that he reminisced and wanted to go back to and how figtrees always became a partner in crime. His words fill with the deepest desire when he says, “I wish they were figs”. The fig tree was his only acquaintance in this strange world and her father looked at everything else with an “indifferent” air. They were his connection to his childhood presumably, to his wants and needs, to his laughs and worries and to his memories. And the want lay void and couldn’t be filled with “lima beans, zucchini, parsley, beets”. The fig becomes a gift from Allah, a manna from heaven, a surprise from the universe when out of nowhere in Dallas, Texas, the father finds a fig tree in the backyard and breaks in to a “figsong”. A mystical and secret connection that only the fig tree and the father shares is evident here. The tree becomes a symbol of his prayer, a symbol of his continuity and of his existence on this earth.

The sentiments of a blossoming friendship and the need to invite an intimate stranger are rampant in the poem by Risha Ahmed. In her poem, “About a tree”, this twelve-year-old poet questions as to why the tree is distrustful of her invitation “to the cakes I made”. She tries to ask the tree who is on this earth “just to give me shade” if it finds her synonymous to the “axe and the saw”. She wants the tree who “bear[s] pretty flowers” to befriend her. She wants to console the tree by pointing to its many “sandy paws” and that no number of axes and saws can destroy the



multifarious physiognomy of the tree. The tree is always many things to many people and this pluralism will always exist despite the efforts taken by mankind. She is desperate for its companionship which includes “just the tree and me” and requests the tree to forego all apprehensions and trust her. It is like she wants to let the tree not to condone her for the wrongdoings of mankind.

Trees are inarguably the best teachers for any person. According to Native American belief, God bestowed trees upon us to learn the quality of strength from an oak, flexibility from birch, to stand tall as a redwood, to live gracefully as a willow. The need to give sanctity to trees was the first step in conserving these species on the earth. A similar tradition of ‘sacred groves’ or ‘kavus’ in India fosters this sentiment among the public. They are inarguably the harbingers of biodiversity.[Though recently a newspaper article focussed on the disappearance of sacred groves in many areas in Kerala which makes the conservation issue absolutely imperative.

When the trees purpose is served, it changes but still proves useful to mankind. Isn’t that what truly immortal means? E.g.: Roland Barthes article titled “Toys” talks about the subjectivity of objects. He propounds that a toy fashioned from the left over tree will always contain the memory of the tree, a power in itself. Unlike plastic toys that have sharp edges and focus on the ‘use and throw’ sentiment, toys from nature display longevity and perhaps are transferred from generation to generation. The vintage quality upholds their status and always act as a connecting link among generations. Almost the same sentiment is evoked in Richard Walker’s The Cedar Tree. Here, the cedar tree becomes synonymous to the life of a man himself. Richard Walker at the beginning fosters a spiritual sentiment by pointing out how the people in the northwest still respect the canoe made from the cedar tree. The cedar tree having served its purpose of telling “us by its rings when salmon runs were big,” by “providing shelter for birds and other animals, providing bark fiber for clothing and for fishing nets, providing bark fiber for baskets in which to collect berries or cook shellfish, fine woven baskets that are passed from mother to daughter, and from grandmother to granddaughter?” was turned into a canoe. The canoe in itself becomes a message of selflessness as



this canoe became “a seagoing canoe that carried the People on waters the Ancestor knew carried the People to gatherings and sacred ceremonies.” The cedar tree was also a spot of burial of the ancestors. Hence, the canoe becomes synonymous to their ancestors to be treated with reverence. The cedar tree becomes the memory of the traditional songs and the songs of the ancestors that the people can relate with and continue. The tree becomes the continuance of tradition. The tree becomes a constant reminder of our frivolous existence on this earth and kindles within us the message of being useful to people during life and after death. The cedar tree evokes the quintessential existence of the spirit over body. It focusses on the interconnectedness of life on its sacredness thus establishing within us the message of divinity within which is a reflection of divinity outside. It reaffirms the fact the cosmic universe is within us as much as we are in it.

“Trees” by Joyce Kilmer is a poem of contemporary relevance. This was one such poem that prompted people to plant trees as part of ecological conservation. He regards people like himself as fools in only composing poems advocating the merits of the trees. But the tree which is truly a wonder can only be created by God, the supreme. A tree “that may in summer wear, a nest of robins in her hair” and who “intimately lives with rain” and “upon whose bosom the snow has lain” symbolizes the very message of patience and tenacity. The tree never complains but becomes a symbol of hope for the people who think that there is no way out of their bleak future. There is willful surrender to god as the tree “lifts her leafy arms to pray”. The tree becomes a reflection of mankind both of them more or less sharing the same physiognomy. The tree evokes in us the memory of god’s love, constantly reminding us of our purpose and through its life tells us to emulate it. Here, the tree becomes critical in asking us the pertinent question “what are we leaving behind for our future generation?” The tree becomes an agency of power and of change. The poem written after the wake of the First World War has had desired effect on the poet. It teaches mankind that to create out of love and out of pride and arrogance never have the same results.

The main idea is to revamp our policies regarding environment and most of our belief systems by orienting them towards an ecological consciousness’. One of the ways is to integrate





economy with the climate; to make people understand that by helping climate dual motives can be achieved. One it may sustain our life on earth and our economy from dwindling. Human Beings should consider a proactive empathetic approach to flora and fauna alike to make this world a better place to live in. It is to this account that the 'Memory-Card' can be used. It is at its best both fatal and enlivening. It can either create or destroy. One can either learn or re-learn from the memory that acts as storage units of all our actions of the past.

Therefore, our spirit can only be revived by going back to nature. We have risen from mud and it is to the mud that we return. It is a seldom reminder that unless we check our practices and completely transform our measures, we solely would be responsible in destroying the past, present and the future of coming generations. It is the dire need of the hour that we move from our anthropocentric constitution to eco-centric positioning.

“Someone is sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago”.

-Warren Buffett

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## **Marginality in *Mahabharata*: Revisiting Class and Gender question in Kavita Kane's *Karna's Wife: the Outcast's Queen***

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**Abstract** Kavita Kane's *Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen* is a retelling of *Mahabharata* from the perspective of a woman outcast by choice. Karna, an able warrior deprived of his identity and dignity fights against social discrimination and gradation to prove his potential. He is aided in his revolution by his trusted friend Duryodhana and his supportive wives. The great warrior is however gender insensitive. Kane seeks to unravel the silence regarding the personal life of the enchanting personality Karna and examine the contributions of the women of great warriors. She explores the plight of marginal women in the epic hitherto neglected and unrecognized. The remarkable bonding between the privileged and unprivileged class, love, compassion, understanding and support between them make Kane's interpretation grand and beautiful. This paper addresses the issue of marginality in the novel and comment on the characters misinterpreted and popularized through numerous representations till date.

**Key words:** Outcaste, silence, class, gender, bonding.

Epics are the earliest documents of Indian society, its structural framework and network of operations. The numerous stories and multiple characters allow readers to have an extensive view of human life and its complexities. The readers can hardly contain their urge to delve deeper into human psychology and unfold the myriads of emotions and conflicts which find their parallel in life. Time and again, it has been repeatedly pointed out that social hierarchy, social foundation, social interest carry greater value than individual life and justice. In question to this paper, I would like to restrict my reading to Kavita Kane's interpretation of *The Mahabharata* in *Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen*. The novel revisits the epic *Mahabharata* from the theoretical perspectives of post-structuralism and feminism to explore the mental turmoil, consciousness and thought processes



of the enigmatic characters.

Re-engagement with epics is not a new phenomenon. Scholars and writers are jointly venturing into these ancient realms with greater interest and vigour in recent years. Yet, Kane's representation stands unique against the long queue of texts battling for adoption, in her resurrection of marginal characters and imposition of conscience. She employs dramatic license to incorporate the imaginary female character, Uruvi, Karna's wife (1) in order to uncover the unknown facts of Karna's life. Karna, the most appealing and mysterious but damned character in the Indian classical epic has always been examined in comparison to his arch-rival Arjuna or with respect to his friendship with Duryodhana, both of them central characters. Karna's marginality within the epic is re-ascertained by the fact of his ambiguous, patchy portraiture as a family person. The creation of Uruvi replenishes this gap by not only illuminating the character of Karna but also by the imaginary contemplation and depiction of the predicament of the wives of a socially ostracized, determined and aspiring man. Her advantageous royal belonging, association, intelligence and sensitivity to social and cultural processes are designed to play the eternal and ever-seeing human conscience. The inscrutable tricky primary narrative and emergence of new critical theories complimenting the idea of 'death of author' (2) provide occasion for uncountable renditions befitting the requirements of the age. In pursuit of unraveling the abominable patriarchal, discriminating and exploitative nature of society, scholars are aiming at the roots of cultural dissemination. The repeated reproductions of the epic knowingly and unknowingly consolidate and perpetuate insensitivity towards gender and humanity. Hence, there arises the need to re-interpret and re-analyze the text which archetypes ideal Indian society. The epic has ceased to be solely a religious text about the eternal war between good and evil, right and wrong. Kane's endeavour in rewriting the epic, *Mahabharata*, adds an extra mile to the undergoing scholarly efforts. Her creation of the imaginary character, Uruvi becomes a part of the prevalent refashioning and recreating exercises in literature to suit the temperament and needs of a particular era. Kane's careful introduction of a character high born but sharing the life of a low class by choice produces a departure from the flow of literary experiments. As a result, the text is prevented from being essentialized as literature from the ground. Uruvi's bonding with both the worlds, the Kshatriya clan



and the *suta* class, strives to provide unprejudiced representation of characters and situations. This paper will read the novel from both the gender and class margins in order to elucidate the center as well as the periphery. It will consider the lived experiences of a female outcast by choice, and her power and grit in accosting society.

Mahabharata has often been read as a class narrative from the stand-point of Karna, who had lifelong suffered the brunt of low birth in a society hell bent on class preservation. We zoom in our lenses on Draupadi, the wife of the Pandavas or on Kunti or Gandhari when we talk of gender. But, have we ever cared for the inconspicuous female characters within the epic? They haven't ever been mentioned of in any mode of reproductions or representations. Pre-occupation with the center often provide a partial knowledge or even distorted view of circumstances and characters. A character requires to be measured by all standards of relationships and situations before coming to any conclusion. Kane's keen eyesight salvages the characters in the supporting roles, specially the wives of the great men from getting overshadowed and fading into oblivion. By throwing the spotlight on the private realm, Kane tries to depict the interconnections between the two worlds: interior and exterior. How the politics of the former affect the peace and serenity of the latter. How, women are invariably drawn into men's politics and rivalry while society puts on a garb of paternalism towards 'weak', 'defenseless' women. We all remember the disgraceful scene of Draupadi's humiliation. The silence regarding Karna's married life accounts for the inscrutability of the character. Discussion on how his wives reacted to his lack of sense of belonging, misplaced loyalty, and most significantly his role in the molestation of a woman, will shed light on marginality and enable better scrutiny of the characters. The honest, inquisitive, tongue in cheek Uruvi probes and prods the characters into self-introspection and confession. In this paper, I would like to analyze the experiences of a subject doubly sub-altern by class and gender.

In the novel, Uruvi, the princess of Pukeya, daughter of king Vahusha, was brought up amidst all sorts of lavishness, extravagance that one could imagine of. Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas, and Uruvi's mother's childhood friend, pampered her as foster- mother. She even confided her dream of making Uruvi her daughter-in law to Uruvi's mother, an arrangement which was readily agreed upon by the latter. As a playmate to the Kauravas and Pandavas, Uruvi enjoyed



the advantage of knowing her friends intimately from childhood. While, she was contemptuous about Duryodhana for his evil ways, she sided with the Pandavas like everybody else. Bhishma Pitamaha, Gandhari, and every other person doted on the charming, intelligent, loving princess. However, with the appearance of Karna in the royal precincts, the facades, treachery and tyranny of society became blatantly exposed. She sensed her world changing, people whom she have known for years becoming strangers, when she challenged social norms by declaring love for a lower class, a *sutaputra* and proposing to marry him. Uruvi fought the entire world to win him. Although, she had to pay an exorbitant price of incurring the rage and rivalry of neighbouring rulers, she managed to have a *swayamvara* in its truest sense. She enjoyed the chance of choosing the person she loved as her life partner instead of being carried away as a trophy by the ablest Kshatriya warrior. It rarely happened that a woman could marry the person she loved.

The title of the novel “Karna’s Wife: The Outcast’s Queen” becomes obvious and clear at this juncture. Karna was married and was a father to sons when Uruvi gained admittance into his life. However, Kane seeks to draw reader’s attention specifically towards Uruvi by adding the term ‘Queen’ at the tail of the title and also by the use of the singular form of ‘wife’. She also emphasizes the sort of relation that existed between Karna and Uruvi through her choice of expression. Howsoever, in the course of this paper, I would consider the peril of both the wives: Vrushali and Uruvi, each antithetical to the other. Karna points out to his brother, Shona: “I think Vrushali loves me for myself and not for what I may become. Whatever happens to me or whatever I do, I shall never disappoint her. But I am not good enough for Uruvi” (Kane 67). This discussion highlights the fact that despite Karna’s enough faith in Vrushali, she was after all taken for granted. Vrushali, his first wife was mature, calm, cool, tolerant, adjustable and wise. She had the perfect ‘wifely’ qualities of gentleness and dutifulness. She belonged to the same class of *adhiraths* as that of her husband. Karna and Vrushali shared happy, contented conjugal life and were devoted to each other till the appearance of Draupadi between them. Vrushali was docile and compliant in everything her husband did. She showed mute submission when Karna attended Draupadi’s *swayamvara* and desired to marry her. Vrushali was helpless when she lost her eldest son in the scuffle following Draupadi’s casteist remark at her *swayamvara*. She had no rights over her



children since they belonged to their father. The father decided the fate and future of his children. So, Vrushali was powerless and failed to save any of her children from getting slaughtered in the fateful war of Kurukshetra. She also was bound to resign to her fate without protest when he unexpectedly married Uruvi and brought her home. Vrushali was in no way different from the other royal ladies in the past and present who had no right to voice their disagreement and decision over their lord. Before Vrushali, women like Amba, Ambika, Ambalika, Gandhari and Kunti were also victims of deception and exploitation but were powerless to confront society. The practice of Polygamy was acceptable and recognized in society so women had no option other than sharing their husbands with other women. Draupadi, who had dared to question the court on rights and duties of a husband, morality, *dharma* and justice, also happened to be the second wife of her husbands. Vrushali was pleased to perform her duties according to social expectations. She was satisfied to play the part of a 'good' wife displaying patience, attention and determination only to see her husband happy. She had no aspirations for herself or for her husband but was content to have him by her side.

On the other hand, Uruvi was diametrically opposite to Vrushali. Younger by many years, she was willful and rebellious. She lived her life by her choice and took her life's decisions to which she remained steadfast till her last breath. Uruvi braved all odds, 'antagonism' and 'disgrace' to marry her love, Karna. Her marriage was only a beginning to a series of trials. She remained honest to her own self throughout and took responsibility of her decisions. A woman has no caste, class of her own. Her identity depends on the family she is born into until her marriage into another family. She is then identified through her belonging and liability to her marital household. Nonetheless, a woman is not above class or caste. Uruvi's marriage to Karna meant her 'fall from grace'. "She was neither the Princess of Pukeya anymore nor would she ever be accepted as the Queen of Anga." (Kane 59) Despite Duryodhana pronouncing Karna as the king of Anga, society never acknowledged him as a king. The Royal clans never let him forget his lineage and his true place. Karna, ignorant of his actual identity, identified himself through his foster parents Radha and Adhirath, who belonged to the class of *sutas*. He was the unwanted, illegitimate son of an unwed Kshatriya mother who abandoned him in a river, in desperation to save social status and reputation. All through his life, Karna had to bear the yoke of low class identity and suffer the social ills





associated with it. He was treated as an outcaste when he attempted to learn archery, a skill which was reserved for the privileged Kshatriya class, from Guru Dronacharya, the Kshatriya guru himself. Karna's aspirations were curtailed at every step and he was disallowed from competing with the famous archer Arjuna for not being a Kshatriya. He underwent public humiliation for the second time when he dared to compete with other Kshatriya princes for the hand of the Kshatriya princess, Draupadi in marriage. Karna was rudely reminded of his ineligibility and ambition in dreaming of marrying a Kshatriya princess being an outcast. So, as an outcast's wife, Uruvi too had to suffer social chastisement and derision. She had to share his turbulent past, fretful present and tormenting future. But, she never became dispirited or regretted her decision. In tough times, she consoled her mind by saying that she married the love of her life, a privilege enjoyed by very few women in her society. By stooping below her caste to marry Karna, Uruvi lost her friends, relationships, and society. She and her family turned into an outcast overnight. Uruvi relinquished the comforts of her palace, fineries, most importantly her respect, prestige, position, influence in order to become the companion of the *sutaputra*. Her trial did not end here. In the adopted new home, unlike Vrushali, she was greeted as an unwelcome guest forcibly intruding into the lives of a well-knit family. Karna's parents looked worried and regarded her "in open awe, as if she was a goddess who dared to tread the mortal path" (Kane 51). Karna's brother, Shona, who was fiercely protective about his elder sister-in-law, openly displayed contempt and disapproved of their marriage. He distrusted her for her Kshatriya identity and considered as a threat to family's peace and happiness. Shona vociferously proclaimed that Uruvi was "a stranger, *an outsider*" (emphasis added) who would never be able to adjust with them. Karna's first wife, Vrushali's reaction as expected was cool, unemotional, distanced and formal. And finally, Karna, for whom she left everything, idealized her like the Petrarchan lover. He idolized her for fighting the whole world for his sake. She was yet miles away from becoming his soul-mate. Uruvi, about whose incisive wit Kane never lets her readers forget, was quick to notice the malice, bias and flaws in the actions of the people she revered and considered to be just. She constantly harped on the human conscience, and pestered her elders with questions whenever they had taken a biased decision. She enquired Bhishma of his partiality in rejecting Karna but accepting Satyawati, a daughter of a fisherman as



his father's wife and Queen, and all the sons of entire Kuru family, none of whom were blue-blooded, as his descendants. Uruvi also unhesitatingly declared Kunti to be responsible for making Karna a *pariah*, an outcast within his family and society. She reasoned that it was desertion, opposition and neglect of the good and righteous that led him to befriend evil. Duryodhana, in spite of being malicious, was the only person who came to his rescue and treated him with due respect when he was being subjected to ignominy. He was the sole person to publicly acknowledge Karna's goodness, nobility, courage and most importantly his worthiness as a great archer and warrior.

Uruvi was a perfect blend of rationality and emotion. Uruvi fell in love with Karna at the moment when he challenged Arjuna in the competition ground. "...Uruvi saw in Karna all the qualities of a hero who was not being permitted to be one." (Kane 12) Her compassion for a person denied honour and justice, gradually snowballed into love. She dreamt of becoming his true companion, his counselor, and his protector. She wanted to share his feelings, pain and even ambitions. Through her effort, Karna could find himself a confidante with whom he could discuss every matter from political to personal. However, despite her persistent effort, Uruvi failed to counsel Karna against forming alliance with Duryodhana. The hunger for identity, social acceptance and dream of living like a warrior pushed him towards his doom. If Duryodhana had used Karna for self-interest, Karna too had utilized Duryodhana to realize his dream of competing with Arjuna. Duryodhana was his only chance and Kurukshetra the only place to prove his potential and win the honour and dignity he truly deserved. It was he who pestered Duryodhana for face-to-face combat with his cousins Pandavas instead of resorting to mischievous means. In aiding Duryodhana in expanding his kingdom to whole of Aryabharta (3), he not only re-paid his debt and gratitude, he also demonstrated his potential as a warrior. Karna, even participated in the heinous crime of abducting women from their swayamvaras (just like Bhishma in the past) to gratify his friend. This barbaric deed committed by an otherwise noble man makes Karna's character even more complex and ambiguous. Both his wives along with other well-wishers were compelled to swallow Karna's friendship with Duryodhana, his self-surrendering gratitude towards him and finally his death in service of his friend. Uruvi's companionship, support and acknowledgement alone proved to be insufficient to pacify ambitious and resolute Karna. Karna desired acceptance and recognition for



his merits from the royal Patriarch, the heads of society and from all those who hailed Arjuna as the greatest archer and compared Karna with him. So, Uruvi's solicitous act of individually crediting and comforting Karna, could not subdue his craving for honour and respect. Nonetheless, the companionship of Duryodhana and Uruvi with Karna (friendship between the privileged and unprivileged or rather between two differently marginalized people) continue to be exemplarily redemptive and restitutive. Karna too returned his heartfelt gratitude and pledged to protect them. Karna's feelings are best expressed when he says: "Uruvi ... is like a wild exotic flower in a desert who must be sheltered from the bitter winds. I want to protect Uruvi; she has fought the world to be with me" (Kane 67).

Uruvi was much inexperienced, impetuous and expressive in comparison to Vrushali. She was wrong in assuming that Karna's embittered heart needed her loving protection and healing skills. Nevertheless, her emotional succor was haven for him. He actually wanted to change society which valued one's lineage, social hierarchy over an individual's merit. He was ready to die for his cause. Uruvi's wifely anxieties got better of her and she united with Vrushali in helplessness, pain and bereavement. She left no stone unturned yet like Vrushali she failed to save her husband from certain death. Both the women also suffered shame and mortification for Karna's fondness for Draupadi. There existed a complex love-hate relationship between Karna and Draupadi. Draupadi symbolized power, position, honour and bewitching beauty; everything that the deprived, disadvantaged Karna lusted after. The situation deteriorated with Karna's revengeful attack on the Pandavas's wife in order to make her realize the sufferings of a social 'pariah'. He joined Duryodhana and Dushashana in publicly deriding Draupadi and called her a 'whore'. He wanted to deflate her pride of class and beauty. His wounded male pride desired to triumph over that woman who dared to abase him in public. It was Karna's remark which instigated Dushashana to disrobe Draupadi. But, it was Draupadi herself who had "sown the seeds of hate and humiliation" by scorning Karna for his low birth and jeering Duryodhana for his inheritance of blindness from his father. The dice game on that ill-fated day gave them the opportunity to humble her haughty pride. It was not only a play of fate and fortune, honour and wealth but it was also a ploy for involuntary exposition of all the characters. After the game, the characters stand adjudicated and mortified.



Although the Panchali Princess had harboured secret love for Karna, she was reluctant to 'break social norms' and marry below her caste. The public spectacle of injuring feminine integrity of Draupadi forced her to fall below social standards and connect with the margin. She bonded with the marginalized in their longing for self-respect and honour. Karna's wives had to bear the brunt of his misogynist remark and the consequences of his participation in this historic event of utmost savagery. Although, Vrushali, in allegiance to her nature was quick to forgive her husband and consoled repentant Karna, Uruvi was inconsolable. She could no more continue to admire, love or even tolerate his company. She became certain that the war was inevitable with two disgraced and stigmatized individuals resolved to redress their situation and win back their lost dignity. Draupadi united also with Uruvi and Vrushali with respect to the impending misfortune which encircled each one's lives and apprehension of inevitable doom.

While, Karna believed the battle-field to be sacred enough to 'fight for honour and truth', Uruvi resented war for the wastage of uncountable innocent lives. In order to survive the madness infesting their lives, Uruvi tried to comfort herself by treating the maimed. Healing the wounds of the wounded warriors was therapeutic but also created other wounds in the process. She faced criticism from many and Shona was harshest of all. He accused Uruvi once again of being an outsider as she neither befitted a Kshatriya Princess nor a Warrior's wife. She was questioned of her allegiance, support and duties towards Karna. This was yet another test for Uruvi for being the wife of a great warrior. She nursing the warriors injured by or because of her husband did not comply with the respect, aura, and abilities of her husband. It rather inspired duality, suspicion and sneer in the minds of the subjects. Her actions once again defied social norm and expectations. She was thus held answerable to the blind associate of Karna.

The eighteen day war in Kurushetra left everyone bereaved and mourning. Every family had paid the price of war but most by the Kuru dynasty who lost hundred sons in one war. Karna's sacrifice ultimately transformed the characters who were all accountable for his death. His mother, Kunti, finally publicly acknowledges him as her son, the Pandavas were doomed to live in repentance for their misdemeanor and treacherous murder of their elder brother. Before his death, Duryodhana too was transformed by the generosity and love of Karna, who fought against his own



people for his sake. If not in life, at least in death Karna enjoyed the respect due of a warrior. The death of Karna and his sons devastated Vrushali who soon lost her sanity. Uruvi retaining her allegiance to her marital household, decided to stay with Vrushali and Karna's parents and look after them. She also devoted herself in caring for the helpless and suffering. She proclaimed: "My place is here- with Radha, with Vrushali, and with the sick and the maimed" (Kane 301). Uruvi's unconditional surrender to Karna and to his peripheral identity did not end with his departure. She continued to support and heal the physical and mental bruises of her people. Uruvi's presence served to be a burning reminder for Kunti and her sons about the injustice and crime they have committed. With respect to Karna's sense of self-dignity, Uruvi rejected the offer of Krishna, Kunti and the Pandavas to accompany them. However, remembering Karna's unfulfilled desire, she reluctantly approved of Arjuna's request for training her son Vrishaketu along with Lord Krishna. She thus carried forward the dreams and desires of Karna even after his death. After the death of her remaining family members, Uruvi retired to her childhood home. The novel concludes beautifully with the characters' retreat to motherhood and childhood, where kindles all attachment, education, reformation and reconstruction.

Since time immemorial, the privileged have adopted on their own the responsibility of commenting, analyzing and determining the needs, difficulties and crisis in the lives of the unprivileged. However, these discourses from the center have often failed to truly interpret the situation of the periphery and do justice to them because of their detachment from the actual lived experiences. The fear of compromising one's privileges and desire to keep the basic social framework intact also affect the mainstream discourses to a great extent. Kane makes use of the trope of inter-class love and marriage in the highly stratified ancient society to gauge the characters closely by joining in their experiences. With the interpolation of the active character, Uruvi, the plight of the wives of the great warriors in the epic is intensified through contrast. The feminist within Uruvi questions society within the text itself rather than from outside. This technique not only unsettles the calm composure and negligent attitude of society but also reveal the flaws and hypocrisies embedded within it. The wives of Karna were far more marginalized than Karna himself since they were bereft of both class and gender influence. Karna, though beaten by society, still enjoyed rights over his family. His wives were marginalized both within and outside the



family. As long as society continues to discriminate and grade human beings, center and periphery would remain an inescapable reality. History has witnessed discontentment and revolution from below time and again whenever the downtrodden became zealous enough to voice their plight and recover their situations. Karna's life long war with his marginality ultimately translated into the actual war of Kurukshetra. The marginal women characters, Uruvi, Vrushali too fought their individual wars with themselves as well as with society. Vrushali's silent suffering turned her into an insane. She reacted to society's pre-occupation with gender and class disparity, honour and pride through her escape in death. Uruvi, her folly, decided to fight with the perpetrators of social ills in society. Her indomitable will, empathy for the battered individuals, support and resistance to social injustices sustained the revolution initiated by Karna. She actually took the rebellion to a much deeper level, to the battleground of conscience and inner precincts of home. Her retreat to her childhood and sharing of her motherhood with the royal queen Draupadi, indicated her treating of social wounds and creating it anew.

## Notes

- (1) Here I have referred to Roland Barthes's concept of 'death of author' in his essay 'The Death of the Author', published in 1968.
- (2) Aryabharta was the ancient name of the land now called India. It obtained its name from the Aryans who ruled the land.

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## **Savage Harvest: Stories of Cruelty, Courage and Compassion**

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**Abstract** Mohinder Singh Sarna's *Savage Harvest: Stories of partition* is a collection of thirty short stories. These stories are replete with instances of violence that marked the partition of India into India and Pakistan in 1947. Partition of India is said to be the bloodiest incident in the history of the sub-continent in which more than twelve million people were affected in some way or the other. There are also many instances of courage and compassion that reaffirm one's faith in humanity. The researcher has tried to put together all those instances of cruelty, courage and compassion—the multiple hues of human personality.

**Key words:** Sick, divergent, butchered, smoldering, notorious, savagery.

Mohinder Singh Sarna's *Savage Harvest: Stories of Partition* is a collection of thirty short stories with the 1947 partition of India as the backdrop. A Punjabi writer of repute, Sarna, is the winner of the prestigious Sahitya Akademi award. The present collection is a translation of his stories by his diplomat son, Navtej Sarna.

The 1947 partition of India is said to be the bloodiest incident in the history of the subcontinent. More than twelve million people had to be displaced, with more than half of the population being butchered and subjected to savagery while crossing the borders. Arson, loots, murders, rapes became the order of the day. Sarna himself was an eyewitness to such senseless brutality and barbarism as he was holed up in his house in Rawalpindi along with his father and younger brother. Later, he escaped to Delhi before finally settling in Amritsar. He witnessed the "same killing and brutality on this side of the border; the misery of the refugee caravans going in both directions, the senseless vengeful violence" (Sarna, M.S. xii). The stories are expressions of cruelty, courage and compassion—the divergent hues of human personality that were in display during such a trying situation such as partition that affected the lives of so many people at the same



time. “*Savage Harvest: Stories of Partition* tells the stories of riots and rapes, plunder and pillage, arson and killings. These acts of violence were to permanently fracture society, leave a deep imprint on arts and culture in the decades to come, and most importantly wreck the psyche of the people far beyond the geographical confines of the holocaust” (Review *The Hindustan Times*).

The very first story titled “Savage Harvest” sets the tone straightaway. Dina, the protagonist of the story, was the village blacksmith. Since he didn’t have much work to do in the village, he spent much of his time helping out the peasants. During sowing and harvesting, his “blood would tingle and strange freedom would enliven his bones” (Sarna 2). A mere look at the crops standing in the fields; the sugarcane swaying in the breeze, would fill his body with a strange sensation. “Sickles, harvests, the sugarcane swaying gently in the moonlight, the call of the golden earth and the lilt in the songs born of this earth...” (2) enchanted him greatly. He would instantaneously forget the hellish times in which he had to live. For the last twenty days he had only moulded metal into axes and spears. “The season of sickles and scrapes had passed; this was the time of axes and spears. And it had been a strange harvest. Instead of wheat, those who had planted it had been chopped up (2). Pakistan had already been created and it was now his responsibility to arm the warriors of the new born country. It was as if creation of Pakistan was a *yagna* and killing of Hindus and Sikhs was the *ahuti*. “And this jihad would succeed only if his furnace kept raging and spitting out fierce instruments of death.” (3)

Dina had to work overtime as his son Bashir wanted fifty axes for him and his group, otherwise he would tear him to pieces. Dina tried to console him thinking that he only made axes but he didn’t kill people with those. But his wife’s statement removed this myopia that affected him. She said, “The killer kills one or two or at most a handful of people. Each axe made by your hands kills dozens.” (5) Dina feels guilty at his contribution to the mindless massacre. He wonders:

Would anybody eat the sugarcane that had been sprayed with blood? Or wear cotton which had been irrigated by blood? What kind of wheat would grow in this blood drenched soil? And what kind of a harvest would it be after this bloody season? The shower of blood that has reddened everything had been caused by the axes he had fashioned. (9-10)



Dina's conscience was shaken. He wanted to absolve himself of the sins by throwing the instruments of death into a well, before his notorious son and his gang could lay their hands on them. Like a man possessed by evil spirits, he runs towards his house but is greeted by the corpse of the innocent old wife of the Brahmin of the thakurdwar. The old woman's wrinkled forehead bore a long gash from an axe.

The same brutality and barbarism had been unleashed in another village named Laddewala Varaich. The village had turned into a cremation ground. Its headman Khuda Bakhsh Varaich moved through the neighbouring Muslim villages, pleading and beseeching the villagers not to perpetrate any violence but in vain. "The Quazis of Qazi da kot, the Maans of Maani, the Gujjars of Quila Mian Singh, the Dogras of Kotli, the Gondals of Gondlanwal ...they had all called him an enemy of Pakistan and a murderer of believers." (Sarna "A Village Called Laddewala Varaich" 24) He was accused of supporting the infidels, i.e., the Khatris of Amritsar who had been "chewing up Muslims like bits of sugar cane" (24) and raping their sisters and daughters in the bazzars. Helpless, he begged the villagers to leave the village before Thursday evening, when the Baths, Chimnis, Maans, Gondals and Dogras were all going to attack the village together. He had even helped the villagers "tie up their bundles, dismantle their cots and pack them, and stitch up sacks full of kitchen utensils." All his efforts to find a safe passage for the villagers came to a naught as one of his own people informed the attackers before the villagers could depart. The entire village was burnt to ashes by the attackers.

...happy homes had been burnt to ashes. Where painted cots, spinning wheels and carved stools were still smoldering; where half-burnt human bodies lay rotting; where in the corners of houses and in ditches within lanes lay pathetic piles of old bones; and where, in the doorway of the thakurdwar, a handsome young man lay on his side, his intestines pulled out by some sharp, hooked weapon. (25-26)

Another story titled "Jathedar Mukund Singh" is replete with incidents of violence that marked the division of the country. The Jathedar and his *jatha* of Sikh hooligans had put several hundred Muslim refugees on a train- "the train that did not go to the Pakistan of Muhammad Ali Jinnah; its destination was the capital city of the Angel of Death" (Sarna, "Jathedar Mukund Singh"



41). However, Mukund Singh cannot be held entirely responsible for what he had carried out. His desire to avenge the slaughter of eighteen members of his family in Narhali village in west Punjab in March 1947. The young and the old had been brutally massacred and women had to jump into the wells to protect their honour. The sikhs were made victims because it was conceived that the “sikhs had snatched away a huge swathe of Jinnah’s Pakistan. In Jinnah’s dream, pakistan would have reached the banks of the Jamuna river. But the sikhs had struck aside the hand he had extended in friendship, preventing Pakistan from stretching across the Ravi and thereby saving half of Punjab from going to Pakistan” (42).

The people of Theekri Majra packed their belongings, loaded them into carts, and waiting for a caravan to pass close to the village the next afternoon when Mukund Singh’s gang charged into the village, looted their belongings, dragged their animals away and locked up the villagers in the school building.

The broad daylight murders took place even in the presence of the Army, which in some cases, remained a mute spectator. The narrator narrates one such incident where he was allowed to travel with an army convoy which was deployed to rescue the Hindus and Sikhs from the newly formed Pakistan. Suddenly, the convoy came to a halt somewhere between Ludhiana and Jalandhar. The narrator saw great commotion in the nearby fields. Some men, with staves and swords in their hands, were searching for a Muslim who had disappeared amidst the corn. After a frantic search, the poor looking Muslim was found and brought out. He was frozen with fear and was shivering. He begged at the feet of his tormentors to let go of him in the name of their Guru. At this instant, a companion of the narrator travelling with the army convoy “jumped out of the truck, pulled the sword out of the other man’s hand, and cut the poor Muslim to pieces” (Sarna, “The Butcher” 93). He justified his act by saying that the previous March “these people had killed eight of [his] family members” (93).

Sarna’s story “Sikhism” is about a village named Mughal Chak where the rich Sikh landlords coexisted with the Muslim landless labourers. When Pakistan was formed, the Muslims assured their masters to protect them at the cost of their lives. The Sikh landlords decided to continue staying in the village believing that such violence was quite normal when rulers changed.



They also believed that with a legitimate ruler in place, things would settle down quickly. Besides, they had little faith that their passage to India would go unharmed. The killings at Sheikhpura, the looting and burning incidents at Lahore, the attacks on caravans of refugees at both sides of the borders, and massacres of trainloads of refugees made them decide in favour of staying put in their village and wait and watch. However, the situation worsened as thousands of Muslim refugees, ravaged and looted, arrived from the other side of the border and settled in villages around Mughal Chhak. The Sikh landlords decided to go to the Gujranwala Refugee Camp before the Muslims around them, seething for revenge, decided to settle scores and pounced on them. While they were slithering away under the cover of darkness, they came face to face with the Muslim attackers. The savage attackers demanded ornaments, money and guns with bullets to be handed over to them. In turn, they assured a violence-free passage. However, the moment they handed over the guns and bullets, they were sprayed with bullets. “More than half of the members of the caravan fell right there... The bullets kept chasing those of us who tried to run” (Sarna, “Sikhism” 122). Some of the members of the caravan reached the refugee camp defying death. When they were being taken from the refugee camp to Amritsar, they witnessed heart-rending and gory sights. On both sides of the roads were lying hundreds of bodies of men, women, children and old people. “These unclaimed bodies were swollen...and had been rotting...the entire two furlong long caravan of Muslim refugees had been massacred” (123).

Such tales of barbarism, cruelty, ruthlessness abound in the stories of Sarna. However, such tales are interspersed with tales of courage and compassion that reaffirm our faith in humanity. Such episodes may be few and far between but nevertheless, they occur as a balm to the aching soul. Regarding these tells of hope, Sarna tells something like this:

I didn't lose faith even when faced by the barbarity of partition. My partition stories pass knee deep through the dark quicksand of blood and crushed bone, but they keep their head on which they carry their bundle of hope, clearly above the quicksand. This hope is kept intact even in the whirlwinds of barbarity and brutality. (Introduction xiii)



Once Khuda Bakhsh Varaich, the old choudhury of the village Laddewala Varaich finds out that the village has been ravaged and most of its inhabitants have been butchered, he reaches the house of Chanda Singh Jat's widow and daughter Jagiro. He advises the mother-daughter duo to pack up and leave the place before the ravagers returned slithering and hissing. He himself volunteers to lead them to a Sikh village under the cover of darkness. He knows pretty well that his own life is in grave danger and that the riff-raff of his own clan stare at him with murder in their eyes. He realises his helplessness in the current circumstances but does not give up easily. When a group of young men discovers them hiding in the sugar cane fields, Khuda Bakhsh tries to protect Nand Kaur and her daughter but gets killed in the process.

When death stares directly into the face, most people would prefer to escape first. Very few would jump into the claws of death giving a safe passage to others. Basant- the imbecile and fool in the story "Basant the Fool" was capable of such supreme sacrifice not only once but twice. Usually, when Basant took to the streets, young boys would torment him and even, throw stones at him. His face was deformed in paralysis. His lower lip hung low and saliva continuously dripped from it. Such a person whom everybody considered a fool did an act of supreme sacrifice in handing over a ticket to Kanta, the daughter of Pandit Kirpa Ram so that she could travel in the plane and join her fiancée and his parents in Delhi. This he did disregarding the wishes of his mother, who made a living by washing the dirty dishes of people. She had somehow managed the ticket to ensure safety of her half-crazy son. On another occasion, when Mehta Karam Chand had pain in kidney and someone needed to go to Hakim Abdul Aziz at the Imambara to get some medicine, Basant volunteered to go there himself. People were being stabbed ruthlessly in the streets those days but he gave it two hoots. For him welfare of others stood supreme. He didn't hesitate to sacrifice his life for the sake of that. It's true that such people like Basant don't die; they live forever in our memories.

In "Gondlanwala," Choudhury Karim Bakhsh's grandson Shabbir challenges his uncle Manzoor to a horse ride in his attempt to save the unmarried daughter of Surjan Shah Lamba from the clutches of the latter. Manzoor had abducted the girl and kept her confined to a house near Choudhury's well. Shabbir knew pretty well that Manzoor's horse Naazo was a frisky horse. Even





the best riders of the area shuddered at her name. Shabbir made Manzoor swear in the name of Holy Quran and Allah that he would give Shabbir anything that he asked for, if he returned in one piece after the horse ride. Despite the horse's repeated attempts to throw him off, Shabbir stuck to the horse's sides with all his might. He finally reached the spot where his uncle was standing and demanded that the Lamba girl should be given to him so that he could take her to her uncle, Jagir Singh in the Hafizabad camp. Despite Manzoor's disagreement, Shabbir "picked up the wavering, stumbling girl and put her on the mare, and then leapt on the mare himself, and spurred the horse towards Hafizabad" (Sarna, "Gondlanwala" 83).

Abnash in the story "The Parade" rushes towards the street in front of her house with a bed sheet and blanket to protect the honour of two Muslim girls who were being paraded naked. Surrounded by a howling mob, the two unfortunate girls tried to hide their nakedness with their hands but in vain. Abnash had thought that only Muslims were capable of scaling such heights of insanity and inhumanity but she was shattered to find that Hindus and Sikhs "were no laggards in committing atrocities" (Sarna, "The Parade" 179). The people justified their act by saying that they were only returning the favour to the Muslims who had dishonoured their sisters elsewhere. Abnash exhorted only those, whose sisters and mothers had been dishonoured by the Muslims to come forward and take revenge. "Her tortured soul knew that those whose own sisters and daughters had been dishonoured would never commit the same evil towards the women of someone else's family" (181).

The underlying social message of Sarna's stories is that hate and violence have no religion. They can scar the society and breed contempt and hatred but they can never be a permanent feature of a civilized society. Civilizations, since time immemorial, have been affected by such mindless violence, but like a phoenix, civilisation has raised its head again from its ashes. The world has worshipped human values. In this connection Namita Arora writes, "A feature of Sarna's stories is that while they may be grim, they are rarely without hope or relief. Most certain at least one character... who listens to that nagging voice of conscience, a voice often inspired by the teachings of his or her religious faith, and musters the courage to act on it." (Review, *The Sunday Guardian*)



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## **Patriarchy, Gender and Politics in Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary***

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**Abstract:** Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* is a land mark in the history of novel writing and its publication revolutionized both the style and the content of this genre hereafter. The publication of *Madame Bovary* as a magazine serial caused Flaubert to be tried for committing an outrage against public and religious morality. Emma Bovary's audacious behaviour sent shock waves to the nineteenth century French society. The andro-centric nature of the text becomes evident in the portrayal of Emma whose downfall is shown to be inevitable because she deviates from the already fixed path for women in general. Flaubert is technically disinterested in his style but a close reading from the feminist point of view exposes his politics in subjugating Emma to patriarchal norms.

**Key words:** Gender, Morality, Sex, Freedom, Politics.

Since its first appearance in 1857, Gustave Flaubert's ground breaking novel *Madame Bovary* has been held as the first modern novel by many literary stalwarts. The craft of fiction gained a new momentum in the hands of Flaubert when he declared that the only thing that matters is style and demonstrated it in this novel. Walter Pater aptly called Flaubert the martyr of style. The content of the novel is no less revolutionary which represents Emma unhappily married to a mediocre provincial doctor Charles Bovary. Emma, as depicted by Flaubert, revolts against the ordinariness of her life by pursuing voluptuous dreams of ecstasy and love. But her sensuous and sentimental desires lead her only to suffering, corruption and downfall. A feminist reading of the novel will expose many hidden facts like the patriarchal structure of discourse, subordination of women under the mask of culture, and politics of literature. The study of novel within this theoretical frame-work will bring out what is "latent in manifest."



The publication of *Madame Bovary* as a magazine serial caused Flaubert to be tried for committing an outrage against public and religious morality. Emma Bovary's audacious behaviour sent shock waves to the nineteenth century French society. Like Stendhal and Balzac, Flaubert offered no morality of compromise and adaptation to his female protagonist. Emma, till the tragic end of her life, does not feel any compunction for her prodigality and extra-marital affairs. Flaubert was no feminist and for him all progressive movements were forms of romantic illusion. But, unconsciously he was critical of the ways in which the lives of women were circumscribed by men. His distinction between sex and gender remains undercover. The novel, covertly, debates other issues like 'Eternal Feminine' and 'sexual politics' which were highlighted in the second half of the twentieth century by feminist thinkers like Simone de Beauvoir and Kate Millet.

(I)

Emma's situation is precarious in the nineteenth century France where males were effectively free to adulterate outside their homes and women faced severe punishment and imprisonment if they did so. Fathers and husbands were the guardians of women and the latter ought to be virtuous wives and mothers. Women had no positive role to play, and they were restricted to the confines of home and garden. The Napoleonic civil code had transformed marriage from an essentially religious sacrament to a legal contract in which authority was henceforth invested in the husband. Emma Bovary's conduct is at variance with these codes of the male-centered structure of society.

Emma shrugs off the reductive definitions of woman conceived by patriarchy. Emma, of course, is not a particularly self-conscious character and she does not conceptualize her dilemma in these terms. However, she does actively resist the position allotted to her and acts in such a way that unsettles the stable categories of wife and mother. The very first line- "It took her long time to find her sewing box" (Flaubert 14)- that introduces Emma to the reader shows her lack of interest in house keeping. Emma, being the only daughter of Monsieur Rouault is expected to run the farm but she finds it boring and burdensome. Flaubert provides Emma with such attributes as elegant look, refinement, and fine education that cause her to frustrate the expectations of her father and husband.

Emma does not betray a single feature of a farmer's daughter and it seems absolutely natural is she dislikes the country atmosphere that does not suit her. Flaubert describes Emma:

The hair over her temples was waved slightly, a refinement which the country doctor now noticed for the first time in his life. The tops of her cheeks were pink. She had a shell-rimmed prince-nez which she carried, like a man, tucked in between two buttons of her bodice. (15)

The above quoted passage foregrounds the fact that the demands of oppressive culture are likely to clash with the nature of Emma.

The patriarchal ideology demands a woman to be imprisoned in domestic life and assume the role of 'angel in the house'. Whatever her entity- be it a mother, a sister, a wife, or a daughter- she has to behave in a certain way defined by the masculinist culture and only after internalizing these pre-determined codes of conduct she will be called a good woman. Moreover, to be called an ideal woman she is required to do great sacrifices which may include compromising her self-respect, crushing her wishes and desires, abandoning her position and denial of self-expression. This is the position of women in a patriarchal society. The myth of 'Eternal Feminine' attempts to trap woman into an impossible ideal by denying her individuality and freedom as illustrated in *The Second Sex*: "Thus, as against the dispersed, contingent and multiple existences of actual women, mythical thought opposes the Eternal feminine unique and changeless" (De Beauvoir 283). The very title of the novel - *Madame Bovary*- is sufficient to demonstrate how the individual is alienated in the patriarchal and myth perpetuating society of nineteenth century France. The individuality of Emma vanishes in 'Madame Bovary'. The word 'Madame' signifies the married name bestowed upon all women who entered into the institution of marriage at the time. Emma's existential malice and obsession with fantasy is the product of her limited role in a male-centered society.

The andro-centric nature of the text becomes evident in the portrayal of Emma whose downfall is shown to be inevitable because she deviates from the already fixed path for women in general. The question - where is she?- raised by Helen Cixous in her excellent essay 'Sorties' becomes pertinent in case of Madame Bovary. Cixous is of the view that a society based on male-biased hierarchical opposition leaves a virginal slot for woman which is the place where men can



imprint their own wishes and desires. Emma is unwilling to accept this place passively. She feels depressed in the atmosphere created by her husband and his surroundings. Emma wants liberation from the monotonous and rotten life, which has been imposed upon her, and in doing so she challenges the established, authoritative structure of society, which curbs her self-realization. Observing the phallogocentric orientation of society Helen Cixous remarks:

If we consult literary history, it is the same story. It all comes back to man-to his torment, his to be at the origin back to father there is an intrinsic connection between the philosophical and the literary... and the phallogocentric. Philosophy is constructed on the premise of woman's abasement Subordination of the feminine to the masculine order which gives the appearance of being the condition for the machinery's functioning. (580)

Cixous concludes that "she does not exist." A woman exists only as a matter subjected to the desires of men. In the novel Emma has been presented merely as a sex-object in the world of Rodolphe and Leon.

## (II)

Discriminating between sex and gender Simone de Beauvoir argues that one's sex is determined by anatomy while gender is a social and cultural construct. Gender refers to socially constructed roles, activities, attributes and behaviour that a given society considers appropriate for men and women. Hence women are supposed to be acquiescent, timid, passive and emotional. Emma, usually, does not behave as women are respected to do. For instance, the day after her wedding it is told:

The next day, however, he seemed a different man. It was he who acted as though he had lost his virginity during the night, while the bride's behaviour revealed nothing whatever.(Flaubert 29)

Emma, like a conventional bride, is not shy of losing her virginity. On the contrary Charles behaves like a woman.

Furthermore, motherhood which is considered to be the most coveted and beautiful



experience in the life of a married woman turns out to be a disappointing affair for Emma. It is Charles who is excited to know that Emma is pregnant; she remains indifferent. Emma is extremely disgusted at the birth of a daughter as she was desperately expecting a son. She lacks the maternal instinct and leaves her daughter-Berthe- mostly in the care of her maid servant, and hardly gets time to feed her child. Sometimes Emma is cruel to Berthe to the extent of a step-mother. After her separation from Leon, in a fit of annoyance she shoves Berthe away and the little child sustains injury. What is defined as 'the heart of a mother' is absent in Emma.

Emma's sudden forcefulness and quickness of decision are considered to be the qualities of men created for action. In one of her clandestine meetings with Rodolphe in her house, Emma hears the sound of approaching footsteps in the lane and whispers to Rodolphe:

"Someone is coming", She said.

He blew out the candle.

"Do you have your pistols?"

"What for.?"

"Why ... to defend yourself, "Said Emma. (Flaubert 165)

Here, a conventional woman had tried to hide herself and let her lover do some act of bravery to defend himself. But Rodolphe is shocked to see the bravery of Emma who is not solely governed by her heart. In Emma one finds a mystical fusion of reason and passion typical of men.

Apart from that Emma had an unlimited urge to dominate and to seduce. Charles never dared to object to the way Emma spent money and strove to pursue a lavish life which their moderate income hardly allowed to do. Charles becomes extremely helpless when Emma is angry with him over his failure to cure the crippled leg of one of his patients named Hippolyte. She leaves him emotionally shattered when he is in desperate need of consolation. Further, she scolds Charles for being impatient on her coming home late and thereby snatches the permission to indulge in her escapades without restraint.

Similarly, Leon, the first lover of Emma in the second phase of their affair can help dancing to her tunes. He starts absenting himself from his office conspicuously under the influence of





Emma. She treats him as an infant. Leon is thunderstruck at her promiscuity as evident in the following passage:

He did less out of vanity than for the sole purpose of pleasing her. He never argued against her ideas; he accepted all her tastes; he was becoming her mistress more than she was his. His soul was carried away by her sweet words and kisses. Where had she learned that depravity, so profuse and so artfully concealed that it was almost intangible? (Flaubert 273)

Leon is as submissive before Emma as Charles. Hence, it is not difficult to perceive a conflict between Emma Bovary's conventional feminine role and increasingly powerful masculine urges which ultimately undermines her existence and leads her to suicide. Emma's sickness can be connected to her paradoxical existence figured out by Flaubert himself.

### (III)

On being asked, “who is Madame Bovary?”, Flaubert answered, “Madame Bovary c'est moi [is me]”. So, it is not unsafe to guess that Flaubert intentionally denied Emma her complete female existence. Flaubert's attitude is, therefore, ambivalent towards Emma. The manliness which has been bestowed upon her serves only to highlight and aggravate her moral and physical degradation. Her masculinity does not make her the heroine of the novel but rather a villainous character who is gradually being vampirized by some evil.

Emma, for instance, is shown to be an escapist who neglects her duties for romantic delusions which she engendered by reading too much of romantic fiction and fashion magazines. It makes her immoral and irreligious and further results in the deterioration of her marital life. In this way Emma is solely responsible for her destruction. This may be the overt intention of Flaubert but there are passages in the novel which present a different picture. Charles's daily routine is enough to dismay a newly married wife. For the whole day he would ride all over the countryside treating his patients and Emma was left alone with no one around to share her feelings. To counter this loneliness she indulged herself in reading novel and magazines. Charles often returned home late in the evening to a comforting atmosphere, a dining table exquisitely laid for him and a charming,



attractively dressed wife prepared to impart a soothing touch to his weary soul. But to Emma's disappointment, having had his dinner Charles would immediately sleep as depicted by Flaubert:

He began to read it after dinner, but the warmth of the room, combine with his digestion, always made him fall asleep within five minutes; and there he sat, with his chin in his hands and his hair falling down to the base of the lamp, like a mane. Emma would look at him and shrug her shoulder." (Flaubert 60)

Thus, Charles prevents Emma from finding out the meaning of "words "bliss", "passion" and "rapture" which had seemed so beautiful to her in books"(Flaubert 34). Nothing can be more tortuous for Emma who expected married life to be an exhilarating experience. In Emma's meditation on her marital dissatisfaction we catch our first real glimpse of her thoughts, and the stage is set for the escalating crisis of her life.

Emma's pregnancy brings another burden upon her soul. Emma's desire of having a son may be the consequence of her realization of the pettiness of a woman's existence in her society. She often thinks of freedom of her childhood days which she has lost gradually in becoming a wife from a virgin. Emma is convinced that men are absolutely free to extract all kinds of pleasure in life and, therefore, she wants a boy who will have the power to enjoy life which she lacks. Moreover, this conviction of Emma gets stronger with the passage of time. The experience she gathers from her relationships with Leon and Rodolphe breeds only frustration in her life.

Emma deeply laments what Kate Millet has pointed out in her *Sexual Politics* that women are always denied sexual freedom and biological control over their body. Emma feels powerfully attracted to the local clerk Leon but she is unable to give herself to love because of the restrictions of her marriage. After Leon's departure to Paris, Emma becomes more irritated and neurotic. Subsequently she yields to Rodolphe only to be seduced and cheated.

However, it is not hard to find evidence in the text to corroborate the point that Charles acts as a catalyst to push Emma into her liasion with Rodolphe. But Charles's mistake is overshadowed by Emma's whims. Charles, despite all his thoughtlessness, has been portrayed as an innocent victim of Emma's action. But, he is as much responsible in incurring sufferings and woes on his family as



Emma is. To substantiate this point it is significant to quote Kate Millet who maintains:

The large quantity of guilt attached to sexuality in patriarchy is overwhelmingly placed upon the female, who is, culturally speaking, held to be the culpable party in nearly any sexual liaison, whatever the extenuating circumstances. (54)

In the present case when Rodolphe initially offers to loan Emma a horse to ride, she declines the offer. But it is Charles who insists strongly on her that she accept. Not only this but he also requests Rodolphe to manage the time of trip according to the latter's convenience. This proves out to be a golden opportunity for a libertine like Rodolphe who plays his card right. Thus Charles becomes an accomplice in initiating Emma's infidelity. In addition to that the classic masculine fantasy dictates the imagination of men to put women always in a vulnerable situation as illustrated by Kate Millet in context of great novelists like Henry Miller, Norman Mailer, D.H. Lawrence and Jean Genet. Flaubert also presents Rodolphe, when seen from Emma's point of view, as handsome, potent and irresistible to an almost mystical degree. It is therefore no very great surprise to the reader that Emma falls into his hands. After this Emma keeps sinking into the quagmire of debauchery and prodigality which claims her life.

To conclude we find that Flaubert's objective and disinterested handling of the subject-matter, as it appears on the surface, fails to do justice to the female standpoint. It is believed that Flaubert allows his characters to develop their points of view unhampered. But the feminist reading of the novel resists this notion and demonstrates that Emma's point of view is manipulated by the author and her demonic projection is the product of a system that remains male-biased despite all claims of equality, objectivity and impartiality.

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## **Subverted Mimicry Of Myths As A Postcolonial Tool Of Narration In Sarah Joseph's *The Vigil***

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**Abstract:** In postcolonial theory, native mythological narration is also a tool for conveying the unique experiences of a subaltern self and for recording its sociological and psychological opinions. Myths are often preferred by great Indian writers to prove their affinity for their cultural roots. The literary myth based texts subvert the existent stereotypes of women as presented by the male writers. There is a sort of 'demythification' or removal of the already existing myth and in lieu of it, there is a 'remythification' that recurs there. Writers like Sarah Joseph consider myths to possess the space that they require to voice their resistance and she makes a study of the life of Tara and Angadan from *The Ramayana* in her work, *The Vigil*. Joseph mimics the myth of Raman and Sugrivan also from the epic, but she subverts the traditional myth, thereby espousing the novel postcolonial conception of subverted mimicry. Raman and Sugrivan who have been portrayed so far in the myths as ideal kings, are presented by Sarah Joseph as unjust leaders, who commit unethical deeds and heinous crimes against women and nature. There is a subversion lurking in this process, which is cited as subversive mimicry. Sarah Joseph employs this as a tool to represent her sense of repulsion and vengeance towards patriarchal brutality on women like Tara. Bringing to light the misinterpreted myths and by breaking the prevalent monocentric perceptions, Joseph reconstructs these myths with subversion, highlighting the accomplishments of the oppressed characters like Tara, Vali and Angadan.

**Key words:** Subversive mimicry, historical specificity, stereotypes, demythification,



remythification, monocentric perception.

Postcolonial theory originated in the mid-twentieth century and since then, the scope of postcolonial studies extended beyond the boundaries of colonial histories, third world cultures, immigration issues and minority constraints. Cultural assertion done by clinging to one's roots or yearning for one's roots, anti-colonial resistance to new, invasive cultures and preservation of one's national identity are all major themes of postcolonial development. Native mythological narration is also a tool for conveying the unique experiences of a subaltern self and for recording its sociological and psychological opinions. Myths are often preferred by great Indian writers like R.K.Narayan, Salman Rushdie, Raja Rao whose socio-realist works proved their affinity for their cultural roots and mythological discussions also signify the historical specificity of their nation.

Giving a re-reading of the extant mythology is a part of postcolonial impact in India. As Nayar relates:

Postcolonial cultures' reliance on myth and local legend is an effort at de-contamination, a process of freeing their cultures from colonialism's pervasive influence. The return to roots – while running the very real danger of fundamentalism, reactionary nativism, and chauvinism – is an attempt to gain a measure of self-affirmation that is not tainted by colonialism. (Nayar 234-235)

Patriarchy considers myths to be their personal domain and uses it as an instrument to confine women and show their restrictions on women. In Indian literature, the characters from *Ramayana* and *Mahabharatha* follow this and serve as moral lessons on how women ought to live in a patriarchal society. Biblical characters are also pointed out in many contexts to restrict the roles of women. Mythical men characters are set apart to prove their masculine strength and diplomatic skills. Men are always portrayed as the leaders in the power structure and in all levels of power – political, familial, social and cultural – and in all domains, woman is the ruled.

Mimicry refers to the imitation of the mythical and cultural background, of mythical heroes and heroines who are quoted objectively, not only to highlight their virtues or accomplishments, but also to set them as a unique model to display their follies and weaknesses. Hence, the postcolonial readers discern the significance of the events in the myths and learn from them, so that they do not end up in the same predicament as them. Women writers give special attention to mythical women



characters and many writers mimic the original mythological prototypes and concoct stories from them, with or without a few changes, and recreate them as their protagonists. Chitra Banerjee's novel *The Place of Illusions* is based on the story of Draupati and Gita Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Light* is based on the story of Gandhari. These literary myth based texts subvert the existent stereotypes of women as presented by the male epic writers. There is a sort of 'demythification' or removal of the already existing myth and in lieu of it, there is a 'remythification' that recurs there. There is a subversion lurking in this process, which is cited as subversive mimicry. Sarah Joseph employs this as a tool to represent her sense of repulsion and vengeance towards patriarchal brutality on women like Tara.

Julia Kristeva comments on the subversion of mythical texts to literature through the following words:

Authors do not create their texts from their own mind, but rather compile them from pre-existent texts . . . and the texts become a permutation of texts, an intertextuality in the space of a given text, where . . . several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another. (Kristeva 64)

The text may be from history which is an inevitable part of myths and literature, and history forms a bridge between abstractions and experience. These literary texts attempt to form stereotypes and at the same time, also challenge and subvert the stereotypes and reconstruct a new image. Sometimes the original forms of myths are questioned and sometimes, the myths are deconstructed and left bare to the understanding of readers.

Myths are closely related to history, but they are not historical events at all times. Culture is a fluid component in them and it is always on the move. Myth is also a generative component of culture and myth is a recorded part of culture. It is plural and co-textual. Myth is accompanied by the text which states whatever it narrates. The contexts of a myth are multiple and tradition bound. Nathanael O'Reilly sums up the nature and scope of myths as given below:

They include resistance, appropriation, race/ caste / class relations, language usage, indigeneity, immigration/ invasion, land rights and ownership, national identity, marginalization, mapping, naming, mimicry, the role of historical narratives, settler





guilt-feeling and denial, and anxieties regarding belonging. (Reilly 1)

Myth is a way of negotiating the present with the past and the activities of the present are related to those of the past and new dimensions are arrived at.

Mythological study in the present century is a single oft-repeated motif in many countries alike – to expose the suffering of women, the submerged voices of the weak and the victimized, the fables of valour and bravery of men and the teaching of values to posterity. They redefine human identity and create new interpretations. Deepika Bahri calls myths to be ‘cultural commodities’ and they seek to “re-conjugate aesthetics, restoring its capacity to emancipate the human senses” (Bahri 15).

The collective conscience of critics and postcolonial sensibility fixes mythical women characters like Sita and Draupati as prototypes. But they are more realized as victims of patriarchal domination. They are considered to be treated with dignity in the epic, but after a meticulous study they can be identified as abused and exploited women, and this is evident from a mythical study. Alan Swingewood asserts that myths seek “to eliminate the historical basis of institutions and processes and create within popular consciousness an acceptance of the inevitable facts of class inequality and power” (Swingewood 119).

Writers like Sarah Joseph consider myths to possess the space that they require to voice their resistance. The life of Tara is even more complicated than the other women in *Ramayana* and Sara Joseph makes a study of her in her work, *The Vigil*, which is dealt in detail in the forthcoming part of this paper. Women and nature form an archetypal binding with each other and Tara symbolises the veritable empathy of a woman for nature. Myths like the myth of Angadan in *The Vigil* reflect the orientation of man to his environment. The cultural inheritance of man from his physical and natural environment is the first influence on man, and the world of Vali, Sugrivan and their clan proves it. Their emotions, their loyalty and patriotism are all depicted through the myths in the novel and it shows how they shape the life of human beings as being a part of the society.

The title *The Vigil* symbolically pleads vigilance from the readers and appeals them to skip the bigoted perceptions of the *Ramayana*. Joseph directs her readers to read the novel from the perceptions of the subaltern people, the weak and the oppressed, whom she lionizes and ennobles to the acme. She, in this novel projects the characters of Vali, Tara and Angadan as subalterns because



their intrinsic character is mythologically misinterpreted and distorted and they have been subjugated and pulverized as victims by the oppressive power of Raman and Sugrivan. Therefore, Joseph mimics the myth of Raman and Sugrivan from *The Ramayana*, but she subverts the traditional myth, thereby espousing the novel postcolonial conception of subverted mimicry. Raman and Sugrivan who have been portrayed so far in the myths as ideal kings, are presented by Sarah Joseph as unjust leaders who commit unethical deeds and atrocious crimes against women and nature.

To illustrate, Joseph deconstructs the myth of Vali, who has been projected as a philanderer and a perfidious ruler throughout the epic, and she deliberately and emphatically sublimates him as a martyr of his clan. She introduces Vali as a valiant and invincible king of Kishkindam and his love for his people is benign and limitless. Likewise, his concern for nature and his native land is unconditional. He wraps the land with greeneries by cultivating enormous trees and plants which are brought from various places. As depicted by Joseph,

... A man who loved Kishkindam more than anything else... All these rare trees were planted and nurtured by Vali. He brought back seeds, saplings or cuttings from every place he visited and planted them in Kishkindam. Flowering trees, shrubs, creepers and medicinal plants. (TV 25)

His deep love for nature evinces his kindness for the flora, fauna and trees that he brought from different regions to Kishkindam, revealing his genuine nature and the congenial relationship that Vali maintained with other kings and rulers proves his efficient kingship. As the ruler of the country, he is said to strictly follow the traditions and customs of the land.

A ruler's virtue is assessed in two ways. The first one is based on his goodwill that he earns and accumulates from the common people while living and the second one is on the people's testimony about him after his death. When Vali is heinously killed by Raman and when the news of Vali's death spreads in Kishkindam, "...the people fell prey to a terrible sense of insecurity. Trees were burnt. The streets were filled with smoke. People ran helter-skelter, crying out loudly and picking up stones and sticks – whatever they could lay their hands on" (19). It seems that he has not only gained his people's support, but he has also won their heart, and it unambiguously exemplifies



Vali, as drawn by Sarah Joseph as a more morally and spiritually righteous man than Raman and Sugrivan.

In the *Ramayana*, the character Sita has been highly exalted and centralized as the most virtuous woman because of the sacrifices that she has done for her husband. This aggrandized myth has diminished the character of Tara, the wife of Vali, whose sacrifice for her husband and son, is even more virtuous and profound than Sita. As focused by Joseph, she has tolerated the gruesome deeds of Sugrivan, her oppressor, than Sita who suffered imprisonment and subjugation in the hands of Ravana.

Even after the death of Vali, Sugrivan, the sibling of Vali, tries to sexually exploit Tara, but she bravely accosts him as:

Tara struck him and pushed aside his hands, then lowered the cloth that covered her breast. 'Look at my beauty! Look! The marks made by Vali's nails. The bites that he presented. The holes made by Angadan's milk teeth. This earth is marked by the imprints of a father's and son's kisses. If you find any untouched space on my body, you are welcome to it.' (TV 57)

Though Tara is disarmed in front of Sugrivan, she daringly retaliates to him. It undoubtedly exposes her bravery and indomitable will, especially in taking decisions, rather than Sita who merely protects her virtues in a docile manner from Ravana, only with the help of Raman. Tara succumbs, but only for the sake of her son's life. She becomes a prey to Sugrivan's sexual perversion. It explicitly shows her true sense of self effacement and sacrifice, which stems from her boundless love for her son. Therefore, while comparing these two women's sacrifices, Tara who has come across a sea of difficulties overshadows Sita, who is safely caged in Ravana's fort. Though the widespread myth has trivialized the character of Tara, Joseph in her novel accentuates her to the maximum.

The mythology of *Ramayana* celebrates the fruitless deeds of the people in the forefront, who have been believed to be great and it callously ignores the astounding and noble endeavours of the subalterns. Therefore, challenging this aspect, Joseph furnishes more importance to the character of Angadan who is the innocent son of Vali, when compared to other characters in this novel. Angadan who is in the springtime of life is commanded to search for the wife of Raman, who



has killed his father Vali against all principles of dharma. Hence, being mentally tormented with an unquenchable thirst for revenge on Raman, and being compelled to lead his journey to rescue Sita, Angadan suffers a traumatic dilemma. But, even then he succeeds to perform some great adventures during the mission. At the end of the novel, when Angadan proceeds to kill Raman, Sita prevents him by telling that:

Angadan, Raman is sleeping. Killing a sleeping man is a sin. I know there is no remedy for the sin done to you. If you think taking my life would help, I am awake. Even the sob that comes out of the earth may at time lack compassion. Even the mother's womb may turn out to be bitter. The iron that he held in his hands proved useless. Angadan swung the sword and threw it away. He walked out and disappeared into the darkness. (TV 261-62)

By exemplifying and prioritizing the character of Angadan, Joseph mocks at the deeds of Raman by indicating that even "a beardless lad is better than him in observing the ethics of war". She also ridicules the 'valour' of Maruthi Ammavan and Lakshmanan for being an accomplice to Raman in his immoral deeds.

Joseph utterly distorts the mythologically constructed image of Raman and Vali. Raman justifies his killing of Vali as "You, Monkey! You coveted your brother's wife and made her your own. You have to die. That is the only punishment for you" (19). Joseph vehemently berates Raman for denoting Vali as an animal and when he himself has flouted the warfare ethics in making a hidden attack on Vali. Likewise, she charges Raman for helping Sugrivan, who proves to be a lecher by coveting his brother Vali's wife. Bringing to light the misinterpreted myths and by breaking the prevalent monocentric perceptions, Joseph reconstructs these myths with subversion, highlighting the accomplishments of the oppressed characters like Tara, Vali and Angadan.

The ethos of Indian sensibilities appears in all Indian texts and literary articulations of varied areas with the Indic origin. Since literature is a vital record and creative writing is often a social act, the well known myths of all places play a conspicuous role in the moulding of literature and a collective consciousness in the range of human understanding and intellect. The mythification and romanticization of literature is possible only with the help of a sound knowledge of myths in



one's culture, and this is ventured by Sarah Joseph. Subverted mimicry successfully upholds the hitherto forgotten aspects of the mythical narration of the renowned epics and tales, and projects out as a typical postcolonial experience.

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## **Monuments of Eternity Revisited: Exploring the Mood of Loss, Regret and Mourning in Select Poems of W. B. Yeats**

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**Abstract:** W. B. Yeats is unquestionably one of the most important modern poets in English literature. He is both a romantic and a modern poet, for the elements of these two schools of poetry exist in his poems. Irish legends and folklores are part and parcel of his early poetry. A romantic note of escapism is quite evident in these poems. His later poetry, however, shows a shift from romanticism to realism and modernism. Besides dealing with the beauty and bounty of nature, his poetry lays bare his personal joy, sorrow and despair. His grief at the loss of his youth and beauty is revealed in a number of his poems. His disappointment and pain, stemming from his failure to win the heart of his beloved Maud Gonne for ever, also permeate many a poem by Yeats. His poetry also mourns the loss of spirituality, aesthetic temperament, discipline, law, peace and happiness in the modern world devastated by violent wars. However, the present paper seeks to explore the mood of loss, regret and mourning in some important poems of W. B. Yeats. In other words, the paper will bring to the fore how such a mood reigns supreme in a number of his notable poems.

**Keywords:** Loss, regret, mourning, despair, nostalgia.

### **Introduction**

William Butler Yeats is, no doubt, a renowned modern poet in English literature. His poetry, however, shows a curious blend of both modernism and romanticism. Like his contemporaries, he was acutely aware of the spiritual emptiness and moral degradation of the modern age. His early poetry shows his efforts to escape from the sordid materialism of his age. His strong faith in magic and mysticism made him escape into the world of fairies through his poetry. It thus goes without saying that he borrowed his themes for his early poetry from the Irish legends and folklores. One may also point out that the influence of the Pre-Raphaelites is quite unmistakable in these poems.



Of the collections of his early poetry, mention may be made of *The Wanderings of Oisín* (1889), *Poems* (1895), *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899) and *The Shadowy Waters* (1900). However, his poetry gradually shifted from escapism to realism. The increasing realism can be seen in his later collections of poems like *The Green Helmet and Other Poems* (1910), *Responsibilities* (1914) and *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919). Interestingly enough, he reached the peak of his achievement through his collections *The Tower* (1928) and *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (1933). His last period of poetic creation gave birth to the Crazy Jane Poems. According to Edward Albert, Yeats is “one of the most difficult of the modern poets. His preoccupation with the attempt to formulate a philosophical system which could replace the scientific materialism of his age underlies most of his later verse” (Albert 485). Again, it is beyond doubt that Yeats started his poetic career under the influences of great poets like Rossetti, Spenser and Shelley. The aesthetic movement of the late nineteenth century also exerted a great deal of influence upon the poet. While London introduced Yeats to the younger poets of England, Dublin acquainted him with the Irish literary nationalism.

A mood of loss, regret and mourning reigns supreme in Yeats’ celebrated poem “The Wild Swans at Coole”. The poem presents the aged poet’s pangs springing from the loss of his youth, vigour and vitality. It foregrounds a sharp contrast between the poet, who has lost his youth and passions, and the wild swans at Coole, who have been able to defy the onslaughts of time. The poem opens with the autumnal beauty of nature. Then, the poet goes on to point out that nineteen years have passed since he first visited the Coolelake. On his first visit to the Coolelake, he found the swans young, passionate and untamed. At that time, he himself was full of youth, life and vivacity. But on his second visit to Coole, he finds out that time has robbed him of his youth, vigour and passions while the swans remain unaffected by the passage of time. In fact, they are as young and wild as they had been. This contrast fills the poet with a mood of loss and regret:

I have looked upon those brilliant creatures,

And now my heart is sore. (*The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* 107)

In sharp contrast to the poet’s old age and physical decay, the swans are paddling in the cold water in pairs, thus indicating that their power of love making remains intact. Wherever they go at their own sweet will, ‘passion’ or ‘conquest’ always attends upon them. Thus, it is crystal clear that the





sight of the ever-young swans serves to intensify the pangs of loss and regret in the poet by way of contrast. It is equally important to note that the mood of loss is also accentuated by the concluding stanza of the poem. The present poem ends with the poet's apprehension that the swans will fly away and build their nests somewhere else to delight other people's eyes. That he is going to lose the sight and company of the birds is clearly suggested in the closing lines. Hence, one has every reason to assert that the whole poem is dominated by a strong mood of loss, regret and mourning.

"Easter 1916" is unquestionably one of the finest poems by W. B. Yeats. The poet here pays homage to those revolutionaries who laid down their lives in the Easter Uprising of 1916 for the sake of the freedom of Ireland. It will not be wrong to point out that the present poem demonstrates Yeats' ambivalent attitude towards the Easter Rebellion that took place in 1916. The poem is replete with the pangs resulting from the loss of many lives in the rebellion. Yeats begins by recollecting the days which preceded the Easter Uprising. He lets us know that the Irishmen were living a simple and casual life before the rebellion. At the end of the day, they would come back home "with vivid faces". The poet would either nod his head or utter a few "polite meaningless words" to those common people. While exchanging some casual words with them, Yeats felt that he and his fellow countrymen were living in a land "where motley is worn". In other words, the English men looked upon the Irish people as mere clowns. But all of a sudden, a sea-change took place in the hearts of the Irishmen, as a result of which they rose in revolt against the British rulers. They even laid down their lives for the sake of their county. Thus "a terrible beauty is born" out of the self-sacrifice of the revolutionaries. The mood of loss and regret is quite unmistakable even in the opening stanza of the poem. The Easter uprising, no doubt, led to the loss of "vivid faces" and "polite meaningless words". The feeling of this loss can hardly escape the attention of an alert reader. In the second stanza of the poem, Yeats talks about some revolutionaries who sacrificed their lives for the freedom of the country. The poet laments that a woman lost her sweet voice as she continued to spend her nights in 'arguments'. Her voice gradually grew shrill and harsh as she kept motivating others and delivering lectures. Of course, the woman referred to here is Constance Markiewicz. Yeats goes on to talk about Patrick Pearse who used to run a school and also wrote some poems. The poet mourns the loss of MacDonagh who was both a poet and a critic. He is described as the "helper and friend" of Patrick Pearse. Moreover, Yeats pays a glowing tribute to



John MacBride, “a drunken, vainglorious lout”. He did wrong to Yeats by marrying the latter’s one-time beloved Maud Gonne. Thus, the second stanza is equally dominated by a strong mood of loss and regret. In the third stanza, Yeats mourns the loss of flux on account of the fixity of the revolutionaries’ purpose. Each and every object on earth was subjected to change and flux. But their hearts remained fixed on a single purpose. In the last stanza, the poet makes it abundantly clear that “Too long a sacrifice / Can make a stone of the heart”. The poet questions the necessity of their self-sacrifice, for he hopes that “England may keep faith”. However, the loss of some innocent lives is mourned time and again in the poem:

We know their dream; enough

To know they dreamed and are dead. (*The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats* 153)

Thus, a mood of loss, regret and mourning runs through the entire poem.

“Sailing to Byzantium” is another beautiful and notable poem by Yeats. It demonstrates the dichotomy between the sensual world of the young people and the eternal world of art. Here the poet laments that Ireland is no land for the old people, since it has been caught in the sensual music of love and love-making. Young lovers are found engrossed in the embrace of each other. The birds are enjoying their love-making in the trees. Different kinds of fish are also engaged in copulating. As a result, old people have no place in Ireland. Indeed, the country has lost its artistic temperament and spiritual concerns. All the young people are so engrossed in the sensual pleasures that they continue to neglect the “monuments of unaging intellect”. In the second stanza, Yeats goes to the extent of comparing an aged man to a scare-crow:

An aged man is but a paltry thing,

A tattered coat upon a stick, unless

Soul clasp its hands and sing and louder sing.

(*The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* 163)

The aged poet feels and believes that the soul of an old man must clasp its hands despite the decline in his ‘mortal dress’. But he laments that there is no singing school in his country where the soul can learn the art of singing aloud. Again, it is a pity that the existing singing schools are busy studying the “monuments of its own magnificence.” This is the reason why the poet has sailed the



seas and arrived at “the holy city of Byzantium.” In Byzantium, the poet addresses the sages who are “standing in God’s holy fire”. He prays to them to come down and teach his soul the right kind of songs. Moreover, he appeals to the sages to ‘consume’ his heart away so that it may be purged of the animal desires. He further implores them to gather him into “the artifice of eternity”. Actually, he wants to merge with the world of art. Yeats goes on to say that once he is “out of nature”, he will never take any bodily form. Rather, he will choose a form which can be made by the Grecian goldsmiths out of hammered gold and gold enamelling. He longs to be a golden bird which will be able to keep a drowsy emperor awake. Another possibility is that he will be transformed into a golden bird which will keep singing from a golden bough “to lords and ladies of Byzantium/ Of what is past, or passing, or to come”. Needless to say, the poem is steeped in heartrending pathos. The poem may well be considered to be a lament over Ireland’s loss of spiritual and artistic values and concerns. Thus, there is no denying the fact that the poem is strongly dominated by a mood of loss, regret and mourning.

“Among School Children” is another beautiful poem in which Yeats has expressed his pangs occasioned by the loss of his youth and beauty. At the same time, his grief at the loss of his one-time beloved Maud Gonne is quite evident here. One day he visited a school at the age of sixty and the school girls reminded him of his one-time beloved Maud Gonne. While walking through a long school room, he asked a number of questions and a “kind old nun” answered them one by one. The nun pointed out that the children were being taught different subjects and various skills “in the best modern way”. The aged poet noticed that the children were staring at him “in momentary wonder”. The sight of these school girls made him recall the school days of Maud Gonne. He recollected how she had once told him “of a hash reproof, or trivial event/ That changed some childish day to tragedy”. At that time, he sympathised with her in the best possible way. Now the aged poet started looking at the children one by one to find out if any of them resembled Maud Gonne in her school life. He finally discovered a girl who gradually seemed to transform into his one-time beloved before his mind’s eye. Again the poet’s regret at the loss of his youth and beauty is boldly expressed in the following lines:

And I though never of Ledaean kind

Had pretty plumage once – enough of that. (*The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats* 184)



The poet goes on to point out that if a mother could see her son in his old age, she would find it difficult to decide whether she would take the trouble to bring her child into the world. Now he comforts himself with the thought that each and everybody on earth is bound to fall victim to old age. Great philosophers like Plato, Aristotle and Pythagoras had much knowledge and wisdom. Despite that, they lost their youth and vigour, and finally grew old: “old clothes upon old sticks to scare a bird”. Thus, the poet seeks to drive home the point that old age is a common lot to all people. However, Yeats introduces another argument in the penultimate stanza. He points out that both nuns and mothers worship images. Both of them fall victim to disappointment despite the difference in the nature of their respective images. The last stanza deals with the dichotomy between the body and the soul. The poet uses the images of a chestnut tree and a dancer to accentuate the point that the body and the soul are inseparable from each other. The poem is thus concerned with a number of issues. The dominant mood is, however, that of loss and regret.

A mood of loss, disappointment and mourning reigns supreme in Yeats’ another important poem “Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen”. The poem not only depicts the sad state of affairs in Ireland but also exposes the horrors and pity of war. It also foregrounds the degeneration of human nature. Violence seems to be the chief focus of the poem. The poem begins with a lament for the loss of “many ingenious lovely things”. The mood of loss and regret is thus established at the very outset of the poem. Yeats suggests that some “rogues and rascals” still survive to plague the world. He now depicts the horrible picture of warfare and its aftermath:

Now days are dragon-ridden, the nightmare

Rides upon sleep: a drunken soldiery

Can leave the mother, murdered at her door,

To crawl in her own blood, and go scot-free. (*The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* 176)

Thus, it goes without saying that a sense of loss and disenchantment prevails in these lines. The poet cannot help lamenting the sorry state of affairs occasioned by the brutal warfare. Complete violence and chaos have gripped the country. Moreover, everybody has been subjected to violence, torture and exploitation. The present poem treats a number of issues and ends by summing up the difficult situation which has sprung from the terrible war. In the concluding part of the poem, Yeats



sheds ample light on the reign of violence in the country. For instance, the roads are being dominated by violence. One can also see the violence of horses. Having been exhausted, the horses “break and vanish”. In a word, “evil gathers head”. It appears that Herodias’ daughters, who were emblematic of cruelty and anarchy, have returned to the country. Hence, one may feel compelled to point out that the poem mourns the loss of peace, joy and happiness in Ireland as well as in the world owing to the hellish affair called war. The mood of loss, regret and mourning in the poem is, therefore, prominent to one and all.

Yeats’ “The Second Coming” is indubitably one of the best-known poems the world has ever produced. It brings to the fore the aftermath of the First World War and the loss of traditional values and morals in the post-war era. The poem may be seen as a lament over the loss of balance, values, rules and disciplines in the post-war world. Thus, it goes without saying that the poem is dominated by a mood of loss, regret and mourning. The first stanza gives a precise picture of the horrors, anarchy and lawlessness that reign supreme in the world after the First World War:

Things fall apart: the centre cannot hold;

Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world. (*The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* 158)

It is thus evident from these lines that the world is in a state of chaos and the civilisation is on the verge of destruction. Things have fallen apart and the centre cannot hold the surroundings. Absolute anarchy has emerged as the dominant force in the world. As a result, profuse bloodshed is taking place frequently and the “ceremony of innocence” is being drowned. The best people are not certain of themselves while the worst ones are “full of passionate intensity”. In this way, the poet mourns the loss of integrity, discipline, rules, innocence and peace. In the second and final stanza, the poet sees a vision in which the image of a beast with the body of a lion and head of a man comes out of ‘Spiritus Mundi’. The poet understands that a Second Coming is about to take place. This terrible beast or shape has a gaze which is as “blank and pitiless” as the sun. It is moving its thighs slowly while the shadows of desert birds fall upon it. At this moment, the vision comes to an end. Yeats, however, feels convinced that a Second Coming is round the corner. While the First Coming consisted of the arrival of Christ, the Second Coming will bring a ‘rough beast’ and all the destructive forces with it. There is no denying that fact that the poem is a lament over the loss of



balance, law, innocence and rules in the post-war world. Hence, a mood of loss, regret and mourning is quite unmistakable here.

### **Conclusion**

To sum up, one can point out that Yeats' poetry not only treats the Irish legend and folk tales but also centres round his personal feelings, emotions and thoughts. Different poems have dealt with the loss of different things. Some of his beautiful lyrics focus on his loss of youth and beauty. Some others have described his pangs stemming from the loss of his one-time beloved Maud Gonne. There are some other poems which lament the loss of spirituality and artistic sensibility in Ireland. The readers also come across a number of poems where Yeats has mourned the loss of peace, happiness and joy occasioned by violent wars. Some of his poems have depicted in unequivocal terms the loss of discipline, law, balance and even humanity. However, all these poems have one thing in common – that is, the mood of loss, regret and mourning. Despite the difference in the subject matter, these poems are strongly pervaded by the aforesaid mood.

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## Exploring Nuances of Self in Select Works of Existential Literature

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**Abstract:** The paper deals with exploring the various nuances of *Self* and its interpretation through various discourses. The paper analyses the concept of *self* through the lens of scientific, cultural and legal discourses concluding that the concept is dynamic in nature and has a real time character. *Self* in the paper has been scrutinized as both individual and collective entity drawing from prevalent conceptions and shaped by dominant discourses. To achieve the same, steady trend has been introduced where the discussion shifts from the essential realm to the existential to delineate the evolution of the concept. The paper takes into account select fictions of Georges Bataille, Mikhail Bulgakov, and Pierre Klossowski to explore the innovative models of *self* explored by them.

**Keywords:** Self, Existentialism, Dasein, Klossowski, Schopenhauer.

The concept of *self* is the most ambiguous and diffused of ideas that have occupied the intellectual pursuits of humanity since time immemorial. The complexity involved in formulating a unanimous definition of the *self* is highlighted by the manner in which diverse disciplines, namely socio-historical, scientific, legal, philosophical, psychological, or literary present their respective observations on the same based on varied factors. Therefore, *self* instead of representing a unified, individual entity manifests an amalgamation of multifarious human enterprises and bodies of knowledge constituted in this regard. *Self* hence assumes a dynamic elusiveness empowering it for rendering itself in a diversity of forms based on the nature of discourses and their resultant interaction at the diachronic level. This does not however, imply that it can be studied as a causal outcome of the mutually interacting discourses but reinforces the practice of understanding *self* as the unifying, neutralising dimension and the source of all humanitarian outputs directed towards the production of knowledge. *Self*, hence in the most rudimentary terms can be understood on the lines





of time, the measurement of which is usually undertaken through several digital and analog chronometers. Despite the precision guaranteed by such devices, the accuracy of the time measured remains questionable perpetually, owing to various geographical and cultural premises mutually decided and accepted. These discrepancies in the measurement of precise time, however fails to deter the practice of measuring time and allowing it to dictate the general functions of individuals. Similar is the case of *self* where various modes of discursive practices in spite of producing myriad interconnected, often uncertain conclusions, have been unsuccessful in suppressing the desire to explore, understand, and interpret the intricacies of *self*.

Scientific and legal discourses on *self* are highly mechanized bodies of knowledge with stress majorly laid on the anatomical reality of human existence. Scientific studies and legal structures equate *self* with body of the individual consequently negating the subjective existence of the thinking *self*. The scientific discourses can be problematised for the absence of a consolidated methodology and for their operation, founded on bifurcation of human body into life sustaining systems the efficacy of which is marked by several characteristics such as pulse, heartbeats, breathing patterns, locomotion, and so on. Distinguished by other social discourses and based on a concrete set of written mandates, legal discourses target the human body for the infliction of corrective, punitive measures of discipline and punishment. The *self* considered synonymous with anatomical fabric of the convicted human can be observed in the corporal punishment judicially awarded to the convict. This in extension can also involve the suspension of human rights and an enforcement of highly routine, meaningless existence under extreme surveillance as a means of depriving the *self* from avenues for effective realisation.

Owing to its political alignments, the above interpretations of *self* is seemingly problematic, exponentially accentuated by the nature of the methodologies adopted in the determination of the distinct attributes of *self*. Operating largely on regressive differential and chronological models, the socio-historically constructed *self* is largely an outcome of exchanges involving teleological progression of select events. Holding time to be the cardinal factor socio-historical *self* is a collective entity as opposed to individual. Striving to engender a grand narrative of the achievements of a class through an era, this *self* is materialised through the subsuming of several



unacknowledged little narratives of individual contributions and experiences. Thus, the *self* as realized through means stated above, functions as propaganda machinery endeavouring to embrace and further preferred narratives conforming to the hegemonic agenda of the concerned class. Socio-historical *self* claiming to be instituted on facts alone reflects extreme disregard for humanitarian attributes and accounts of personal experience, on grounds of objectivity. This method thriving on the politics of misappropriations and representations governed by vested interests, stifles individual subaltern voices thereby denying selfhood to the otherwise unprivileged sections which may have contributed constructively in the realization of the collective *self* of the class. Depicting the voice of few against numerous undocumented silences, the collective nature of socio-historical *self* is beguiling and dehumanizing in nature which can be observed in the demigod portrayals of a select personages on one hand, and a sheer rejection of an array of individuals on the other. Construction of socio-historical narratives of *self* are limited with little space designated for individuals to perform as speaking subjects. The purpose of the *self* lies in the generation of consent favourable for the perpetuation of the hegemony under which the aforesaid *self* is manufactured and disseminated for general assimilation. Another aspect of such delusionary methodology of *self* and the consequent hegemony is the capacity to initiate incessant classifications which effectively imbibe in the layers of the grand narrative, any effort undertaken by the subaltern sections to break away from the collective, unitary *self* by introducing themselves as speaking subjects. The technique of assimilation, being subtle, leads to an unconscious normalization of errant factions into the permissible ranges of dissent, eventually generating a consensual agreement to the propagation of the falsehood of presumed concept of *self*. Hence, this idea of *self*, nourished by an overt agenda of aggrandizement of the hegemonic class, curtailing asymbiotic variants cannot be deemed empowering for the units comprising it and thus, should be renounced as an instrument of mass deception.

As regressive and incarcerating the above interpretations may seem an equal amount of autonomy is provided by the philosophical inquiry of *self* that in its all accommodating nature includes all those factors, in entirety, which have either been held constant or evaded in the purview of the analysis above. From Immanuel Kant's metaphysics concerning with the interaction of the



referent *I* with *substance* leading to the formation of *self* to Albert Camus' concept of *absurd*, continental philosophy has evolved from experiential, essential to an existential frame in its investigation of the building blocks of *self*. In the words of G.W.F.Hegel as can be read in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, it becomes crucially important for the realization of *self*, that a victory on the overwhelming grasp of *other* is established and the process is reiterated incessantly for the continued expression of the same in concrete terms. A failure to persevere would lead to the annihilation of *self* which need not necessarily correspond to the clinical death of the individual in question. *Other* being comprised of multitudinous repressive institutional components and sensory experiences pervades both internal and external realms of the *self*. Thus, *self* can be read not as an eventual outcome of an arbitrary struggle but a continuous dynamic conflict for securing a space in an otherwise chaotic gulf intervening physical birth and death. Following this it can be assumed that *self* instead of being a unified, unalterable truth becomes a loosely held conglomerate of simultaneous manifestations of the concurrent conflicts between multiple disruptive forces and the thinking being. It can be concluded from the above propositions that the aspect generally upheld as *self* is a derivative of an absolute *Self*, a unified symbolic receptacle of original, objective psychic states, capable of infinite replications transcending temporal, socio-cultural, behavioral, or ethical deterrents. Therefore, *Self* attains a status of myth on the lines of the Real making all endeavours of the thinking subject a palimpsest of diverse interpretations of the *self*, which though experienced in completeness is seldom truthfully expressed owing to linguistic and behavioural constraints. In extension, it can also be maintained that schizophrenia other than being a corrective measure adopted by human brain to address traumatic formative episodes is a usual state of immediate human *self*. Considering the replicating properties of *Self*, it and its corollary *self* can be termed as material realities conditioned for a purpose, rather than illusory metaphysical constructs. On Bergsonian terms, in replicating itself on the physical realm, *Self* occupies space which is reinforced corresponding to the number of times *self* is invoked.

A disagreement, at this point can be proposed to the postulations of Arthur Schopenhauer as can be found in his work *The World as Representation and Will* where he examines the idea of clinical death and through concepts drawn from various theological and philosophical sources



establishes the futility of life as compared to the nobility conferred by death to *self*. He posits the idea of the presence of an Original source of all observable material forms on the terrestrial frame to which all forms must return after the completion of the cycle of life. In the same work he contends that the objective of the soul, divested of its physical frame, is reunion with the primordial protoplasm to ensure that the cycle of births and death is continued unhindered. A similar view on psychological lines has been submitted by Sigmund Freud in his work *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* where he asserts the presence of rudimentary protoplasm which through circumstantial stimulus metamorphosed into extremely complex organisms, in this case human. Prior to the inevitable response to external stimuli, following the instinctual codes the rudimentary protoplasm repeated its course of existence complacently deflecting any impulse to assume higher orders of life in their respective kingdoms, till such behaviour was viable no more. The surroundings and factors sustaining life altered their courses which had corresponding effects on the protoplasm, forcing it to grow and shed appendages in order to sustain the cycle of life. The changes were long drawn and took eons to attain the current form of human anatomy. This however, had little bearing on the traces of memory constituting the subconscious which strives to reach the primordial state of simplistic existence. This, according to Freud was the function of death drive which sought to restore the *self* to the state of non-existence or oneness with matter. It has to be unanimously accepted that theological doctrines of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity amongst many others do promote the theory of amalgamation of human *self* with that of a superior Being as the solitary, ideal aspiration for a thinking subject, thereby moulding the *self* into a vessel spiritually prepared to receive divine inspiration from an external, undeterminable source. In a situation as this, the lofty ideals associated to the conception of *free will* are rendered superfluous for the apparently independent *self*, capable of incredible feats is reduced to a mere receiver of hallucinatory inspiration from an indeterminable, practically non-existent chaotic mass. This is further problematised by the fact that such selfless abnegation of *self* results in a cessation of manifold constructive efforts that could have enriched knowledge and the experience of life in general. Following this, it can be assumed that the magnificence attached to the human *self* is misleading at best for the distinguishing element that demarcates lower life forms from the thinking subject are



capricious and inconsequential. Annulling the arguments of Schopenhauer hence, it can be said that the will-to-live defining the animalistic existence of lower animals is a more honourable trait than the will-to-die exhibited by the most sentient thinking *self* ever ordained. This reasoning, moving further, clearly entails the paradox involved in the societal perception of *self* where a productive desire to live and create is derided as sacrilege and the depraved craving for random psychological ecstasy is extolled to the pedestals of divine. Collectively considering the instances of Schopenhauer and Freud, it can be concluded that their suppositions fall short in addressing the critical niches integral to the understanding of the *self* and the repetition constituting the cycle of births and deaths. If it is believed for an instant that the aim of progression of *self* in the linear temporal framework is the ultimate merger with the benevolent primordial mass, then the motive governing the interjection in the primal order in the form of life is unexplored in their respective treatises.

Owing to such conceptual shortfalls, and several socio-economic transformations the essential notion of *self* was found inadequate in satiating the relentless struggle for understanding the same in the face of a new world order characterized by political intrigues, sanguinary wars, unprecedented ethnic cleansings, and economic recessions. It led to a questioning of the immensely auspicious values associated with the essence of *self* and a complete renunciation of the same heralding an age of existentialism and absurd. Existentialism as a discursive practice prevailed by prioritizing the principle of existence over essence in which *self* was upheld as the center of existence. Following this stand existentialism freed the thinking subject from the prohibitive subtle or explicit institutional directives and restored the status of *free will* as an attribute characterized by extreme freedom and equally crucial to the determination of *self*. Under such a scheme of thought the notions of a congenial supreme consciousness, public interest, and benefic world order are repudiated in the favour of personal choices and experimentation with *self* for the formation of consciousness. The existential *self* observes the world as an array of indifferent, irrational forces not necessarily acting in the best interest of the individual concerned. In a world order as thus, he is obliged to define the parameters of his own nature based on the enormous range of choices available to him which also makes him solely responsible for the outcomes of such choices. The



existential *self* permitting no exit discards the established notions of good vs. evil and in turn accepts the arbitrariness of the social structures which restrict the exploration of the possibilities of *self* by constantly striving to rise above them. It should not be understood that existential *self* in the process of self-recognition refutes the contemplation of death but musings on death extensively influence the choices undertaken by the existential *self* during his course of life on earth as has been effectively explored by Martin Heidegger in work *Being and Time*. Heidegger in terms of Hegel considers *self* as a cumulative entity torn between the individual thinking subject and the world outside, the conflict between which is crucial for shaping the individual experience of the *self* or Dasein. In this context, death is regarded as a closure of spatio-temporal reality of *self* beyond which lies a realm of non-existence or simply *nothingness*. However, existential or absurd theories preach individual action and the exercise of free will to combat the finality spelled by death, for *nothingness* and merger into it is regarded as the inevitable course in the evolution of *self*. In the discourses of existentialism and absurd death is constructed as the all neutralizing, apathetic *other* which has to be, on Hegelian terms incessantly thwarted for the optimum realization of *self*.

This intense ordeal of existential domain of nothingness, death, and the struggle to exist in an erratic, unmoved universe has fed the literary imagination effecting the production of works on the continent that have comprehensively explored the subject. Albert Camus' *The Plague* is an account of the Algerian city of Oran reeling under the pandemic of bubonic plague where Dr.Rieux, Jean Tarrou, and Joseph Grand choose humanitarianism and tending to victims of the disease over escaping with their lives. The existential concepts are subtly masked in the course of the novel where the struggle of the Dasein of Dr.Rieux against external institutions is brought to fore. Arbitrary institutional structures randomly constricting freedom and the complete realization of *self* is depicted in the portrayals of Father Paneloux and the Prefect who illustrate the administrative and the religious state apparatus respectively. In the novel, Raymond Rambert, epitomising a probable counter-discourse to existentialism, leaves no stone unturned in his attempts to escape and join his wife in Paris. His efforts however, are ineffectual vindicating that the universe as erstwhile perceived is not an embodiment of munificence, but is a prototype of impassiveness and callousness which throws individuals in the midst of the world to see them suffer and surrender to the throes of





existence.

Rising above all socio-cultural constructs and asserting freedom in the most unimpaired form imaginable, existential *self* discredits the notions of reality to indulge in a simulacrum of Real. This can be observed in Mikhail Bulgakov's *Master and the Margarita*, written on the lines of Fyodor Dostoyevsky where two disparate historical epochs are invoked to evaluate the concerns of freedom and the corresponding existence of *self*. The narrative moves unhindered between the contemporary literary society of Moscow and Jerusalem during the trial of Jesus by Pontius Pilate depicting the invalidity of linear time in tactlessly seeking to restrain the expanse of *self*. Dispensing with the socially accepted notions of good and evil, the author portrays Satan, in the form of Professor Woland, a discerning and a levelheaded character inspiring the protagonist Berlioz to experiment with *self*, in place of a blind adherence to the contemporary fashionable trends of thought. The novel adopts various innovative narrative techniques and characterization that appear as a sequence of troubled, uncohesive dreams defying a unified plot structure and thus disorienting the usual reading patterns. The goal of all the initiatives as can be found in the novel is to dilute the sacredness associated with historical figures and in extension with life. Additionally, the novel can be assumed to be driven by the spirit of inculcating the quest to discern true *self* from pretence, and necessity of making choices and facing the consequences of the same.

A more profound utilization of simulacra than the above text can be observed in Pierre Klossowski's *Diana at her Bath: The Women of Rome*. Following the above techniques the authors transfers the readers to a Roman setup which in essence is French. The essay consists of the antics of Diana, the Roman goddess of wilderness and fecundity, and Actaeon, a mortal hunter. The tale forms a part of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* where captivated by the former, Actaeon secretly watches the rituals of her bath. Being surprised by the intrusion, Diana accidentally changes him into an antelope by splashing the waters of the stream on him. The essay however, drifting from traditional lines, focuses on Klossowski's *tableaux vivant* where the author perilously constructs innovatively artistic, improbable, erotic situations devoid of emotional intensity. This aspect, too profane to explore in mainstream literature, does not serve to titillate the readers into fantasies but enables them to investigate the politics of eroticism within the accepted socio-cultural, legal mores.





Exploring the sacred and mythic erotic practices of the Roman women, the author establishes the manner in which the evolution of contemporary sexual behavior is regressive being determined by its associations with sacred religious practices. It is not to say that Klossowski as an author sought to commend licentiousness and unrestrained sexuality pervading the French social milieu but his goal consisted of exposing the techniques of religion which in place of liberating the *self* places insurmountable fetters and prefers certain forms of freedom at the cost of obliterating others. It has been stated earlier that the hegemonic setup dictating socio-religious practices upheld the desire for annihilation and self-inflicted pain sacred as compared to the desire to create new forms. Therefore, deviating from the popular norms of acceptable and the contrary, the author examines and presents on literary terms another aspect of the freedom of *self* which though crucial would perpetually be undermined.

The most unfamiliar approach in the exploration of erotic instincts has perhaps been adopted by Georges Bataille in his novellas *My Mother* and *Madam Edwarda*. Seeking to explore the divine through transgression Bataille demolishes the insubstantial rubric of ethical erotic conduct reducing it to a mere set of confutable statutory directives. The solitary desire dominating the narrative structure is an unrestrained wish to discover the pleasures of union with the all-embracing nothingness after death as the ultimate expression of *self*. Death for the author, as depicted in the novellas has more complex connotations than the clinical closure of life exhibited in the absence of instincts, or sensory experiences that structures the world around *self*, providing it a ground for action. Unlike Klossowski, Bataille does not provide graphical details of erotic encounters but engages in a distancing, thoroughly objective narrative discourse potent enough to disturb the foundations of all apparent truths and held sacred by the readers<sup>1</sup> (Mishima 4). The aforementioned works encapsulate Bataille's conception of *self* which is comprised of deliberate actions towards simultaneously seeking and staving off a power greater than the human conception. This power though capable of being emotionally realized elides the intellectual grasp therefore diffusing the

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<sup>1</sup> In the words of Yukio Mishima, " ... image of the mother overlaps with that of Edwarda, and with it a vision of defilement, of incest which violates the sanctity of the Sacred Mother. But, in these works, the Sacred Mother does not suffer passively as a victim of trespass; she herself spurs others on and forces them into an experience, filled with terror, repulsion and ecstasy which leads them to witness God." (4)



lines demarcating the sacred from the profane and anarchy from order aiming at a wholesome experience of *self* devoid of any fetters whatsoever.

From the above discussion it can be deduced that *self* is a macrocosm which encloses the supersturcural discursive practices regulating human action on the spatio-temporal frame. Other than being a tangible reality, it is a subject-in-process which defines the human person dynamically depending upon diverse situations of existence. The expression of *self* calls for immense courage to court non-existence, accept the sacred and profane alike renouncing the ethical concerns in seeking union with nothingness alone. A discerning individual must be able to distinguish between true *self* and its false manifestations for strong as the desire to achieve complete *self* may be, equally injurious is the tendency of institutions to standardize the construction of *self* which can be deceiving for many. The essence of *self* is probably non-existent for a presence of that would regulate and restrict certain actions thereby contradicting the agency of *free will*. The truth of *self*, if any, lies in the material existence, and in the efforts to surpass that state of causal relationships with the functions existing outside it. The realization and construction of *self* lies in dictating existence, and not being dictated by it for it is liberation in truest sense.

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## Myths about Online Learning

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**Abstract:** ‘Teach me and I forget, show me and I forget, involve me and I learn.’

The Chinese proverb sounds appropriate in case of online learning. The pedagogical paradigm shift in higher education to 24-hours learning environments, encompassing several delivery formats including online courses, blended or hybrid designed courses, and the traditional face-to-face lecture classes have increased student access and engagement into global, lifelong learning. Online teaching is an innovative approach and opens up new vistas to distance education. A large number of colleges and universities across the world are transitioning traditional face-to-face classes into fully online, blended, or web-facilitated courses. This is due to the need to maintain a competitive edge and make courses handy to an expanding and diverse student population. Online learning offers new, exciting opportunities to expand the learning environment for diverse student populations. In spite of all the advantages online education is still labeled with number of myths that discourage many learners from taking online courses over traditional face to face teaching and learning. This paper gives an understanding to some of the common predominant myths about online learning and methods to minimize them.

**Keywords:** Online learning, blended learning, hybrid learning.

### Introduction:

Online learning appears to be the greatest revolution in contemporary education that had a huge change in the system and opened great opportunities for everyone inquisitive to learn. Despite the fact that the traditional system of education has several advantages but there are issues like the expensive fee structure, infrastructure problem, and busy classrooms. Such issues prevent many to get education. It is understandable why online education is gaining popularity among organizations and students. Over the past decade, the number of online courses and programs have also grown



tremendously (Allen & Seaman, 2008; Sugar, Martindale, & Crawley, 2007; Wait & Lewis, 2003). A large number of students (about 3.94 million) were enrolled in at least one online course in the Fall semester of 2007 (Allen & Seaman, 2008). This is an increase of 12.9% over the previous year. As student enrollment and the number of online courses continue to rise, institutions will need faculty who are willing to address existing challenges and participate in developing and teaching online courses.

Online courses offers flexibility of location to the students had helped promoting this modality. Online education has grown tremendously but still in spite of most the institutes adapting the blended online learning teaching methods, there exist myths that hampers the total success of the methodology. DTL is now more than 40 years old Western Behavioral Sciences Institute offers the first online program in 1981. Nova southern east university began offering the first online doctoral program in 1985. In Latin America institutes like Anahuac University of Technology offers online programs for more than twenty years. Though the dimensions of DTL have greatly increased over the years but still the myths exist. Nevertheless, online education is still related to stereotypes. People often think that online students are not smart enough for a traditional college or university, they are lazy, and there is no authenticity of the degrees. Such myths discourage many people from taking online courses and they opt for the traditional educational system that consumes money, patience and time.

This paper gives an insight to some of the common prevailing myths about online learning and ways to minimize them.

1. F2F courses exhibit better quality than online courses: Despite the clear demonstration of the benefits of using technology in education, there continues to be a marked reluctance by academics to engage with online learning (Anderson, 2008). Heaton-Shrestha, May, and Burke (2009) found teachers to be much less positive than their students about the learning benefits of an online learning component. Start with smaller initiatives, and once the technology works, build on that success, and incorporate lessons learned. This reflection is created as there is a basic difference in the pedagogy of the two modalities, f2f teachings are synchronous interactions and contents are presented as lectures, pencil and paper assessments, and therefore, content can be planned session



by session. Online teaching involves asynchronous interaction, discussion forums, alternative assessments thus content must be planned out in advance of development. This myth can be minimized by working on the following steps

(A) Clear learning objectives: Articulating the learning objectives will help select and organize course content, and determine appropriate assessments and instructional strategies. It will also motivate learning appropriately and monitor the progress.

(B) Aligned assignment: Aligned assignment will keep the learners curiosity high and they would be able to find the relevance of the course. For this, we need to ensure that the teacher and learner effort is focused on objectives that are rewarded by assessment, and vital to the subject, so that achievement is maximized. Learners are in practice of procrastinate long assignments, such as projects, presentations, or papers, thus, it need to be duplicated throughout the course as check points to create session reminders.

(C) Ample material: Organize the content in logical units, or modules, in which each module is organized around a major topic and contains relevant objectives, material, and associated activities. In the introduction to the module, include information about how long the student should expect to spend working on the module.

(D) Technical tools: E-learning makes use of many technologies some of which have been developed specifically for it, whilst others conveniently complemented the learning process, for example computer games. Communication technologies are also widely used in e-learning. Starting with the use of email and instant messaging, message forums and social networks, we see a plethora of tools that any internet user would use in any case. In addition, some technologies work in a complementary manner to other software and enable new features. For example, software that adds a whiteboard on your video conferencing tool to allow you or your peers to make changes on other people's work for review, or screen sharing which allows someone to make a presentation while still making comments and giving input using the microphone. E-learning makes good use of database and CMS (Content Management System) technologies. These two work hand in hand to store your course content, test results and student records. The data is stored in the database and the CMS provides a user interface for you to add, update and delete data. A good LMS will often



provide reporting tools to generate and store progress reports. E-learning tools and technologies used to improve the quality of content are manifold. Software such as Flash and PowerPoint will help you make your presentations slick and interesting, with high quality, graphically rich content. There are word processing packages and HTML editors available these days that make formatting your text or web pages a breeze, removing a lot of the complexity. There are also many online services available that you can use to create interactive elements for your courses such as quizzes and games.

2. Plagiarism is common in online course: Another common myth is the notion that online students are more to cheat than f2f students. However, there is mounting evidence to suggest that this is not the case. Studies have shown that self-reported cheating rates equal in f2f and online. Certain forms of cheating are more likely for f2f students. The effects of this myth can be reduced with the support of the institute, structured curriculum and well-developed and well-planned interactive activities developed with faculty support. This myth can be minimized by working on the following steps

(A) A policy should be established on academic integrity that enunciates faculty and student responsibilities. Faculty should be instructed to mark the violated cases. Organization can prevent plagiarism by securing student logins and password to access online courses and related resources, discussions, assignments and assessments

(B) Awareness of academic integrity policy among students is required. Activities or the assignments that require innovative and promote critical thinking should be cooperated in the course. Use of different assessment strategies should be taken under consideration.

(C) Faculty should be provided access to internet so that any search engine could be used for a unique text string or phrase from the discussion or post. Moreover, faculty development program should be held on the regular intervals as to update them with the latest ways to check plagiarism and to use the setting on the LMS to reduce cheating.

Plagiarism can be reduced to an extent by taking the above measures but still it is the student has to decide to cheat in a course regardless of the modality revealing the notion of the increased cheating online is unfounded.





3. Online learning is a solitary and disconnected experience: Often it is presumed that online learning is a solitary experience. Students are left themselves to understand the course and proceed further. This myth could be eliminated by involving students in various activities that make use of online tools. Assessment results can be monitored, tracked, and used to ascertain that all requirements have been met. Also, facilitators or course managers should stay in contact with participants to ensure expectations are understood. The truth is that online learners have many tools to connect. Adobe connect, canvas, ePals, edX, facetime, schoology, Google Plus Hangouts, skype, udacity, youtube are various tools where they can connect during the course. Rightly it can said learning community occurs equally for face to face classes and online classes. It should not be assumed that all students have experience with online learning or using the necessary technology. Provide ample technical support for learners by including links to resources, making yourself available to students, and promoting collaborative peer problem solving on the discussion board. Items that appear to be optional generally will not be completed; therefore, assessment is one of the critical success factors to overcoming this challenge.

Faculty has to be present and be responsive to student needs and concerns (Savery, 2005). The instructor should engage in a balanced level of participation and communication—both publicly and privately; in such a way that the students know he or she is engaged and available. This includes modeling good participation by frequently contributing to discussions through responding to students' posts and asking further questions. The instructor is instrumental for creating a warm and inviting atmosphere that promotes an online sense of community (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008; Jiang & Ting, 2000).

4. Procrastination is agreeable: Generally, it is believed that procrastinate submission of assignments and activities is a common practice. Studies indicate that students who succeed in online courses are self-directed and independent learners who can take responsibility for completing assignments on time and meeting deadlines. Since there are no outside warnings or reminders, online students must have excellent time management skills and discipline to develop and adhere to schedules.

5. Online courses are easy credits: Online courses have the same rigor and expectations as face-to-face courses. They allow flexibility and convenience but online courses have definite time



frames, deadlines and due dates for accomplishing assigned reading, writing, participating in discussions and other activities. Online courses demand engagement and a high level of participation. Discussions require the exchange of ideas and provide opportunities for all students to contribute in an unthreatening environment. Students respond that the online environment helps them gain confidence in their ability to interact with others.

6. Online course devalue the role of instructor: The increased demand for online learning as well as more institutions of higher learning striving to provide diverse educational opportunities, online learning continues to grow as a viable means of providing increased access to a greater number of students ( Allen & Seaman, 2008; Saba, 2005) . As a result, at some point in their teaching career, university instructors may be asked to consider teaching their classes either partially or fully online (Clark-Ibanez & Scott, 2008). Becker and Jokivirta (2007) also found that academics worldwide reported low enthusiasm for using technology in learning. More recently, a large-scale study (over 4,500 teachers) by Allen et al. (2012) found that 65% of faculty was more afraid of teaching with technology than they were excited by the new modality. Prepare facilitators by immersing them in a online learning program so they fully understand the participant experience. A team teaching approach, using another facilitator or an online learning producer, can help to maintain energy and interest, and ensure all details are addressed. Facilitators also must understand that each individual component of blended learning needs to be treated as critical. Online faculty should be involved in course development. Instructor student interaction is highly important in online learning that evolve the role of instructor, but not diminish.

7. Online degrees are unauthentic: Research tells us that online education is as good and, often better than other instructional modes. Online programs must meet the same accreditation standards as their traditional on-campus counterparts. Nowadays employers consider the performance rather than considering the modality. Furthermore, the ability to work in cyber teams is quickly becoming a required work skill, and students with this experience may have an advantage.

## **Conclusion**

Every learning modality has its own strength and challenges. Online classes seem to be more successful by helping students to achieve their learning goals. The technical challenges are not



about getting technology to work on networks (though that is an important first step) rather, they are concerned with ensuring the success of the program by utilizing and supporting appropriate technologies. Digital technologies are changing higher education around the globe. Students expect the flexibility, personalization, and connectedness that online and blended courses offer. Also, employers want graduates who are proficient with technology and who can collaborate at a distance. The resources that supported me as an instructor transition into the online teaching and learning environment are not only restricted to learning of one particular course. It is an overall effort, which involves getting enrolled into courses that helped in learning new methodologies. Moreover, reading blogs, research available on internet also helped me a lot in understanding the online classroom environment. Besides, information can be gathered from the discussions and exchange of ideas with colleagues. That sense of community helps become a better teacher. Since the instructor don't have a physical presence in an online course, thus it becomes important to establish an instructor presence virtually using other methods like discussion tools, blogs, and chat groups embedding of videos that motivates learners to get engaged in the course. Most online classes require students to log-on several times a week. This ensures active participation and maximum learning. The nature of online learning requires more interaction to establish community and presence in the virtual environment of a course. In a recent study of undergraduate students at an American university enrolled in both traditional and online courses, students preferred online courses to the traditional classroom saying that they learned more in these classes, spent more time on these classes, and found these classes to be more difficult yet of higher quality than traditional classes (Hannay & Newvine, 2006).

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## **Rasa: A soul of Sanskrit Dramaturgy**

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**Abstract:** “What is Rasa?”- is a debatable question since the word “Rasa” emerged in the *Rig Veda*. Rasa has different twenty meanings. Rasa is a soul of Sanskrit Dramaturgy. Different scholars from Bhatt Lollata to Jagannatha have given different definitions of Rasa. There are eight main Rasas and the ninth Rasa was added later on to the list. Rasa has a lot many definitions, and still expecting more new definitions. The reason behind this is, Rasa arises from the interpretation of different elements, it is a feeling (Anubhava). Rasa does not exist in Rama, Nata (actor), Kavya or Nataka. It exists in our hearts. According to scholars, it exists in our hearts in the form of Sthayi Bhavas.

**Keywords:** Rasa, Vinhava, Anubhava, Satvik Bhava, Vyabhichari Bhava.

### **Introduction**

It is said for Rasa – “रस्यतेअस्वाद्यतेवाइतिरसः”. Rasa has come from dhatu – रसअस्वादने in the form of आस्वादन. On one hand, Rasa word delights us and fills our heart with lots of happiness; on the other hand it has been a subject of huge controversy in the poetics. The controversy is not regarding the supremacy of Rasa in the poetics. Scholars of all disciplines believe that Rasa is mandatory element of Kavya (Literature), and mostly of them consider Rasa as the chief element of Kavya (Literature). “What is Rasa?” is a matter of controversy. Scholars have shown their different views regarding this.

There are so many meanings of Rasa in Indian Sanskrit Literature as it is said in



रसोगन्धः रसेस्वादेतिक्तादौविषरागयोः।  
शृंगारादौद्रवेवीर्येदेहघात्वम्बुपारदे।  
रसातुशल्लकीपाठाजिह्वाधरणिकङ्गषु।

It has its roots in रस + अच्. Rasa means water and love and at the same time Rasa means alcohol and poison. Aapte Dictionary gives twenty meanings of Rasa. Let's look at some prominent meanings of Rasa.

Rasa is a kind of lifesaver according to Ayurveda. In Cookery, मधुराम्ललवणकटुकषायतिक्त (sweet, sorrow, salty, bitter, astringency, spicy) are six types of Rasa.

In Nature Science, the quintessence of the trees is also known as Rasa. Even Rasa is commonly used for beautiful things. Apart from this, the sensation of pleasure is also known as Rasa. In *Vaishashik Darshan*, Rasa has been considered as one of the 24 attributes. Thus, Rasa which has so many meanings has been interpreted in the Kavyas (Literature) as Shringar Rasa. At the same time the supreme poet, Vishvnatha has presented Rasa as “वाक्यंरसात्मकंकाव्यं”. (The sentence with Rasa is poetry.) Thus, Rasa word has been used in very large context. As Dr. Rajendra Krishna Agrawal writes in his research thesis - **“Rasa is the apex point of the Indian literature. Indian poetics, Rasa is the source of knowledge, which has gifted intellectual scholars in each and every century. Rasa is the light house of literature, which has enlightened the intellect of so many writers. Rasa is invisible; still it is an important element of DrashayaKavya. It is inexpressible, still creates ingenuity in the words.”**

Rasa and interpretation of Rasa have been the matter of controversy since the primitive period of time in the Indian Sanskrit literature. It is said for Rasa in

*TaitariyaUpnishada*– “रसोवैसःरसंहोवायंलब्ध्वानन्दीभवति”. (Being means of eminence pleasure. Rasa and soul are equal)In *Agnipurana*, Vyasa says –



“वाग्वैदग्धप्रधानेऽपिरसएवात्रजीवितम्” (Though the Kavya is full of beauty of language, but Rasa is the reason behind aliveness of Kavya) for Rasa. Karuna Rasa has been considered as the base of Ramayan, even the credit of writing this kind of epic goes to the following verse which is full of Karuna Rasa by Valmiki –

मानिषादप्रतिष्ठास्त्वमगमः शाश्वतीसमाः।

यत्क्रौञ्चमिथुनादेकमवधीः काममोहितम्॥

“Who is the main promoter of Rasa?” –is still a matter of controversy. It has been proven through different pieces of evidence that this was the matter of discussion even before the *Natyashastra* of Bharatmuni. It has been mentioned by Bharatmuni and Shardatanaya– अत्रानुवंश्यौशलोकोभवत्. At the same time Rajshekara has considered Nandikeshavara as the primitive promoter of Rasa. If we ignore the past, at present *Natyashastra* of Bharatmuni is the only available treatise which can be considered as the resource of Rasa.

### **Rasa in *Natyashastra*:**

The Acharya who has given us the definition of Rasa is Bharatmuni. Bharatmuni has focused on Rasa and Rasa theory in the sixth chapter of *Natyashastra*. The next chapter is based on the interpretation of Bhavas, in which he discusses Bhava, Vibhava, Anubhava, Vyabhichari Bhava, Satvik Bhava along with Sthayi Bhava in detail.

According to Bharat, Rasa and Bhava are interdependent. Rasa does not exist without Bhava and Bhava does not exist without Rasa. Rasa and Bhava together can raise Rasa in the abhinaya (acting) –

नभावहीनोऽस्तिरसोनभावोरसवर्जितः ।

परस्परंकृतासिद्धिस्तयोरभिनयेभवेत् ॥

Bharatmuni has given a solution to all doubts in the interpretation of Rasa. Bharatmuni has done this in the appropriate format of question – answer. For example, sage asks – “What is Rasa?” Bharatmuni replies – what can be tasted (Aasvadyate) is

Rasa – रसइतिकः पदार्थः? उच्यते आस्वाद्यत्वात्।



How to taste it? Bharatmuni replies – with the abhinaya which has to be full of bhavas. In short, the person can feel Sthayi Bhavas through the combination of Vibhava, Anubhava and Vyabhichari Bhava in the abhinaya –

**भावाभिनयसंबद्धस्थापिभावांस्तथाबुधाः ।**

**अस्वादयन्तिमनसातस्मान्नाट्यरसाः स्मृताः ॥**

This is known as Rasa in Natya.

Bharatmuni has accepted 8 Rasa and 8 Sthayibhavas in his *Natyashastra*. He has not given space to Shanta Rasa in Rasa and Nirved in SthayiBhavas.

Bharatmuni has considered Rasa as a thing which can be tasted in his *Natyashastra*. He has given Rasa Sutra (formula) – “विभावानुभावव्यभिचारिसंयोगात्रसनिष्पत्तिः” (The aesthetic relish is produced (rasanishpatti) by a combination of the determinants (vibhava), consequents (anubhava), and transitory states or fleeting emotions (vyabhicharibhava))

After Bharatmuni, the author of *Agnipurana* considered Rasa as the main element of the Kavya as we humans have ParamBraham as an important element of our body. After that, Bhamah and Dandi have presented Rasa in the form of Alankara. Vaman has presented Rasa in the form of Attributes (Guna). After that Anandvardhana had established Dhavani as the soul of the Kavya and according to him Rasa is vyangya (irony). By this, he started a new chapter in the process of growth of Rasa with which the new process of interpretation of Rasa had started. Bhattlollat, Shree Shankuk, Bhattnayak and Abhinavgupt padacharya have gained name and fame as the

commentators of Rasa. The author of *Kavyaprakash* has interpreted this topic deeply in his chapter on Rasa Interpretation. Any treatise regarding Bhattlollat is not available, but we have his interpretation of the AbhinavguptPadacharya's commentary named *AbhinavTeeka*. Let's have *Kvyaprakash* as our base and think of these four Acharyas before than Mammat.

**Views of Scholars on “Rasa”:**



### **Bhatt Lollata**

He has been considered as the UttpttivadiAacharya. He was in favor of Mimansa and Vedantiks. He has defined निष्पत्ति word of Bharatmuni as उत्पत्ति. He has given the process of combination (Sanyogat). According to that, Rasa comes to you through AlambanVibhav like Lalna (actress/ characters) and UddipanVibhav like Garden (appropriate situations and conditions for particular Rasa). Then it nurtured by Vyabhichari Bhavas like Nirveda. Primarily the Rasa exists in the characters like Rama and secondarily in the actor who acts in Preatiyaman (Seeming) Rasa.

According to Bhatt Lollat Rasa can exist in any form but cannot have any kind of relation with the society. This is the most unacceptable thing in the view of Bhatt Loallat. Rasa is having very esteemed kind of relation with the society. According to this Rasa exist in Nata (Actor) which is a matter to think upon.

### **Shree Shankuk**

According to Attorney Aacharya Shankuk, Rasa is permissible and Vibhavas are there to measure them. This view of Shankuk is based on the view of Bhatt Lollat. The difference is that Shankuk considers Rasa as permissible. The Sthhyayi Bhavas like Rati which are permanent in the characters like Rama, they are known as Rasa through Vibhava. Rasa mostly lies in the characters like Rama and also in the actor who acts through the Vasana.

Shree Shankuk's view is totally based on the view of Bhatt Lollat and if we look chronologically, he is one step ahead of Bhatt Lollat. Rasa exists in the society

but through his Anumitivad. Due to Anumitivad, the characters like Rama are propounded through Chitraturagnyaya. Through this, the Rasa could be felt.

### **Bhatt Nayaka**

After that, we have an interpretation of Rasa by Bhatt Nayak. He is known as (सांख्यमतानुयायी) devotional Aacharya. He did not believe in Dhavani but he had his belief in तात्पर्यवृत्तिः. Thus, he has his important view on Rasa representation. Thus,



definition and views of Shree Shankuk are really important in the structure of Rasa. According to Shree Shankuk the person understands Vakarth by Abhidha. Bhavas could be felt through Bhavakatvavyapar and Chinamaya Rasa could be relished by Bhojakatvavyapar.

According to Bhatta Nayaka, Rasa does not exist in Neutral like Rama, it can be felt by the society and at the same time, Nata or the actors can feel it. Rasa is not something to express. The expression is possible for the things which exist in the background. But cannot be felt before or after, so Rasa is not a thing to express but it is a thing to feel.

### **Abhinavgupt Padacharya**

He was a believer of Dhvani. His belief has been known as अभिव्यक्तिवाद. His main works are - commentary on *Natyashastra* named *Abhinavbharti* and *Dhvanyavlok* named *Alok*. Abhinavgupt has given an interpretation of Rasa just like Bhatta Nayaka which has its special place in Sanskrit Literature. According to Gupt Padacharya, Rasa is expressible. According to that in the society, Sthayi Bhavas like Rati gets attached with Vinayavanubhava and Vyabhichari Bhava, after that the process of साधारणीकरण takes place and gets expressed in the heart of social person like Rama. Abhinavgupt Padacharya does not believe into this. According to him, Rasa exist before and after and for all time and situation in the hearts of social person. The Sthayibhavas pass through the process of साधारणीकरण and through Vibhava it

comes to know as Rasa like Shringara.

In Sanskrit Literature, the scholars of Alankara have considered Rasa as self-enlightening and something very heavenly. According to the interpretation of Rasa which has been given by Mammat, the author of *Kavyaprakasha*, Sthayi Bhavas are passing through Vibhavas and come to know as Rasa –

**व्यक्तः सतैर्विभावाद्यैः स्थायीभावोरसः स्मृतः ।**

### **Special Interpretation of Rasa:**



Up till now, we have seen the interpretation of Rasa in very common form. If we go to the roots of the interpretation of Rasa, it was started from the *Natyashastra*. Aacharya Bharatmuni has presented the form of Rasa. According to him, there are 4 main Rasas and along with this, he has given them a special sequence. The 4 Rasas are – Shringar, Raudra, Veer, and Bibhatsa –

तेषामुत्पत्तिहेतवश्चत्वारोरसाः ।

शृंगारो, रौद्रोवीरोबीभत्सइति ॥

Thus, according to *Natyashastra*, these 4 Rasas are the dominating Rasas and other 4 Rasas have been generated from each of these 4 Rasas.

The other 4 Rasas have been produced from the following Rasas. Hasya from Shringar, Karuna from Raudra, Adbhut from Veer and Bhayanaka from Bibhatsa –

शृंगारद्धिभवेद्धास्योरौद्रोच्छक्रुणोरसः ।

वीराच्चैवद्भुतोत्पत्तिर्वीभत्साच्चभयानकः ॥

Abhinaya (Acting) does not exist in the *Natyashastra*, so Shant Rasa has no place in that.

Dr. Brajvallabh Mishra is a modern critic and wonderful thinker. He has written his work named – *Bharat AurUnkaNatyashastra (Bharat and his Natyashastra)*, in which he has given the reason behind the sequence of Rasas. His whole work is a

masterpiece but the portion of Rasa in his book is outstanding. His thoughts regarding Rasa are quite modern, relevant and scientific.

All religions – Hindu, Muslim, Christian, etc believe that the the world was established with a couple of a man and a woman. Their names in Hindu religious treatise are Manu and Satrupa, in Muslim religious treatise are Aadam and Hauva, in Christian religious treatise are Adam and Eve.

The Bhavas which have developed with the world are known as Sthayi Bhavas, Shringara and other Rasas are the results of them. When there were no objects in the world or the objects were there but they did not have the knowledge of those objects.



In this situation, when they had looked at each other, they were attracted towards each other because of the natural attraction of a man and a woman. At that time of attraction, the Rati Bhava had been aroused in their heart and as result of that Shriangara Rasa had been aroused. When they would have separated because of a problem at that time the Krodha had been aroused. Thus, Raudra Rasa has come on the second place. After that when they had tried to be free from the circumstances, the Utsah had been aroused. The Utsah would have turned into Veer Rasa. When they would have looked at or noticed the disastrous side of nature or fallen leaves and flowers, the bhava of Jugupsa would have aroused which is the base of Bibhatsa Rasa. Thus, this can be considered as the sequence of the evolution of the 4 Rasas.

After that, the other 4 Rasas in the order are Hasya, Karuna, Adbhuta, and Bhayanaka. Hasa directly comes from the Shringar. Thus, Hasya Rasa arises from Shringar Rasa. When someone would have behaved in fury but after that when he/she would have thought about the situation with a cool mind, would have trapped into the situation of shoka (mourning) which is SthayiBhava of Karuna Rasa. Someone would have completed a work with Utsah. The completion of work would have given him/her the feeling of wonder which creates Adbhuta Rasa. The person would have felt fear by looking at the disastrous side of nature. This fear (Bhaya) is the SthayiBhava of Bhayanaka Rasa. Thus, the evolution of these 8 Rasas has a Scientific base.

We have seen an interpretation of Rasa and got an idea about 8 Rasas by Bharatmuni. To understand the real form of Rasa, it is necessary to look at the relationship of Bhavas and Vibhavas.

### **Bhava**

Bharatmuni has considered feeling of the soul as Bhava - **आत्मानुभवंभावः**. Feeling is not something physical but it is something to be felt. When these bhavas were used in the context of interpretation of *Natyashastra* and *Poetics* with society, they were considered as Sthayi Bhava, Vibhava, Sanchari or Vyabhichari Bhava and Satvik Bhava by Bharatmuni. Bharatmuni has connected these Bhavas as a



sign with the activities. In the same context, Mammat has clearly stated in *Rasabhivayakti*–

कारणान्यथकार्याणिसहकारीणियानिच ।  
रत्यादेः स्थायिनींलोकेतानिचेत्नाट्यकाव्ययोः ॥  
विभावाअनुभावास्तत्कथ्यन्तेव्यभिचारिणः ।

Those Bhavas which help Rati and all other such Sthayi Bhavas in real life are known as Vibhavanubhav and Vyabhichatri Bhava in the terms of Natya and Kavya. by following यथागुणस्तथानाम.

### **Vibhava**

**विभावोविज्ञानार्थः** which means through which we can get an idea about language, body language and Abhinaya. So this is known as Vibhava –

बहवोऽर्थाः विभाव्यन्तेवागङ्गाभिनयाश्रयाः ।  
अनेनयस्मात्तेनायंविभावइतिसंज्ञितः ॥

To make it more clear, we can say that those which can be the reason behind Anubhava and Vyabhichari Bhava or which give us the knowledge of other Bhavas are known as Vibhava. There are two types of Vibhava, AalambanVibhava, and

UddipanVibhava.

### **1 AalambanVibhava**

The bhava which is Reason behind arising all bhavas are known as AalambanVibhava. For example, in context of Shringar Rasa, Nayak and Nayika (Hero and Heroine) are AalambanVibhava.

### **2 UddipanVibhava**

Which work as astimulus for bhavas are known as UddipanVibhava. For example, in context of Shringar Rasa, an isolated place, wonderful atmosphere, beautiful river bank, green garden, etc. are UddipanVibhava.

### **Anubhava**

By adding prefix “Anu” with bhava, we have Anubhava. Those which can be felt  
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just after Aalamban and UddipanVibhava are known as Anubhava. According to Bharatmuni, which can be felt through language, body language, and abhinaya is known as Anubhava. Along with that yelling, sweat;etc acts are known as Anubhava. According to Dhanik Dhananjaya (the author of *Dashrupak*) whatever disorders take place in Sthayi Bhavas because of Vibhava and effects body language are Anubhavas. Anubhava occurs just after Vibhava and can be considered as the reason behind Vibhava –

### अनुभावोविकारस्तुभावसंसूचनात्मकः ।

#### Satvik Bhava

Satvik Bhava is to be known as a form of Anubhava. According to DhanikDhananjaya (the author of *Dashrupaka*), this is one part of Anubhava but they should be counted separately because they rely on Satva –

### पृथग्भावाभवन्त्यन्येऽनुभावत्वेऽपि सात्विकाः ।

### सत्त्वादेव समुत्पत्तेस्तच्च तद्भावभावनम् ॥

Whenever the vibhavas get into a person, they could be appeared as a tear, etc.

Anubhava can be considered as physical activity and Satvik Bhava as mental activity. According to Dhanik Dhananjaya, there are 8 Satvik Bhavas - स्तम्भ (Paralysis), प्रलय (चेतनाविहीन) (Fainting), रोमाञ्च (Horripilation), स्वेद (Sweating), वैवर्ण्य (Change of Color), वेपथु (कम्प) (Trembling), अश्रु (Weeping) and वैस्वर्य (Change of Voice).

#### Vyabhichari or Sanchari Bhava

Sthayi Bhavas which were agitated by Vibhavas are reflected in the social people in the form of disorder through Anubhava. At that time whatever disturbances of different Bhavas take place in a person's mind are known as Sthayi Bhavas. In that situation, a person finds resolutions and transmits in the mind very frequently, so it is known as Sanchari or Vyabhichari Bhava. According to Bharatmuni, there are 33 Vyabhichari or Sanchari Bhavas - निर्वेद (Discouragement), ग्लानि (Weakness), शङ्का





(Apprehension), श्रम (Weariness), धृति (Contentment), जडता (Stupor), हर्ष (Joy), दैन्य (Depression), उग्रता (Cruelty), चिन्ता (Anxiety), त्रास (Fright), असूया (Envy), अमर्ष (Indignation), गर्व (Arrogance), स्मृति (Recollection), मरण (Death), मद (Intoxication), सुप्त (Dreaming), निद्रा (Sleeping), विबोध (Awakening), व्रीडा (Shame), अपस्मार (Epilepsy), मोह (Distraction), मति (Assurance), आलस्य (Indolence), आवेग (Agitation), वितर्क (Deliberation), अवहित्या (Dissimulation), व्याधि (Sickness), उन्माद (Insanity), विषाद (Despair), औत्सुक्य (Impatience), चपलता (Inconstancy).

### Sthayi Bhava

The way we have a king in human beings and a teacher in pupils, in the same manner, we do have Sthayi Bhava as part of Bhavas –

यथानराणां नृपतिः शिष्याणां च यथागुरुः ।

एवं हि सर्वभावानां भावः स्थायी महानिधिः ॥

If we look at the interpretation of Dhanik Dhananjaya (the author of *Dashrupaka*) regarding this, he has presented the same thing in more clear form. Sthayi Bhavas cannot be disturbed by any other Bhavas. It can merge all Bhavas in it just like the Sea merges all rivers into it –

विरुद्धैरविरुद्धैर्वाभावैर्विच्छिद्यते नयः ।

आत्मभावं नयत्यन्यान्संस्थायिलवणाकरः ॥

If a person is deeply rooted in one Sthayi Bhava, the person will merge all kind of thoughts into that particular Bhava. For example – “सावनके अन्धे कोहरा हीहरादिखाई देता है” (To the jaundiced all things seem yellow). If a person is happy, one can tell a matter to him/her at that time which can raise anger. At that time a person will not get angry, he/she will laugh on that. But if that will violate laughter, that is a violation of Rasa and the situation would be considered as a faulty one.

According to Bharatmuni, there are 8 Sthayi Bhavas and even Dhanik Dhananjaya (the author of *Dashrupaka*) believes that. If we focus completely on



Abhinaya and do not consider Shant as Rasa, we can say that there are 8 SthayiBhavas because abhinaya of Shant Rasa is not possible. In Kavya, Mammata has considered Shanta as Rasa and Nirveda as its ShayiBhava, so that we have to accept Shanta as ninth Rasa. As we have seen the evolution of 8 Rasas in the form of  $4 \times 2$  along with 8 Sthayi Bhavas. Let's look at the sequence of DhanikaDhananjaya –रति, उत्साह, जुगुप्सा, क्रोधो, हासःस्मयोभयंशोकः. Some of them are considering, शम as ninth Sthayi Bhava but it is not accepted in Natya –

रत्युत्साहजुगुप्साः क्रोधोहासः स्मयोभयंशोकः ।

शममपिकेचित्पाहुः पुष्टिर्नाट्येषुनैतस्य ॥

### Conclusion:

Thus, we have looked at different interpretations of Rasa but at last, we come to know that among all these the interpretation of Rasa in the *Natyashastra* is the best one. It has so many definitions still expecting more new definitions. The reason behind this is, Rasa arises from the interpretation of different elements, it is a feeling (Anubhava). It does not exist in Rama, Nata (actor), Kavya or Nataka. It does exist in our hearts. According to scholars, it exists in our hearts in the form of Sthayi Bhavas.

With the passing time, human beings have developed mentally; in the same manner, Rasas have developed. As basically there were 4 Rasas according to Bharatmuni after that other 4 Rasas were added to that. In addition to that, as part of Kavya tradition, Shanta Rasa was added to the list of 8 Rasas. With the passing time, when Rasas were used in Hindi, the language had added two more Rasas to the list. The Rasas were – Bhakti and Vatsalya. If we consider these two as part of Rati, at last, we have to accept Shanta Rasa as the ninth Rasa. As abhinaya (acting) of Shanta Rasa is not possible, so it's better to accept 8 Rasas.

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## **Dreams and Destination: Exploring Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's Reformist Agenda**

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**Abstract:** Sir Syed Ahmad Khan – a great social reformer and outstanding revolutionary figure who spent his whole life to erase the blots of obsolete customs, cultures, and rituals with the paint of modernity on his community. He worked diligently to improve the deteriorating situation of Muslims and to replace their orthodox attitude with a liberal one. The paper aims to focus on the role played by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan for the upliftment of Muslims during the colonial period of India. The central focus of this paper will be to show how during the times of stress and strain, he used his wisdom to replace the obsolete customs, cultures, rituals with the modern and how he fought bravely to overcome all these odds and stood the test of time. Besides this the paper aims to show his belief in the approval of new ideas and doctrines of dominant culture as necessary and not heresy if they help community to uplift and educate any community.

**Key words:** Sir Syed, Social reformer, Modernity, Imitation, Obsolete customs, Orthodox.

### **Introduction**

There is a saying 'one who is not taught by his mother, is taught by the others' though at the surface level it seems to be an easy proverb having least to offer us but if one looks at it meticulously it has one of the fundamental messages related to life. There is a word that has been repeated that is 'taught' at first it has a positive connotation meaning 'to educate' but second time it means 'taunt' that generally people get when they don't know how to tackle or behave in a situation. Its meaning is simple but its application or validity has not died till date. The proverb has relevance here. It fits the title and beautifully describes Sir Syed Ahmad Khan metaphorically who acted as a tutor and mentor to his community to save them from taunts. He understood it that once a community is left uneducated it is bound to see its bodies tumbling and heads bowing in front of other people where they will not be taught but 'taunted' and adorned with multiple negative epithets. He being a visionary saw what others denied to accept in frenzy. He was primarily



concerned “for the reform and education of his community in the modern sciences and in the English language” (Hasan 1077). Therefore epicentre of all his work was education based on modern lines. He was severely criticized by critics and “detractors who think that he became too pro-British, that he became a collaborator” (Campbell 27) and was labelled as antinational and anti-Islam. However “he acted selflessly in the interests of his people, striving to prepare the Muslim people, through its educational elite, to engage constructively with the new British government” (Campbell 27). However the courageous man took the daunting task on his shoulders and endowed education which could liberate, uplift and free the human being from the fetters of outdated customs, notions and dogmas.

After the decline of Mughal Empire Muslims began to feel the heat of alienation in India and lost “their learning, their culture and their position in Indian society” (Sherwani 327). Moreover revolt of 1857 created a huge chasm between Muslims and Britishers. Sir Syed’s vision and his laborious effort to meet the demands of challenging times are highly appreciable. He rightly believed that the past had its merits and its legacies were valuable but it was the future that a society was called upon to cope with. They viewed each other with great distress and disdain. A lot of personalities aroused among the Muslims who began to ponder over the deteriorating situation in order to find the panacea to the problem. Vast number of Muslims thought that the problem could be tackled by fighting against the Britishers. So they carried on the mission of resistance, not only by sacrificing their lives but also prohibiting them from emulating the West including their Education. While fighting the battle against the coloniser, Muslims not only lost their lives but also the weapon more important than the sword that was education which could have empowered them to fight their oppressor and uplift their status in the society. Among the voices of war and revenge arouse a man who spoke of Education as a foundation on which he build his super structure of his religion, social, and political ideas. For Sir Syed “the only way to bridge the wide gap and thaw the icy relations that existed between his coreligionists and the colonizers was to acquire western education” (Belmekki 171). Sir Syed “a visible symbol of Muslim regeneration, a catalyst of social and educational reforms” (Hasan 1077) had the conviction that Indian Muslims are completely unaware that mankind had entered a very important phase of its existence, i.e. an era of science and



learning which was the source of progress and prosperity for the British.

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan alleged that “Indians [muslims in particular] must first be educated and their ignorance obliterated in order that they should be useful to their country, and by education he meant instruction in modern arts and sciences” (Sherwani 311). He believed that it is only through education which will give carte blanche to the poor and backward Muslims of India. He played a vital role to buff up minority community of India, who were tarred and feathered and showed them the way to live a life of dignity and grandeur. His aim was that the benighted Muslims should come out in the actual world with the understanding of the modern education and with the understanding of Quranic principles of the human dignity that could liberate Indian Muslims from barbarism in which they have been living. Therefore, modern education became the pivotal part of his movement for the regeneration of the Indian Muslims, which brought a complete orientation in their lives. He tried to transform Muslim minds from medieval outlook to a modern one. He asked Muslims to seek western education learn English and acquire western knowledge of science and technology, without leaving their Islamic belief based on the Holy Quran and Sunnah but try to get away with traditional Islamic learning in their process of education. He said “Science shall be in our right hand and philosophy in our left; and on our head shall be the crown of "There is no God but Allah and Mohammad is his Apostle”” (qtd in Hasan 1077). To spread the education among the Muslims Sir Syed launched his education movements by setting up Gulshan School at Muradabad, Mohammedan Anglo-oriental School (MAO) at Aligarh in 1875 at the pattern of Oxford University. His efforts towards education and vision have been acknowledged by great personalities.

Pt Jawaharlal Nehru eulogized him and believed that Sir Syed was an ardent reformer and he wanted to reconcile modern scientific thought with religion by rationalistic interpretations and not by attacking basic beliefs. He was in no way communally separatist. Repeatedly he emphasised that religious difference should have no political and national significance. Hindu-Muslim unity was very close to his heart. According to him the word ‘Quam’ (nation or community) mean both Hindus and Muslims. According to him whether Muslims or Hindus both are governed by the same rulers on the same soil. Both Hindus and Muslims breathe the same air, drink the waters of the



sacred Ganges and the Yamuna and eat the products which God has given to our country. According to Sir Syed while the Muslims have adopted numberless customs belonging to the Hindus, the Hindus too have been vastly influenced by the Muslim habits and customs. He tried to tighten the bonds of Hindu-Muslim unity and used the metaphor that Hindus and Muslims were the two eyes in Mother India's face as he says India is "a beautiful bride blessed by two attractive eyes, the Hindus and the Muslims. If they maintain enmity or hypocritical (nifaq) relations with each other, [the bride] will look one-eye" (qtd in Mujahid 89). He sought generous support from Hindu rajas and landlords for establishing what we today see in the form of Aligarh Muslim University. Some people blamed him for dividing the nation and creating a rift between Hindus and Muslims however it was not true rather "one of the myths of later Indian historiography" (96) according to Sharif Al Mujahid.

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan emerged at a time when the status of Muslim community in India was at the lowest stage. He was deeply concerned about the status of Muslims of India who have been living in a state of deprecation for centuries. He felt an immediate need for the Muslims to come out from the clumsiness and bewilderment and acquire knowledge and proficiency so that their social, political and economic status could be maintained. After war of independence of 1857 the atrocities inflicted by Britishers upon the people of India in general and Muslims in particular rendered Sir Syed Ahmad Khan shell shocked. Britishers were of the opinion that the Muslims were the sole reason of war of independence of 1857 as a result of which they banned Friday prayers and replaced the language of Persian and Arabic with the English language. During this uprising "the British Colonial Government decided to point an accusing finger at the Indian Muslims alone as the *bona fide* fomenters, and consequently, they were subjected to a discriminatory policy that disfavoured them in every walk of life" (Belmekki 165). That is why Sir Syed "realized the urgent need to come up with a plan to modernize, as well as energize, the hitherto comatose Muslim community" (Belmekki 165). From his early days he was active in the cultural activities of the Mughal court. The death of his father in 1838 left his family in financial distress and he started to work in East India Company. During his entry into the East India Company he "realized the all round impact of British power in India" (Muhammad 63). His movement started after the revolt of 1857, which





“convinced him of the intellectual and industrial supremacy of Europe” (Muhammad 63). Colonial rule over India was fully established and the nation was greatly demoralized. Sir Syed suffered many personal tragedies in the revolt and “met with stiff opposition and encountered numerous difficulties in forefronting a liberal, reformist agenda” (Hasan 1077). He writes thus:

Gadar kai baad mujh ko na apna ghar lootnai ka ranj than na maalo asbab ki talaf hoonai ka. Jo kuch ranj tha, apnai kour ki barbadi ka tha, yakeen kijiya iss gham nai mujhai budha kar diya aur mere baal safeed kar diya. Yai khayal paida hua, ki nihayat na muraadi aur bai muravati ki baat hai ki apnai kour ko is tabahi ki halat mai choordh kai kisi goosh e aafiyat mai ja baithu. Mai nai hijrat ka irada taraq kiya aur quom ki balahi kai liya judo jahad ki raha ikhtiyar ki. Mere gham khaar mujh ko issai manna kartai hai. Phir mai nai apnai dil sai poocha ki kour ko iss zamanai ki zarurat kai maakif talim dena aur Europe kai aloom ko un mai jaari karna kya islam kai barr khilaf hai. Mujhai jawab mila ‘Nahi’.

But Sir Syed was hopeful and said that:

. . . from the seed which we sow today, there may spring up a mighty tree, whose branches, like those of the banyan of the soil, shall in their turn strike firm roots into the earth, and themselves send forth new and vigorous saplings, that this college may expand into a university, whose sons shall go forth throughout the length and breadth of the land to preach the gospel of free inquiry, of large-hearted toleration, and of pure morality. (qtd in Muhammad)

After the mutiny, it was not the loss of my house or my property that I regretted. Whatever regret I had was over the destruction of my people. Believe me, this sorrow aged me and turned my hair white. It occurred to me that it would be highly shameful to leave my people in such a condition and settle in comfort myself. I dropped the idea of migration and started on the road to struggle for the betterment of my people. My well wishers discouraged me. Then I asked myself, is giving my people European education according to the lives against the tenets of Islam? I received the answer, no!

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Being a member of East India Company he tagged Britain as ‘Takht-Nisheen’ and was of



the opinion that we can't compete with the Britishers in terms of technology. He believed that Muslims lag behind in all walks of life. The main reason for their weak status is their backwardness in modern education. Sir Syed's vision was to heal the wounds of Muslims. He believed that although we are living in a country which has achieved its freedom but truth is that we still need a healer who could cure our wounds. Let's propagate the movement called the Aligarh Movement "for the modernisation and rationalisation of the life of the Muslims" (Sherwani 328) and for creating a modern society with a scientific outlook. Its main issues were to uplift Indian Muslims through modern education and familiarize them with the Western arts and sciences, which would improve their social and political conditions. According to Gordon Campbell, "in Syed Ahmed's day, however these terms were used differently. The word 'science' simply meant 'knowledge', all sorts of knowledge; 'art', on the other hand, referred to technical skill, to the practical application of knowledge" (28). Thus for Sir Syed Western education was the only key to future prosperity for Muslims. That is why he laid the foundation of the Scientific Society on July 9th, 1864, at Ghazipur India. In order to fortify the down trodden Muslims of India he established a Madrasa in Muradabad in 1859, then a school in Ghazipur and Aligarh school in the year 1862 and 1875 respectively. In 1867 he visited England and was fascinated by the greatness and considerable refinement of the British social life which he believed was the result of the education of both men and women. He was also greatly impressed by Oxford and Cambridge and their standard of education. Thus the trip had a great impact on him and he resolved to form a Muslim Cambridge in India. On his return he setup a committee for this purpose and "on the models of the *Tatler* and *Spectator* [journals by Richard Steele and Joseph Addison] he started the *Tahzeeb ul Ikhlaq* and apprised the people of the great change that was undermining their social practices" (Muhammad 81) and to further the process of reform in Muslim community. Soon after his arrival from the Britain with a lot of ideas to reform the Hindu and Muslim communities, he established Mohammadian Anglo College in 1875. Later on in 1920 soon after the death of Sir Syed, it became Aligarh Muslim University fulfilling half of Sir Syed's dream. Only half, because his dream was an incessant progress of all Indians. His maxim was to continuously move forward breaking those norms and tradition which hold us back. Besides this, influenced by the British institutions and to further his mission he laid



down scientific society in 1864 with this aim to make Muslims competitive with Britishers in the field of modern education. The society translated major scientific works from English into Urdu so that it could reach to wide audiences. He also established All India Mohammadian Educational Conference in 1886. It was an annual conference where Muslim leaders from different continents assembled and discussed the educational problems related to Muslims. Sir Syed had a firm belief that the people who would be educated from these institutions would become leaders of the people in terms of liberating them from that kind of situation in which they have been thrown.

For the purpose of modern education he included Britishers including Lord Lyton who later on was given the privilege of inaugurating Mohammadian Anglo Oriental College. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan believed in the loyalty to Britishers in order to fulfill his aim of enlightening Muslims with the modern education. According to Shan Muhammad, Sir Syed believed that the “English were the most civilized rulers of India and Sir Syed wanted to emulate their qualities, not blindly, but to the extent which may make Indians more civilized and cultured” (68). He wrote *Asbaab e Bhagawati Hind* which was later on translated in to English as *Causes of Indian Revolt* in 1858 to remove the delusion between Muslims and Britishers who believed that Muslims are the sole purpose of revolt of 1857. W.W Hunter wrote a book *Indian Musalman* where he stated that Indian Muslims are disloyal to British government. To which Sir Syed wrote a review “Loyal Mohammadian of India” saying that Indian Muslims are not disloyal to Britishers and therefore eschewed their sturdy conviction. Therefore Sir Syed followed western standards and considered western education as the prime source of modernization, progress and development and that is why in the history of India’s transition from medievalism to modernism, Sir Syed stand out prominently as a dynamic force pitted against conservatism, superstitions, inertia and ignorance.

Thus to conclude Sir Syed prospered despite facing great opposition and today an educational hub – Aligarh Muslim University is quintessence of his dreams. It is up to us now to take it forward. Today with a living and breathing personification of his dream, we can’t sit back and rest, believing all works to be done, a lot remains. We have to go on moving from heights onto greater heights.

Mubtalaye Dard Koi Uzoo Ho, Roti Hai Ankh



Kis Qadar Hamdard Sare Jism Ki Roti Hai Ankh

The eye weeps for the suffering of any and every part of the body, How Sympathetic it is to the entire body.

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## **Towards an Ecological Ethics: A Reading of Cormac McCarthy's *The Road***

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**Abstract:** The present paper attempts to read Cormac McCarthy's Pulitzer-prize winning novel *The Road* (2006), within the general framework what Karen J. Warren calls a nontraditional ethical approach exemplified specifically by ecological feminism and an ethics of answerability (Wolf 89). The first section, "Introduction," explains and rationalizes the critical framework. My extrapolations and interventions are spelt out in this section. The Second section is an analysis of the novel. The mode of analysis consists in decoding the politics of representation as exercised through narrative devices. The third section concludes the essay with an understanding of the overall ethical impact of the novel.

**Key Words:** Ecocriticism, Ecological Ethics, Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*, Postapocalyptic Novel.

### **I. Introduction**

The following is an attempt to read Cormac McCarthy's novel *The Road* (2006) within the broad framework what Karen J. Warren calls a nontraditional ethical approach, exemplified specifically by ecological feminism (Warren 256) and an ethics of answerability (Wolf 89).

In the first quarter of twenty-first century, most of the earth's human population, historically distributed across a complex web of power-relations, has come to live in an unhygienic, polluted and hazardous environment. But as a species, humans as such, divided among themselves along the lines of social, economic, political, racial, and gender identities, have now entered the Anthropocene, the proposed name for the geological era when human-species has become a dominant agent in the permanent transformation of the natural world. The implication of such a transition is that the collective thrust of human activities is now directly or indirectly contributing to their collective extinction in the near future. Such transition is also marked by a necessary



readjustment of existing power-relations. Humans, already fraught with internal divisions, are now categorically relegated to a disadvantageous end in the era of their own making. Such ironic circularity, where one is constantly chased by one's own carbon-footprints, calls for a re-examination of inherited assumptions. In a situation which implicates human history within the broad framework of natural history, it is imperative for the ecocritics to explore or invent various forms of narratives that can represent the implications—social, political, economic, ethical and ecological—of such a transition. Social theorist Barbara Adam in her 1998 book titled *Timescapes of Modernity*, dwells on the problems of doing so, in that the scope of the threat is either too large or too small, they are imperceptible with the naked eye, and the nature of such a threat is uncertain. In short, it is an attempt to represent the experientially absent, or the unrepresentable.

From literature, films and TV shows to online games and other cybercultural representation, the future is variously conceived in postapocalyptic terms—a deluge of Biblical scale, rapid desertification or a world-wide famine reducing civilization to a state of nature. Within the fictional space, where a ray of hope is seen in the form of space-colonization, a simultaneous note of loss, too, is heard in the form of mutating human identity. However, more often than not, such representations are enjoyed as science fantasy, and have little bearing on human behavior.

In the present paper, I subscribe to the view that along with perspectives, style and theme, techniques of characterization like personification, pathetic fallacy and positive anthropomorphism in fiction offer a buffer zone of emotional identification, an initial position conducive of a motivational momentum, before the readers can actually engage in a conversation with their received notions.

Although critic Paul Knights (2009), following the philosophy of Geoffrey Frasz, considers anthropomorphism to be a distortion of natural entities, and proposes certain psychological traits like self-understanding, self-acceptance and other-acceptance as the key qualities to be environmentally virtuous, what he ultimately suggests is an unmediated experience—intellectual as well as emotional—of the environment, which appears to be an impossible project given the fact that language itself is a representational system. Even if we assume language to be purely referential, the barrier before knowing the Other, posed by the limited scope of linguistic signs,



remains insurmountable. While suggesting literature's provocation as regards representation of the dumb creature and mute environment, Philipp Wolf writes, "Anthropomorphism is—in a sense—the only way of talking about non-human beings. Any poem is also about the speaker or reader—our relation to nature. And it is after all, a way to arouse sympathy, empathy and solidarity . . ." (112).

Insofar as the environmental virtues are concerned, I have added "ecofeminist ethics of care, kinship and appropriate reciprocity" (Warren 263), to the list provided by Paul Knights (219), which includes proper humility, respect, attentiveness, appreciation, and ecological sensitivity. Ecofeminist critics have extensively contributed to show various conceptual connections among nature, emotion, animals, young children, and women vis-à-vis the conceptually superior, interconnected categories of culture, politics, society, reason, humans, and man.

## **II. *The Road***

The novel under scrutiny is classified under the genre of postapocalyptic fiction. Postapocalyptic fiction as such, narrated in realistic mode, is a rich field of study for ethical critics because it can be understood as a thought-experiment, continuously involving exercise in choice, survival being at stake in the absence of a civil society. Claire P. Curtis in her book *Postapocalyptic Fiction and the Social Contract*, offers a comprehensive study of the genre drawing on social contract theories by political philosophers like Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and John Rawls. In an insightful passage in the "Introduction," she explains that "Postapocalyptic fiction . . . provides a compelling basis for rethinking the conditions of and thus the response to life in the state of nature. . . . And as fiction there is room for carefully analyzing the basic motivations of human beings and the impulses that might drive us together to live . . ." (Curtis 10). In the first chapter, with regard to *The Road*, Curtis claims that McCarthy, by presenting a "state of unnature," leaves no scope for any attempt on the part of the survivors to cooperate with each other and enter into a social contract again. Her claim is valid insofar as she assumes, in keeping with Hobbes, an earth full of resources to be the primary condition of a civil society. However, her complete oversight of the novel's last section, especially as it contains a nomadic society in embryonic stage,





seems thoroughly unjustifiable. Conversely, my reading of *The Road*, suggests that through this group which adopts the unnamed, now-orphaned child, McCarthy is making a point pertaining to the ethics of empathy, memory, interdependence, and a harmonious coexistence, conspicuously set in opposition to the world-view of the man, the recently deceased father of the boy. The overall ethical thrust of the representational politics of the novel—the doomsday landscape, the plaintive tone, and empathetic characterization—is towards a single thesis question for the readers: what is a just and better way of being as humans? This is a categorically different question than the typical doomsday narratives evoke—what might have gone wrong?

The novel is set on a future earth in the throes of entropic implosion. A runaway cataclysm is signaled by the crumbling trees and heaps of mummified dead bodies. Nothing grows on soil. No creature apart from a few humans exists any longer. The landscape is chequered with deserted towns, dilapidated and rifled departmental stores, and other detritus of the twenty-first century consumerist culture. This is a post-natural, post-cultural world where ecological as well as economic collapse is complete.

The unnamed father and son, constantly on move through a gloomy, freezing atmosphere, are bound to the supposedly warm seacoast of the south. The man pushes along a shopping cart filled with scavenged stuffs and keeps reminding his son (and himself) that they are the “good guys” who are “carrying the fire.” It is only by virtue of this constant reminder that the duo is set against the “bad guys” or the cannibals frequenting the road. However, the line between good and bad is constantly negotiated in the absence of law, government, military, and other civil activities. In a world where survival is the only good one can think of, the man blindly guards against cannibalism. The uncertain nature of good and bad comes to the fore as the pair are met with different situations.

The catalyst event, recollected by the man, was preceded by “A long shear of light and then a series of low concussions”. This deliberate understatement has generated conjectures surrounding the nature of the event that had reduced the earth to its irreversibly entropic state. Dana Phillips holds, against most of the critics, that since nuclear war does not begin with “fireworks show,” the doomsday is not heralded by nuclear weapons but rather by some extraterrestrial object (177). Reading the novel as a representation of a cosmic accident and as an ecological collapse caused by



human beings, however, would produce diametrically opposite readings and consequently, different set of ethical issues.

My reading of *The Road* suggests that the ambiguity of rhetoric is a way of highlighting the irrelevance of the particularities of the cataclysmic event. There is no prescribed list of activities that could have helped one to dodge past the represented doomsday, anthropogenic or not. Neither does the novel hold forth any scope of environmental regeneration as evidenced from the narrator's voice in the last paragraph of the novel. The narrator, prior to this point, in turn assuming restricted omniscience, free indirect style, and point-of-view narration, for the first time adopts the superior position of complete omniscience. Directly addressing the readers of the post-apocalyptic era, the narrator ruminates:

Once there were brook trout in the stream in the mountains. You could see them standing in the amber current where the white edges of their fins wimpled softly in the flow. They smelled of moss in your hand. Polished and muscular and torsional. On their backs were vermiculate patterns that were maps of the world in its becoming. Maps and mazes. Of a thing which could not be put back. Not be made right again. In the deep glens where they lived all things were older than man and they hummed of mystery (307).

The irrecoverable nature of the ecological collapse is confirmed in these concluding wistful lines. In such a dirge for the ecologically opulent past, the comparative understanding of the evolutionary stages of humans and other "things" in the "deep glens" can only amount to an accusation. It raises the issue of justice—while there are still a few humans left on earth, there is no brook trout left. In view of the fact that the novelist is ambiguous even about the role of human agency in the catastrophic event, this nuanced accusation seems to be irrelevant unless we read between the lines and discover the assumptions, attitudes, beliefs and activities of the characters represented in the novel. The unnamed father and the son, as they walk down the road, as they talk, engage in various activities, interact with a few characters, and as they are implicated in several situations, the novel keeps on posing ethically provocative moments for the reader.

The man, amidst a world in ruins, I shall argue, is a victim of the memories of his subjectivities, an anachronistic product of a rational, utilitarian, hierarchical and patriarchal culture. He carries



along him the cognitive traces that the consumer society had once instilled into him. For him, the past is a lost empire accessed only via memory, and the boy is his only means of re-living his authoritarian identity. For the boy, the pre-apocalyptic world-view is inherited from the narratives of his father. It is the land promised by his father, an imaginary space conceived retroactively.

The man plays the midwife as his wife goes into labour. The narrator's voice informs us that, "Her [His wife's] cries meant nothing to him. . . . He held aloft the scrawny red body so raw and naked and cut the cord with kitchen shears and wrapped his son in a towel" (64). The ironic use of free indirect discourse lets the reader into the patriarch's mind. The son is exclusively "his son." Subsequently, the scene, detailing the gang of four cannibals with the pregnant woman giving birth to a baby only to be barbecued for food, finds its counterpart in the former. Both are examples of violation of rights, but to different ends. Given the post-apocalyptic world of *The Road*, given the complete absence of resources, woman's womb is the only resource left for the humans to exploit. Where survival is the only good one can conceive of, fetal cannibalism seems to be the most "rational" practice. But the scene hits the reader with its naked utilitarianism, pushed too far. The scene recalls Jonathan Swift's anonymously published satire titled *A Modest Proposal* (1729), in which Swift suggests a way in order to simultaneously improve economic condition of the Irish poor, solve population problem and food crisis in general. The suggestion was that the poor Irish folks should sell their children as food for rich gentlemen and ladies. To the consternation of the reader Swift recommends, "A young healthy child well nursed, is, at a year old, a most delicious nourishing and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled; and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a fricassee, or a ragout" (7).

Similarly, as the cannibals literally survive on the produces of the womb, the boy's father, too, relies on his wife's womb to have his son. We never get to know how he used to treat his wife as the latter had already committed suicide before the narrative opens. As the man recalls her taking death as a "new lover", she rationalizes her choice in her own voice: "They will rape me. They'll rape him [the child]. They are going to rape us and kill us and eat us and you wont face it. You'd rather wait for it to happen. But I can't. I can't" (62, 61). What she wants to escape is "rape," a logic of domination. Despite his civilized surface-activities, the man, too, subscribes to the same



logic as we can gather from his attitude towards his wife as well as from his attitude towards other women, nature and the naturalized underclass.

The novel blurs the line between nature and culture by continually pointing towards the uselessness of human projects to rebuild civilization since there is no natural resource to exploit any more. It substantiates this parasitic existence of any cultural project. The man with his cultural spillover in the postapocalyptic era, had been groomed into what he is from his very childhood. He recalls a day from his boyhood when he rowed across a lake to gather firewood with his uncle. The description of the day goes thus:

The trees themselves had long been sawed for firewood and carried away. . . . They walked along the shore while his uncle studied the treestumps, puffing at his pipe, a manila rope coiled over his shoulder. He picked one out and they turned it over, using the roots for leverage, until they got it half floating in the water (11-12).

The confident, authoritarian moves of uncle and nephew as they blissfully master the woods seem profane given there is no more tree living on earth. The sustained poeticity of language and images contributes to the final irony of the passage: "This was the perfect day of his childhood. This the day to shape the days upon" (21). Such ironic voice assumes an omniscient and ethical tone and implicates the readers in the passage detailing the carnage of the snakes, another event from the man's early childhood. The event is from the time when the man was "the boy's age," standing "at the edge of a winter field among rough men," watching them burning hibernating clusters of snakes (231). These men practice an act sanctioned by their faith. Their faith itself is called into question as by means of this casual act of setting "a great bolus of serpents" on fire," their identity as virtuous, observant Christian is easily secured. The image of evil is thought to be evil itself. Although the passage defies anthropomorphism in Biblical terms, it also employs subtle anthropomorphism as the narrator explains their silent but spasmodic descent into death. This ambivalent nature of anthropomorphism is examined by Timothy Clark:

The issue of anthropomorphism poses the question of animal experience in all its power and ambivalence. It can be at once a mode of understanding non-human animals, a profound barrier to such understanding, a mode of appropriating of animal otherness or a term that



rebounds into the open question of what the human actually is. Finally, in the tension between these views, anthropomorphism in literary texts may enact an ethical and cognitive challenge to re-evaluate the bases of modern society. The non-human effects both a defamiliarisation of human perception, an undermining of 'speciesism' and a potentially revolutionary ethical appeal against the brutal human tyranny over the animal kingdom (198-99).

In the description of the snakes burning, silence of the complacent onlookers and that of the dying snakes are compared side by side. The passage is regarding pain of others; it is a vivid commentary on different forms of pain and raises the issue of rights of the nonhuman animals.

The man retains his dominant attitude towards animate and inanimate nature even in the narrative present when there is no nature to master, and no civilization to build. He appears to be a post-apocalyptic Quixote as the wheel of the shopping-cart he pushes is damaged, the torch of civilization that he is supposedly carrying is a diminutive gasoline lighter, and the towns he glasses like a navigator on a civilizing mission are long deserted. The map, he scrupulously follows to reach the south, claims the existence of the states, highways, and political boundaries at a time when there are no humans left to populate the land itself. It seems that he follows such spillover logic of the past in order to cling on to his authoritative identity, formed during old times. The same assertiveness is extended on the naturalized underprivileged. As the father-son group interacts with different characters, the father reveals his unsympathetic, appropriative, and cruel aspects. When they come across the man struck by lightning, "burntlooking as the country," the man silently passes him without exchanging a single word. When the boy asks his father whether they can help him, the answer he gives is "no" (62). Again, as the pair finally reaches the sea-coast, their cart is stolen by a thief, an outcaste from his commune. The man catches him and makes him strip naked at gunpoint. He assures that the thief die in cold. The thunderstruck man as well as the thief is described in terms that substantiate them as "natural" as opposed to the "cultural" status of the man. The former is viewed by the man as an uncanny element appearing from the middle of nowhere. The thief is seen as "[s]crawny, sullen, bearded, filthy," and is already an outcaste whose right-hand fingers have been cut away giving his hands an appearance of "fleshy spatula" (311). Such hand is more like a chopped branch of tree than a wieldy limb. Such systemic naturalization of the marginal



can be understood as an Enlightenment legacy, justifying the mechanisms of the dominant class/caste/race/species/sex.

We can compare the son's attitudes with those of the man. While memory is a space of loss for the man, the boy, having no memory of the past, retroactively conceives the norms of the pre-apocalyptic world. The past for the boy is mediated via his father's language and narratives of rationalism. While most of the critics stress the father-son love in *The Road*, it seems that the boy is rather a self-imposed reason for the man ensuring his own survival, in the widest sense of the term. The child gives the man, an epitome of Western rationalism, a much desired "telos," a direction to which he can comfortably move. The narrator's voice informs us: "He knew only that the child was his warrant. He said: If he is not the word of God God never spoke" (5). The mother of the boy just before she commits suicide confirms this as she says, "[t]he one thing I can tell you is that you won't survive for yourself. . . . A person who has no one would be well advised to cobble together some passable ghost. Breathe it into being and coax it along with words of love" (93). Such a reading would subvert the surface where the son "needs" his father who appears to be the former's protector. Instead, it reveals that it is the father who requires the son to exist, the condition for the father's existence being an amalgam of old-order identities—of an authoritative protector/patriarch/educator.

In each of the encounter with other characters, the son with an intention of helping them out pleads with the man with a discourse of care, love, kinship, empathy, and kindness. Paradoxically, the boy learns those things from his father. It is not to confirm that the man embodies those qualities or practice any one of them. The "stories" the man has told him enshrines these values. This contradiction reflects the inherent contradiction within humanist dualist discourse in general which at ideological level holds forth the lofty values of empathy, reason, justice, and well-being of others. But at the same time, the ethically informed subject is one generic "human beings," who practically is a tiny intersection of the privileged in the structures of hierarchy. In practice, the othering of women, children, animals, and nature reduces them as non-humans, justifying their subordination. The son, alive to the beauty of the stories of his father, embodying the ethics of justice, care, love and empathy, adopts them as his own. However, he subsequently becomes aware



that in actuality, his father never exercises any of those values.

Towards the end of the novel, a few days before the man dies from the infection in his leg, one of the father-son conversation goes thus:

Do you want me to tell you a story?

No.

Why not?

The boy looked at him and looked away.

Why not?

Those stories are not true.

They don't have to be true. They're stories.

Yes. But in the stories we're always helping people and we don't help people. (286-287)

Human beings help each other not only to secure a mutual advantage but it is also a way of being human. The act of helping others, humans or not, is a gesture of honour. A respect due to "existence" as well as to "being." Such realization of justice is followed by three-fold act of self-understanding, self-acceptance and other-acceptance and the act of justice is accomplished by empathy. Although there is certainly an element of anthropomorphism involved in empathy, it needs not always involve petty sentimentalities. There is no denying the fact, that the father experiences genuine emotional attachment with his son. But such personal attachment guided by selfish motives, has robbed others of their rights. In his struggle for assuring a positional identification with an authoritative prototype, the man also exercises masochistic self-mutilation. He remained alien to his son's actual needs. While drawing his last breath he realizes, "[i]n some other world the child would already have begun to vacate him from his life" (292). Conversely, the boy's emotions have always been selfless and all-embracing. Thus, the unreliable nature of emotions does not always guarantee an ethical act as substantiated by Simon Cooke in his essay titled "Unprofitable Excursions: On the Ethics of Empathy in Modernist Discourses on Art and Literature". Empathy as a cognitive act involves a just choice. Formulated in this manner, empathy is an act of comprehension, with a preconceived notion of justice. An act can be conceived as ethical if that is simultaneously empathetic and just. Any emotion that promotes such act is worthy





to embrace.

The notion of justice, as instilled into the boy from being around his father, surfaces as he comes across the nomadic group after his father's death. The boy's standard of "goodness" is set against those of the male leader of the community as the boy asks him a series of questions:

How do I know you're one of the good guys?

You dont. You'll have to take a shot.

Are you carrying the fire?

Am I what?

Carrying the fire?

...

Do you have any kids?

We do.

Do you have a little boy?

We have a little boy and we have a little girl.

He's about your age. Maybe a little older.

And you didnt eat them.

No.

You don't eat people.

No. We dont eat people.

And I can go with you?

Yes. You can.

Okay then.

Okay (303-304).

The values like trust and gender equality are added to rather vague ones like being "good guys", "carrying the fire" and anti-cannibalism. For the boy, the essential criteria of "goodness" are answered in even fuller terms as he is adopted by the group. The woman of the group, a maternal figure, "put her arms around him and held him," and said, "the breath of God . . . passes from man to man through all of time" (306). Such spirits of care and kinship are an alternative model of social



contract based on rank and exploitative relations. Rather, it is a group which believes in mutuality as the boy is allowed to carry his father's gun and pray to his father's memory as opposed to God to whom the woman offers her prayer.

### III. Conclusion

The conclusion of the paper should concur with that of the novel. Not for the sake of linearity but for its significance—in terms of novelistic techniques and content. As I have already mentioned, it amounts to the narrator's subtle incrimination of our species for the injustice perpetrated by us to our fellow species. The paragraph reads thus:

Once there were brook trout in the stream in the mountains. You could see them standing in the amber current where the white edges of their fins wimpled softly in the flow. They smelled of moss in your hand. Polished and muscular and torsional. On their backs were vermiculate patterns that were maps of the world in its becoming. Maps and mazes. Of a thing which could not be put back. Not be made right again. In the deep glens where they lived all things were older than man and they hummed of mystery (307).

Although, the lines confirm the irreversibility of the ecological collapse, and that we may never set the wrongs right again, they also promote a vision of mutual existence as the relatively detached narrator assumes a superior ethical position and in a tone highly charged with pathos, relates the narrative past to the readers ("you") in the narrative present (307). The lines also confirm a frustrated vision of justice—a vision which derives from an empathetic acceptance of the Other and a subsequent wish to give every object their due in the scheme of things in which humans hold but a small place. The vision is frustrated because humans, with their discourse of progress, and an all-consuming greed were never satisfied with their due. They failed to comprehend their own diminutive status with respect to the great web of life. Instead, they hold on to an imaginary identity. This fictional identity is the prison-house that the unnamed man had made for himself. With self-understanding, self-acceptance and other-acceptance, the nomadic group marks a point of redemption for the whole humanity. Viewed from this perspective, the road in the novel stands for humanity's penitential journey towards knowing what it is like to be a human.



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## **Reconstructing the World through Ecocriticism: An Overview of Ecocritical Slants in E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India***

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**Abstract:** Ecocriticism in the modern era comes out as a major emerging theory as the nature is continuously contaminated by the anthropogenic activities of man. The nexus between the mother Nature and mankind becomes gradually wider. Man in pursuit of money and other material aspects is incessantly committing ecocide. To save nature from the greedy clutches of modern civilization ecocriticism comes into being. E. M. Forster's polemical novel *A Passage to India* celebrates the triumph of this theory because the horrid aspect of the Marabar Caves baffles the comprehension of both the natives and foreigners. Rains come for the sake of the weary and distracted souls to attain sublimity and ultimate unification with God. Not only this but also other features of Indian landscape and religion interact with diverse spheres of human life.

**Key words:** Ecocriticism, Nature, Ecocritical Slants, Culture, Marabar Caves.

In the twenty first century phenomena environment is on the verge of deterioration as it is gradually going to lose its beauty, entity, greenness and freshness by the unscientific activity of human beings and industrial waste materials. Off late, human beings of both First world and Third world countries are ceaselessly committing ecocide, making the planet inhospitable for any kind of life. At this critical juncture, the conscious and rational people take an effort to make other concerned about the boon of benevolent nature. As a result of this consciousness ecocriticism emerges as a prime literary theory making an attempt to



make a greener, cleaner, pollution-free nature through the sustainable development by disclosing the close nexus between human world and environment through literature.

Ecocriticism as a literary theory gains its momentum during the late 1960s and early 1970s. U.S critic William Rueckert first used the term 'ecocriticism' in the essay "*Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism*" in 1978. In Britain ecocriticism is known as 'Green Study' and its infrastructure is less developed there than in USA. To define it may be described as a literary and cultural criticism from an environmentalist viewpoint. Glotfelty in the 'Introduction' to *The Ecocriticism Reader* (1996) defines ecocriticism as "the study of relationship between literature and physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective... ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies" (Glotfelty xix). Lawrence Buell in *The Environmental Imagination* terms it as "a study of relationship between literature and environment conducted in a spirit of commitment of environmentalist praxis" (Buell 7-8). Richard Kerridge in "Environmentalism and Ecocriticism" introduces the concept of nature and its connection to the culture:

Ecocritics analyze the history of concepts such as 'nature', in an attempt to understand the cultural developments that has led to the present global crisis. Direct representations of environmental damage or political struggle are of obvious interest to ecocritics, but so is the whole array of cultural and daily life, for what it reveals about implicit attitudes that have environmental consequences. (Kerridge 532)

Dana Phillips argues in the essay "Ecocriticism, Literary Theory and Truth of Ecology" in favour of the professors of the Department of English about the necessity of reading ecocriticism in literature emphasizing the catena between nature and culture: "Nature is thoroughly implicated in culture and culture is thoroughly implicated in nature" (Phillips 578).

To sum up, it can be asserted that ecocritics bring the questions of class, race, colonialism and gender while they assess a text from ecocritical viewpoint. Following Glotfelty, Greg Garrard stresses upon the co-relation of nature and culture and asserts "...ecocriticism is closely related to environmentally oriented developments in philosophy and political theory.



Developing the insights of earlier critical movements, ecofeminists, social ecologists and environmental justice advocates seek a synthesis of environmental and social concerns” (Garrard 3).

E. M Forster's epoch- making novel *A Passage to India* (1924) is crammed with ecological elements firmly establishing that the present novel can be read in terms of eco-critical reading. The novel's triadic structure (Mosque- Caves and Temple) manifests co-mingling of the natural, cultural and religious aspects of India. The ‘Mosque’ section deals with the possibilities of personal relationship, Islamic brotherhood and oneness of God; the ‘Caves’ section exhibits the primitive universe of evil, chaos and annihilation; the ‘Temple’ section comes as a restorative of harmony and happiness to the exhausted souls in the novel. Critic like Benita Parry assimilates triadic structure of the novel with three different seasonal cycles like cold weather, hot weather and monsoon. Forster’s intention of writing the novel is to examine the close relationship between man and India, essentially as a geographical aspect transforming into a philosophic one:

His intention seems to have been to examine man's place ‘among the incompatible multitudes of mankind’... India, perceived as shapeless arbitrary and discordant, suited the purpose admirably, fitting neatly as a microcosm of ‘the echoing contradictory world’ which opens out to reveal an intrinsic unity. (as quoted in Kundu 52)

At the very outset of *A Passage to India* the description of Chandrapore city and river Ganges reflect nature- culture dualism. The city Chandrapore, situated on the bank of Ganges and bedecked with the trees, is divided by the railway track into Indian locality with hospital and European locality with a civil station. Chandrapore, a city of garden, is just like a forest sparsely scattered with huts and glitters with the holy river Ganges on the bank of which “toddy palms and neem trees and mangoes...rise from the gardens where ancient tanks nourish them....Seeking light and air, and endowed with more strength than man or his work, they soar above the lower deposit to greet one another with branches and beckoning leaves, and to build a city for birds”(Forster 9-10).The holy river Ganges has become polluted in Chandrapore as the effect of anthropocentrism; the river continues to put up



with the rubbish of the city and washes away the dead bodies from Banaras. The sky plays a pivotal role in Chandrapore city because here “the sky settles everything... not only climates and seasons but when the earth shall be beautiful. By herself she can do little--- only feeble outburst of flowers. But when the sky chooses, glory can rain into the Chandrapore bazaars or a benediction pass from horizon of horizon” (Forster 10). This natural phenomenon reveals the intricate relationship between sky and Chandrapore, conflict between the colonizers and colonized as well as the potential unity of man and the redemption of mankind through the breaking out of social institutes and classifications that segregate them into their closed groupings. Malcolm Bradbury speaks for the ambiguous quality of the sky: “...the sky itself is an infinitive mystery, and reaching away into its ‘farther distance... beyond colour, lost freed itself from blue’ (p. 11). Certainly, beyond the world of social organization is the world of the “secret understanding of the heart” (p.22) to which Aziz appeals...” (Bradbury 39).

In *A Passage to India* colonialism undermines anthropocentrism; the colonizers exploit indigenous people, a part and parcel of nature. Mrs. Callendar's scornful remark about the treatment of native patients in the hospital elucidates the attitude of the colonizer to the natives as “... the kindest thing one can do to a native is to let him die” (Forster 28). It exposes the arrogant, insensitive attitude towards the Indians; even “the intelligent natives estimate that a year in India makes the pleasantest Englishman rude” (Trilling 19). Chandrapore club where Indians are not permitted to enter is reverberated with the sound of National Anthem reminding every member of their British national identity especially the ideology that they are in exile. Ronny, the city magistrate of Chandrapore, holds a callous posture to the Indians because “the educated Indians will be no good to us if there's a bow , it is simply not worth while conciliating them , that's why they don't matter” (Forster 39). Geographical distance has made two races apart; the club mentality testifies Boehmer's observation: “Perhaps the most binding imperative of colonial life was to stick to one's own” (Boehmer 67). None but Mrs. Moore makes herself isolated from other club members whose biased conduct and racial hatred towards the Indians baffle her conviction about India which epitomizes the existence of omnipresent God to her. Her strong conviction is:





“...India is part of the earth. And God has put us on the earth in order to be pleasant to each other...He is omnipresent, even in India, to see how we are succeeding” (Forster 51).

The Indian landscape imparts Mrs. Moore a sense of unification. The moon in Indian sky provides her a sense of unity and kinship; it is the same moon in England which looked there “dead and alien; here she was caught in the shawl of night together with earth and all other stars” (Forster 30). Mrs. Moore's sense of alliance continues to persist through her observation of the wasp which signifies her own openness to the Hindu idea of collectivity, to mysticism and the indefinable quality of India in general. However, the wasp is the lowest creature as represented in Hindu myth and it represents a limit of the Hindu vision. Mrs. Moore's vision of the “pretty dear” (Forster 35) is not a panacea, but merely a possibility for unity and understanding of India. But her empathy to the Indians, Adela's intense desire to see the ‘real India’ and all sorts of politics and intrigues of the English people seem to be inconsequential because of the scorching heat of the unfriendly Sun in the Indian sky. Malcolm Bradbury aptly describes the Sun in the novel “merely a creature, like the rest, and so debarred from glory” (Bradbury 37). The hot alien Indian weather which is a part of insurmountable mystery of India baffles the understanding and judgment of the English people. On the other hand, Indian weather becomes a tool of introspection for Adela divulging to her that part of Ronny's character which she never admired : “ His self-complacency, his censoriousness , his lack of subtlety, all grew vivid beneath a tropic sky” ( Forster 79). But Ronny's perception of Indian weather is a quintessence form of every Englishman's perception of the colony: “There's nothing in India but the weather... it's the alpha and omega of the whole affair” (Forster 49). So the bridge party to meet East and West proves to be a foil. There Mrs. Turton wonders about the Indians “Why they come at all I don't know. They hate it as much as we do” (Forster 60).

Religion, a chief aspect of man- made culture, again stands as a barrier to meet East and West as well as Hindu and Muslim. Aziz reacts with disgust to Mrs. Moore for entering into the mosque. Ronny hearing his mother's visit to the mosque warns “you can not do that sort of things...it's not done” (Forster30), insisting that the class difference should be maintained in colony like India where the Englishman “like posing as gods” (Forster 49).



Again, western civilization recognizes a new sort of confrontation coming in contact with the East. Adela, a western maid, realizes her own self and the wide difference between herself and Ronny, her fiancé. The ultimate outcome is the breaking off their engagement. When she comes to realize with this resolution, Adela observes a green bird exposing the mysteries and muddles of “hundred Indias”, a land of mysterious beauty and an exposure of inner self in close contact with nature. Adela's emotions associating with the green bird manifests the inscrutable and non-identifiable nature of India. Like Aziz she prefers to remain silent; the interaction between the subconscious self with its conscious counterpart seems to be inutile. To follow Orange: “Moreover, this willingness to trust to silence rather than more direct expression marks a primary strategy in Forster’s attempt to penetrate Indian culture” (Orange 57).

Thus the ‘Mosque’ section recapitulates the harmony and a quest to know the mysteries of India by Mrs. Moore and Adela Quested; the ‘Caves’ section explores the crudity and horrible nature of the Marabar Caves overwhelming the cultural upbringing of these two English women. The hot, stony Indian landscape is viewed as the ‘alien weather’ by the Europeans with horror, terror and disgust. None can interpret the void and meaninglessness of Indian landscape because India is unique with its “fields, then hills, jungle, hills and more fields...how the mind can take hold of such a country? Generations of invaders have tried, but they remain in exile” (Forster 135). The Marabar hills with its dark caves that are older than anything else upon the earth stand as a supreme force of unattainable nature.

The Marabar Caves embodying the spirit of emptiness and nothingness are devoid of carving and any distinction. The dark caves are only illuminated with the light of matches of a visitor through its polished walls reverberating with the sound of fatal echo ‘Boum’ or ‘bou-oum’. The caves are the representative of ancient, pre-historic age of India which even Lord Buddha “shunned a renunciation more complete than his own, and has left no legend of struggle or victory in the Marabar” (Forster 124). In Rama Kundu opinion Forster portrays the caves darker than the original one to use them as structural and symbolic device drawing the attention into an area where “concentration can take place. A cavity... They were



something to focus everything up” (as quoted in Kundu 114). The Marabar Caves expose the nullity of romanticism because it robbed the infinity and eternity of their vastness- the sole qualities connecting them to mankind; the world in the cave “within us and without echo together the sound of boum; this is the extreme beyond Coleridgean dejection, for the visionary hope is lost in the face of an unspeaking and utterly alien nature, a nature only self reflecting”(Bradbury 32). The hollow, empty caves become a replica of ancient atheist Indian culture.

The aspect of Indian culture associated with the Marabar Caves is the ancient atheist and ascetic tradition of Jain which rejected the phenomenal world as the source of pain and suffering. The Marabar Caves have a corrosive, nihilating effect on those who are susceptible to their power, and they become the central mystery of “mysterious India” in Forster’s *Passage* thereto. (Monk, 101)

Besides the physical existence of the Marabar Caves, it emerges as a human being fascinating and frightening other people simultaneously. The caves, to quote Shahane, “give a negative answer, though it is only one of the many possible answers” (Shahane 117) to Aziz, Mrs. Moore and Adela. Aziz, who like a Mogul emperor imparts a lavish scope of visiting the Marabar Caves to his foreign guests, fails to decipher the significance of dull, dark, empty caves without the spiritual assistance of Professor Godbole. He is accused of sexual assault by Adela who in the evil caves is hallucinated of being confronted with the evil of Aziz's mind. Thus Aziz suffers a lot because “he has challenged the spirit of the Indian earth, which tries to keep man in compartments” (Forster 127). Aziz wishes this particular grim aspect of India to be transformed into mosque that imparts elixir to the lost and dried souls. Even Mrs. Moore whose intention of coming to India was to love and observe Indians and its nature with its seemingly beautiful Ganges, the flowing water and the mysterious moon caught in the shawl of night, confronts with the Marabar Caves whose corrosive effect wither away “the wonderful India of her opening weeks, with its cool nights and acceptable hints of infinity” (Forster 156). Her claustrophobic experience within the caves makes her fatigued; she gradually loses entire mundane interest in god, in her children and in the universe as all these fail to offer repose to her soul. All Christian values within



her like pathos, piety and courage seem to exist having no value of their own. Though she could ever forget the crush and smell of the rocks but the echo without any distinction has a profound imprint upon her unconscious. To her the caves become “the universe as microcosm”(Shusterman 167) that compel her to go back to England .On her way back she is taunted by the coconut trees , and all those ‘untouched places’ of India as she thinks “an echo was India [...] the Marabar caves [ were] final” (Forster 205). She is defeated before the caves which are “a primeval universe of evil, chaos and annihilation” (Shahane 117). She finally achieves her passage to India through her death in Indian sea. The swelling of the river water bears a recurring symbol of rebirth after her life. Her encounter with the caves can best be summarized in the words of Chaman L. Sahni: “From Indian standpoint, she has a vision of vast Immensity, the Hindu view of Timeless Absolute, but from western standpoint her vision embodies a confrontation with Nothingness” (Sahni 69).

India still remains an enigma both with Forster and Miss Adela Quested. Adela who comes to see the ‘real India’, accepts every saying of Aziz who is an emblem of India to her but India as a space remains a spiritual muddle both to herself and Aziz. Aziz demurs “Nothing embraces the whole of India, nothing, nothing... (Forster 143)”. The horrible caves of Marabar hill become a labyrinth reflecting the same stony walls and getting her hallucinated - “that makes some women think they've had an offer of marriage when none was made” (Forster 233). The Caves stand for that aspect of India where religion becomes inadequate and sterile; Mosque and Temple prove to be ineffective. Her experience in the Caves symbolizes “the inadequacy of our intellect to measure spiritual reality” (Sivaramakrishna 15). She fails to make out India and her own Anglo- Indian status. Again, the entire episode in the Marabar Caves is marked by destruction of the structure of marriage and heterosexual relationship. Adela comes to realize the vacuity of loveless marriage; in this context Wilfrid R. Kopphen argues “... upon entering the cave, a symbol of the unconscious, the instinctual, and of motherhood and fertility, Adela becomes unhinged, suggesting a rejection of sexual union” (Kopphen 94- 95). Aziz is convicted of making sexual assault upon Adela but everything is settled aright with the benign effect of echo ‘Esmiss Esmmor’, the Indianized name of Mrs. Moore; it leads to Adela's clarity and the



release of Aziz. Adela gets rid of the echo only after her confession of the mistake in the trial. This brings within her a resignation to the limits of knowledge and worlds. Adela along with Fielding broods over ceaseless conundrum of India: “Were there worlds beyond which they could never touch...? They could not tell...Perhaps life is a mystery, not a muddle; they could not tell. Perhaps the hundred Indias...are one and the universe they mirror is one. They had not the apparatus for judging” (Forster 256).

The Caves’ concomitance with the evil tinged with ceaseless mystery continues to exist with its reference to the snakes. In the Caves Adela sees a thin, dark object that looks like a snake. Adela disappearance in the caves thwarts Aziz’s desperate attempt to find her because “the place was so confusing...and full of grooves that led this way and that like snake-tracks” (Forster 152). On his way back from the picnic sites Aziz seems to see “the snake that looked like a tree” (Forster 157) but nothing is explained. On the other hand, critic like Benita Parry associates the Caves with the spiritual vacuity pervading the minds of the British. The inexpressible Caves “can also be read as echoes of the “spiritual reverberation” induced by an India whose religious pursuits and eloquent landscapes provoke intellectual doubt and promote noumenal anxieties in the novel’s western protagonists...”(Parry 156). Fielding, an atheist, even muses over the fact that the Hindus have perhaps found the quintessence form of the religion which the west lacks.

‘Temple’ section begins after two years of Marabar incident with the coming back of Fielding to India along with Stella and Ralph at Mau during the celebration of Gokul Ashtami festival in Monsoon-“ the best weather”(Forster 307) of India. Love, peace and harmony restore in Monsoon with the “friendly Sun” shining forth and flooding the world with colour. It is the time when reconciliation between East and West takes place after the birth of Lord Krishna representing the Hindu vision of complete being refuting the vision of nothingness, emptiness and isolation symbolized through the Marabar Caves. The evil, corrosive effect of the echo within the Marabar Caves are washed away by the symphony of music within the temple producing an echo of its own- “and union between earth and the sky, the finite and the infinite” (Kundu 220). During Krishna Janmastami festival, the wasp reminds Professor Godbole of Mrs. Moore and the unity between a Brahmin and a



Christian ,between Krishna and Christ ,between East and West. He invokes the omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent God through the song 'come, come, come' - an appeal for the salvation of entire country through the song of love and transcendence. When Lord Krishna takes his birth in the rain, love permeates the entire world: "They loved all men, the whole universe, and scraps of their past, tiny splinters of detail, emerged for a moment to melt into the universal warmth" (Forster 281).

Religion dominates the aspects of Nature and culture. Here the image of Shri Krishna becomes a symbol of religious toleration and solace "not only for Indians, but for foreigners" (Forster 283). Through Nature Forster seems to realize the oneness of God as Mrs. Moore's vision of "God is love" (51) is transformed into Godbole's "God si love" (Forster 281). Thus the third section Temple " seems to suggest the possibility of reconciliation between conflicting pulls, personalities and memories; it carries the promise of an ideal vision of harmony, which is attained though transitory, by the finite individual, at some rare moment when the release of love has taken place" (Kundu 118). Aziz forgetting the enmity with the English invites Ralph to water by boat in the rain where their boat collides with that of Fielding resulting in unity of two long estranged friends. They plunge in the warm; shallow water as "The rain settled in steadily to its job of wetting everybody and everything through..." (Forster 310). But both of them are aware of their imminent separation because in a country like India friendship is not possible between colonizers and colonized. Even the landscape of India opposes to the friendship between Fielding and Aziz with their hundred voices "No, not yet" (Forster 317). India is not merely represented by Forster as a geographical space standing in contrast with England only; "...India is schismatic within itself. India's challenge is the challenge of the multiverse... what the city is as metaphor in *Howards End*, India is in *Passage*, it is a metaphor of contingency"... (Bradbury 36).

To conclude now, it can be asserted that A Passage to India is intersected with the diverse elements of Nature corresponding with human emotion. While in the first section Sky predominates, the second section is preoccupied with earth and the third section with rain. The rain unites earth and sky which Forster so ardently wants. Rama Kundu's comment





is apt to justify the ending:

The rain, marking union of the earth and the sky, the finite and the infinite, is over; still the earth is trying to retain the memory of rain, the union, by sucking water in, and the sound produced in the process evokes a gesture of love. (Kundu 201)

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## ***Things Fall Apart as a Post-Colonial Novel***

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**Abstract:** Chinua Achebe (1930-2013) published his first novel *Things Fall Apart* in 1958. Achebe wrote *Things Fall Apart* in response to European novels that depicted Africans as savages who needed to be enlightened by the Europeans. Achebe presents to the reader his people's history with both strengths and imperfections by describing for example Igbo festivals, the worship of their gods and the practices in their ritual ceremonies, their rich culture and other social practices, the colonial era that was both stopping Igbo cultures and also brought in some benefits to their culture. *T.F.A.* therefore directs the misleading of European novels that depict Africans as savages into a whole new light with its portrayal of Igbo society and examines the effects of European colonialism on Igbo society from an African prospect. Hence this essay is an attempt to show an insight of pre and post colonialism on Igbo society. It is argued that the interaction between the whites and Igbo people had both negative and positive consequences.

**Keywords:** Achebe, post-colonialism, racism.

### **Introduction**

The novel *Things Fall Apart* is written by the late Chinua Achebe (1930-2013) who was a Nigerian author. The setting of the novel is in the outskirts of Nigeria in a small fictional village, Umuofia just before the arrival of white missionaries into their land. Due to the unexpected arrival of white missionaries in Umuofia, the villagers don't know how to react to the sudden cultural changes that the missionaries threaten to change with their new political structure and institutions. Hence, this essay aims at analysing the effects of European colonisation in Igbo culture. Towards the end of the nineteenth century most European states migrated to Africa and other parts of the world where they established colonies. Nigeria was amongst other African nations that received visitors who were on a colonising mission, introducing their religion and culture that



is later imposed on Igbo. The culture of the people of Umuofia (Igbo Culture) is immensely threatened by this change.

Achebe's primary purpose of writing the novel is because he wants to educate his readers about the value of his culture as an African. TFA provides readers with an insight of Igbo Society right before the white missionaries invasion on their land. The invasion of the colonising force threatens to change almost every aspect of Igbo Society from religion, traditional gender roles and relations family structure to trade.

Consequently, Achebe blames the white missionaries colonial rule and/or invasion for the post-colonial oppressed Igbo Culture, this oppression can be seen in terms of the oppressed social coherence between the individual and their society further more, Achebe educates readers extensively about Igbo society's myths and proverbs.

Before Achebe wrote TBA, all novels that had been written about Africa and Africans were written by Europeans. Mostly, the European writings described Africans as uncivilized and uneducated persons. The Europeans, seeing that they thought of themselves as more advanced than Africans, were determined to help Africans shift from the old era into the modern era of civilisation and educations.

Heart of Darkness, for instance by Joseph Conrad was one of the most read novels around the time of its publication in 1899. Conrad described Africa as a 'Wild', 'dark' and uncivilized continent, following Conrad's novel in 1952 was Mister Johnson, a novel by Joyce Cary, like Heart of Darkness, Mister Johnson was also quite a popular read, its reviews suggest it was a more popular read than Heart of Darkness. According to Sickels, Mister Johnson, describes the novel's protagonist Mr. Johnson generally as a "Childish, semi educated African who reinforces colonialist stereotypes about Africa."

Based on the descriptions of Africa and its people by both Conrad and Cary, it comes as no surprise that Achebe and other African writers began to emerge and tell their story of Africa and its people. Not only were Conrad and Cary's novels a misre-presentation of Africa they are also



humiliating to its people. It is through the insights of TFA that the world became more appreciative of Africa and its people and at the same time the truth surrounding the stereotypical ideas that once existed about Africa began to appear in a much clearer light.

Achebe wrote TFA to encourage his fellow countrymen to take advantage of the educational system that the missionaries introduced to them so as to better their lives. He is determined to take the modern African Literature genre to greater heights as well as to prove to the Europeans the value of the African culture. The novel was published during a period when a lot of writers emerged from Nigeria, among them are Wole Soyinka and Ben Okri.

These writers all play an influential role in Modern African Literature, both in their countries, and internationally. However Achebe was the most successful writer of the lot because he “has been critical of the role of Christianity in Africa, his Criticism has been regarded generally as moderate and his creative work has won almost universal praise for its objectivity and detachment.” Infact, he is “one of the writers of his time with fluency in the English language”. None the less, this does not imply that Soyinka and Okri were not successful in their writing careers.

In the writers of TFA Achebe describes the history of Igbo he does so by describing both the perfections and imperfections of the culture and tradition that made them different from Western Cultures for example, their beliefs in the power of ancestral gods, the sacrifice of young boys, the killing of twins and the oppression of women’s to name few. In the novel the reader is also made aware of the arrival of white missionaries in Umuofia as well as the reactions of Igbo to their arrivals. Although the arrival of the missionaries had some benefits to Igbo, there were also a number of challenges that faced the future of Igbo.

My aim and focus is to analyse Igbo society as it appears in the novel, which is before and after the arrival of white missionaries in Umuofia, the effects of their arrival concerning Igbo Culture consequently leading to the clash of culture between the two parties. I intend to incorporate our critical theory in analysing TFA. I will draw on post colonial criticism which is relevant for the analysis of the novel as it is concerned with Achebe’s work in TFA. Post colonial Criticism, for



instances is mainly concerned with literature critiques from countries that the colonies of other countries. Because Achebe originates from Nigeria, a colony of Britain, some of the writing elements he uses in his novels such as language and style are influenced by that.

### **Reflections on Post-Colonialism**

Most texts give the definition of colonialism before they most texts give the definition of colonialism before they define the meaning of the term post-colonialism. Colonialism as defined by OED refers to “the policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers and exploiting it economically.” Therefore, post-colonialism is sometimes assumed to refer to “after colonialism or “after independence” describes the wide range of social, cultural and political events arising specifically from the decline and fall of European colonialism that took place after World War-II.

Post-Colonialism expresses the opposite idea of colonialism. Hence post-colonialism literature is a consequence of colonialism. Through Literature we understand the primary focus of Achebe's TFA, a novel written by an individual who grew up under colonial rule in response to the effects of colonialism on his culture, Achebe writes back at the writings of European writers and the misrepresentation of Africa in their writing. A colonised individual is usually found to follow the culture of their colony regardless if they are against it or not. Post-colonial writers usually write about how their native cultures were destroyed under the power of imperialism.

One scholar has suggested that although most countries have gained independence from their colonisers, they are still indirectly subjected in one way or another to the forms of neo-colonial domination. Post-Colonialism continues to be a process of hostility and reform. This is seen in the development of new elites in post-colonial nations that are often supported by neo-colonial institutions as is suggested by the development of divisions within these societies that are based on discriminations as varied as race, language or religion.

In a heterogeneous society (a society consisting of many different ethnic and/or 'racial' groups, social classes, languages and/or dialects, and cultural traditions) post-colonial writers



usually try to reassign new ethnic and cultural meanings to the groups of people that are treated as insignificant by their society. The literature also aims at inviting the colonised to work together collectively. If they work together and put their differences aside they are surely bound to overcome the pain of losing their culture. This will enable them to focus on ways that will help preserve the elements of their culture that still exist.

However, the literature does not show the colonised as victims of colonialism, but rather it shows that they are confused about their sense of belonging. Most colonised individuals do not know whether to follow their own culture or the culture of the colonizer. Because of this they find themselves combining some of the elements of the two different cultures which make them move back and forth in between their present and past lives, here their confused sense of belonging. This back and forth movement in most instances leads to a miscommunication that can be meaningful.

### **Exposition on the Background of the Novel**

TFA is one of the most influential novels of its time, both on a local and global scale. In order to fully understand the novel and its contents, it is important to look into the history of the novel that led to its publication. When Nigeria became a colony of Britain in 1906, the country became exposed to the British Political structure and its various institutions. Achebe was born in 1930 almost a quarter of a century after the British assumed direct control of Nigeria. Although Achebe's parents at that time had been converted to Christianity his grandparents were still firm believers in their traditional culture.

It is under these circumstances that Achebe then came to know of both the British Culture as well as Nigerian Culture since neither of them understood the other's culture and neither of them was willing to abandon their own beliefs to follow the beliefs of the other, it can be assumed that there was a lot of tension. Aware of this Achebe said -"in an interview that the conflict that existed between these two cultures created sparks in his imagination." This resulted in the birth of his novel *Things Fall Apart*. Achebe became successful in pursuing a good education and was awarded a scholarship in furthering his studies as a medical student, however, he later changed courses to



become a major in Literature. The change came as a result of his curiosity, as well as curiosity of other young Africans who were exposed to education, as to why the Westerners have developed an interest in their land and were now more than ever determined to enlighten it.

Achebe's main concern in two of his publication namely *Things Fall Apart* and *The Arrow of God*, seems to be the introduction of a new religion as well as its destructiveness of a new religion as well as its destructiveness in society. In the novel *TFA* the people of Umuofia are separated into two groups immediately following the arrival of the white missionaries in their land. The first group of people are Igbo followers and the second group of people are followers of the white missionaries. Converts to Christianity choose to abandon their own religion, traditional ways of life and fellow people to follow the white man and his ways.

*TFA* is all about the "collapse, breaking into pieces, chaos, and confusion" of traditional Igbo culture that suffers at the hand of the white man's arrival in Umuofia along with his religion. The views about life that the white men have are totally different from the views that the Igbo have. What seems utterly appropriate and acceptable in traditional Igbo culture does not appear so to the white missionaries. They are quick to want to change certain elements of traditional Igbo culture that according to them are inappropriate and unacceptable. However, in so doing, the white missionaries fail to see that these "inappropriate and unacceptable" elements of traditional Igbo culture are what keep the Igbo together and at peace with each other. For instance, in traditional Igbo culture it is required for a "real" man to wed two or more wives. The women of the clan are aware of this and have accepted this ritual, in some cases the first wife can even suggest to her husband to look for a younger wife. The younger wives are also expected to respect the first wife. These women along with their husbands live together in peace and help each other with taking care of the children and other household chores. However, the white missionaries are against polygamous marriages based on some scriptures found in the New Testament that forbid Christians against such an act.

Another example is that in Igbo culture the killing of children or a person is a normal practice, as long as the reasons of the kill are in line with the practices of their religion, for instance, Igbo





religion says that twins must be killed because they are a sign of the work of the devil, small boys should be sacrificed to the gods as a sign of peace offerings, and so forth. However the fifth commandment teaches believers that only God has the power and authority to decide when the life of man shall end and nobody else.

The obvious Cultural clash that exists between the white missionaries and Igbo in TFA is one that also emeses in the Arrow of God. An additional theme featured in the Arrow of God is that o “internal division in the tribe.” The people of Umuaro become divided on their own without any external influences; this creates a very strong sense of hatred among them and the spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood that once existed is lost.

One of the similarities between these two novels is that both the people of Umuofia and Umuaro are divided as a result of the conflict that is caused by the arrival of white missionaries in their villages. While the division among the people of Umuofia is caused by the influence of the white man the division among the people of Ummaro is not. Here, Achebe shows the readers that although the missionaries are to be blamed for the destructiveness of their religion to Igbo society, readers should also considers that tribes can also become divided on their own hence the blame should go both ways and not just to the Europeans.

In both novels Achebe uses regionally inflected language to describe the life styles of his characters as well as the environment where the plots are set respectively. TFA and The Arrow of God are “both novels that are rich with Igbo proverbs that Achebe translate into English for the benefit of his readers who are familiar with Igbo”. Achebe timelessly uses proverbs in these novels both to preserve, Igbo Culture and language as well as to show their value not only to him, but the entire Igbo community.

A proverb is defined as a “Condensed but memorable saying embodying some important fact experienced that is taken as true by many people.” (“Proverb” Advanced English Dictionary and Treasures). According to “Akporobaro a proverb is a brief common statement that is usually adopted by cultures to teach its people about the principles of right and wrong using as few words



as possible. He goes further to describe it as a means by which ideas can be vividly expressed and illustrated.”

Most of the text in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* chiefly features in the use and explanation of the complicated Igbo myths and proverbs that the Europeans fail to acknowledge. Throughout the novel Achebe craftily uses his characters to speak in proverb when they address one another. The use of proverb is very important in conversations as the Igbo believe them to be a fountain of wisdom and of respect. From the onset of the novel Achebe makes readers aware of the importance of proverbs in conversation. When Okoye pays Unoka a visit to ask him to settle his debt, and although Unoka is late with the payments, Okoye does not lash out at Unoka about his overdue debt. Rather, the neighbors share a Kola nut, give thanks unto the ancestors and then go on to discuss the debt by speaking in proverbs. This maintains good relations between the two neighbors even though they are discussing such an issue that usually causes conflicts between people.

The difference between Achebe's novel and other colonial novels is that his novel thoroughly examines Igbo society as he portrays them in a manner in which shows all aspects of Igbo Culture and not only the desirable aspect of their culture. He also predicts of the future of Igbo and when they are headed to the white missionaries are to be successful in taking control of Umuofia.

With the use of English Language, Achebe is successful in fully detailing the life of Okonkwo who at the beginning of the novel is a very famous young man in all the nine villages of Umuofia. However, as the novel develops and white missionaries begin arriving in Umuofia along with their government and institutions, Okonkwo who tries to protest the change is in the end buried without respect or dignity and his fame is soon forgotten because of the greatest sin in Igbo religion that he commits by taking away his own life.

One of the main reasons that *TFA* was successful is because of its detailed descriptiveness of Igbo culture as seen from the perspective of its author who had an insider outsider position as a result of being raised in a Christian household, which meant that he was not allowed to participate in traditional Igbo rituals although he was Igbo. Owomoyela further asserts that “Achebe presents a through understanding of narrative organization and style, and a keen observation of the absorption



with day to day happenings, not through the lenses of the anthropologist, but through the clear insight of one who was involved with and felt at one with his culture while at the sometime inculcating western ideas.” And its for these reasons that Achebe is able to fully convince his audience of the ideas in his novel.

### **Plot Summary of the Novel**

The title Things fall Apart was adopted from William Butter Yeasts “The Second Coming” (1921). Things fall apart us centered on the life of the protagonist of the novel, Okonkwo. As the novel develops Okonkwo accidentally kills a man and he and his family are exiled from Umuofia. During his exile white missionaries arrive in Umuofia and change the village. When Okonkwo returns to his village he sees the major transformations that Umuofia has undergone during his exile.

Unhappy with the change, Okonkwo and other villagers come together to drive the white missionaries out of their land. Their efforts are in vain as the missionaries send their messenger to about the meeting. Okonkwo kills one of the messengers and in shock at his actions the villagers let the other messengers escape. The messenger report back to the missionaries and they take off to bring Okonkwo to justice only to find him dead.

### **Discussion**

Fundamental to the Age of Imperialism was the “Scramble for Africa” period of the 1880s to the 1890s. The Europeans became hungry for Africa’s natural resources, resulting in their arrival into Africa as well as their hostile takeover of the land. During this period many European countries set colonies in Africa. One of the reasons that the Europeans had for colonizing Africa was their claim to civilize the primitive African minds as a humanitarian act. Soon African states were dominated by European power be it economics, political or social.

The Europeans held & Eurocentric view of the world, firmly believing European culture to be superior. Eurocentrism therefore perceives Europe as the love of civilization and of humanity. Eurocentrism had racist tendencies which fronted an inferior status to the non-whites. In order to five his people back the pride that they once had, Achebe wrote TPA. Language is also a very



important element to Igbo. It gives them a sense of belonging and they also use it as a means to preserve their culture and heritage. And although language is important to Igbo, it ultimately leads to the fall of their society.

Igbo is a society that also appears to be skeptical about change. They refuse to send their children to school where they stand a chance to be able to read and write in the English language. Despite Mr. Brown's effort to show the villagers that they need to learn English because they are now being ruled by the District Commissioner and other white missionaries who only communicate in English the villagers still remain reluctant in educating their children.

The Igbo depend on their language to differentiate them from other cultures. They also depend on language to define their social rank in their society. Okonkwo for instance when being compared to his father Unoka is considered as a wealthy man and not only because he has married a lot of women or his household produces many yams but because of his strength that helped him defeat one of the strongest wrestlers in the village. On the other hand, Unoka was a drunkard who had only one wife, not many yams and had no titles to his name by the time of his death. The village had named him agbala a term Igbo use to refer to "Women as well as to men who have not taken a title" Consequently a man who deserves no respect from society because he is not "wealthy".

Based on the definition of agbala it is evident that a man needs to gain the respect of Igbo society by fulfilling either one of the three requirements that are used to define the social status of a man. That is by either having more than one wife, producing many yams (which are determined by the number of wives a man has, as women are responsible for crop production) or by defeating the strongest man in the village in a wrestling match, which also determines the number of women he marries because families usually marry off their daughter to strong wealthy man.

However, even so readers are immediately aware of Igbo's ignorance towards the rest of the world. They are secluded community with no knowledge whatsoever about the world outside Umuofia. At no point in the novel do the characters make references to Nigeria or the rest of the world. It is interesting to note that the Igbo are not at all curious of other forms of life that beyond Umuofia.



Because the Igbo have only known Umuofia to be the only place in the world and they do not show any interest in learner's about other places outside Umuofia, it can be safely concluded that any thing outside of their territory is disregarded hence its non-existence to them. Accordingly, it comes as no surprise that the Igbo deny their children the chance of mobility from Umuofia into the competitive world which the white man's education assured them, they even reject the white missionaries attempts in teaching them the English language all in favour of their devotion to their native language.

Even before the white missionaries arrive in Umuofia, the Igbo already have their own judicial systems that are based on the knowledge that their godfathers have passed out them about their culture. Their court are spearheaded by the oldest man of the village, whose wisdom and knowledge is trusted in the power of their ancestral gods to guide them to give fain and unbiased ruins. However, one of the first things that the white missionaries do when they arrive in the village is to replace Igbo Courts with theirs. This disadvantages the villagers as the white missionaries do not know the history of Igbo, their Culture or their system of justice. It can be argued that this is one of the many mistakes that the missionaries make when they first decide to take over Igbo and their territory.

In this sense Igbo do not know what is law fully right on wrong in the white man's courts. That is why the leaders of the village are surprised when they are imprisoned after burning the missionary church. The action by the missionaries in not considering Igbo laws and customs in their hostile takeover shows that they do not care about Igbo tradition or culture.

Rather, they appear to be so keen on forcing their own culture on the Igbo that they do not see that they are destroying Igbo culture and that they could learn from the Igbo to better understand them and their way of life.

This lack of consideration of the Igbo and their well-being from the Europeans further creates the drift that exists between the two cultures and drives them further apart from where they first started. It also raises the question of the intelligence of the white missionaries. How could a civilised and educated group of individuals who do not give themselves time to learn Igbo culture turn around and call Igbo uncivilized and uneducated? They certainly appear uncivilized and



uneducated even though they claim to be. This is contradictory to the statements that they represents as the enlighteners of the village of Umuofia.

In fact, it seems that Igbo one move civilised them the missionaries themselves. In their traditional courts, for example, if two parties are at conflict with each other both parties are given the chance to tell their story before a ruling is taken as opposed to the case of the British Courts. When the villagers commit any form of crime they are imprisoned without first being questioned where as Igbo courts question those at conflict before a ruling is taken for example, Okonkwo beats up his youngest wife during the week of Peace for petty reasons and although wife beating is allowed in Igbo Culture, she is given the chance to take the matter before the courts. Okonkwo is not found guilty for beating his wife but for doing so during the week of peace where acts of violence are not allowed. Igbo is a compassionate yet violent society. This is seen through the character of Okonkwo who is generally a representative of the tribe. However, Okonkwo actions show that Igbo only become violent where certain factors force them to be. For Example Okonkwo shoots one of the messengers who are sent by the missionaries to break up their meeting.

He does this because he is tired of the white missionaries and the power of authority they have claimed over their village. Although it is not be best decision to be taken by him, it is understandable why he does it. Instead they it the other messengers escape and sit back and watch the missionaries take control of their territory.

It could be argued that this is the case because their hostility, whether on a smaller scale or larger scale, has always been restricted within the boundaries of their land. Based on this statement it justifies why Igbo do not fight back against the white missionaries who take refuge in their land and treated to change all aspects of their culture. It is rather disappointing that Igbo not only welcome the white missionaries to their land but they also easily allocate them a piece of it.

The decision by the rulers of Mbanta to allocate land to the missionaries was the worst mistake the Igbo could make. It gave the missionaries the impression that the Igbo are a weak society that they could easily influence with their culture. However, it can also be argued that the



decision by the Igbo to keep the piece of land where the evil forest lay is an indication of the respect and loyalty they still have their own culture. But, because the Igbo fail to make known to the white missionaries the dark nature of the forest, any remorse concerning the new cultural and religion is lost. Hence, the white missionaries remain unopposed and in control of Umuofia and its people.

As far as the Igbo are concerned the white missionaries are aliens because their origin is not known to them. They do not even understand the concept behind Christianity. This is because until now the nature of white people and their culture has existed outside of their language. To the Igbo it means it has simply not existed and this ultimately leads to the doom of their culture as they are confused about how to react to this new religion.

Because the white missionaries are convinced that the Igbo are primitives they obligate themselves to civilise them even though the so called primitives do not ask for their help or to be civilised. They believe themselves to be the long awaited answer to the problems Igbo Society faces and other literary Scholars such as Edward said of orientalism (although not from the text itself) believe them to be cunning in wanting to take control of Igbo land and the lands resources by coming to Umuofia under false pretence of their true intentions which was to rule Umuofia.

The white missionaries arrive in Umuofia and almost immediately expect the people of Umuofia to submit to their authority and without any question. However, on the other hand, the missionaries serve as a ray of hope to the people that Igbo religion gives no favour to for example, it is common and acceptable practice in Igbo Culture that twins are killed, boys are sacrificed or dead infants are mutilated, etc.

Some villagers are excited to go along with the white men's idea seeing that it is the only way to escape from their own religion. Okonkwo's son Nwoye is among the first converts to Christianity. This decision came after the sacrifice of Ikemefuna who was almost a brother to Nwoye. Nwoye was totally against the decision made by Igbo to kill his brother, hence he protests against this act by joining the Church and choosing to attend school. His father on the other hand is not at all pleased with Nwoye's decision to join Christianity. Although Okonkwo is disappointed in





his son's choice he does not act on it. It is then assumed that Okonkwo somehow expected this kind of behavior from his son as he always saw Nwoye as "Weak and woman like".

However, Okonkwo ends up disowning his son, Nwoye after he abandons the Igbo religion. The decision by Okonkwo to disown his only son for following another religious is yet another example of Igbo language. By abandoning his own religion, Nwoye disrespects his father in the worst possible way. However, because Okonkwo is unaware of the Christian Culture he cannot act against his son. It is apparent that Committing Suicide is Okonkwo's way of going against Christianity. This act not only costs him his life but it also takes away the respect Umuofia once had for him.

Another covert to Christianity is a pregnant mother. She has watched her children on more than one occasion being put to death because they were twins and his, according to Igbo tradition, because it was uncommon and was the work of devil. She converts to Christianity to protect her unborn child or children. Along with Nwoye and the pregnant mother, many outcasts of the village become passionate followers of Christianity because in 'God's eyes (though in not the eyes of the missionaries) they are equals to everyone else.'

The decision to follow Christianity by some members of Igbo society is greatly influenced by the suffering they had incurred from their own culture. Because they are so eager to get out of the pain and misery that Igbo religion had put them through, they do not realize that by joining the white missionaries they are actually making things harder for themselves in the long run.

Achebe is successful in making readers aware that although the effect of European colonialism challenges the culture of Igbo, the benefits of it can also be seen. Igbo society stands to benefit from the school and from other smaller things such as bicycles that the white men come with forcing Igbo people to abandon their own way of life to follow theirs seems to be the only factor that makes the white missionaries bad people in history.

In my opinion the white missionaries take the wrong approaches in their attempts to help civilize Igbo society. If all of the white missionaries who arrived in Umuofia had the same characters



as Mr. Brown, all would have not lost in the village and the missionaries would have not been referred to as such bad people as they are today. At first Mr. Brown arrived in Umuofia with the hopes that he will be able to convert most if not all of the villagers to Christianity as well as to introduced them to education.

However, soon Mr. Brown also realized that he too could learn something from Igbo rather than him totally disregarding the little knowledge they had. He was an accomodating individual to all of the villagers (even to the non-converts) and did not force them to become Christians, “wherever Mr. Brown went to Umuofia, he spent long hours with Akunna in his obi talking about religion through an interpreter. However, neither of them succeeded in winning the other to their belief, but they did learn more about their dissimilar faiths.”

The wrong approach taken by the westerners is seen in their attitude towards the Igbo of total submission and gratitude from them. Their arrival in Umuofia came unexpected and it did not help that upon their arrival they thought that because they were more civilized and educated they should be the ones to rule in Umuofia and not Igbo. By so doings they immediately unintentionally belittled the status and importance of Igbo in their own land. This is a great disrespect to Igbo and their ancestors, which is what angered and offered the Igbo the most. It would have been pleasant if the missionaries held the Igbo people at the same high standard they thought they were at.

## **Conclusion**

In summary the full of Igbo culture as well as the fall of Okonkwo cann’t only be attributed to their strong belief system and rooted culture at heritage. The aim of TFA into explore the imperfection of Igbo culture as well as its strengths. Although Achebe presents these imperfections to readers that also contribute to the destruction of their culture, the main reason for the fall of the Igbo was caused by their inability and relevance to learn English because they believed that they will never have to apply it usage in their everyday lives.

Also because the missioners were stronger than the Igbo with regard to their advancement in modern day life and education, they had a stronger influence as well as controlling power of Igbo



land and the Igbo themselves. The missionaries used a hostile approach in taking over the ruling powers of Igbo land from its natives by using their influence to spread their gospel and at the same time abolishing Igbo traditional customs and beliefs. Hence the missionaries were particularly superior to Igbo just as the author explains.

The white missionaries saw Igbo as uncivilized individuals in desperate need of their help. Although the motive of the arrival of missionaries in Umuofia was to rule over its people, the missionaries should have also seen this as a way of a cultural exchange between the two. Because both Igbo and the missionaries had until now not known of the culture of the other. The cultural exchange between the two could have benefited the Igbo more because they have not shown interest in knowing of the world that exists outside of Umuofia and had the white missionaries not arrived in their land, they would still be clueless of the existence of mankind elsewhere. It is without a doubt that the white missionaries believed themselves to be superior in comparison to Igbo, that is why they had some of the converts of Christianity be their messengers. The white men saw Igbo as a burden that they had to take care of by informing and educating them of things they did not know.

The white man believed his culture to be morally superior to Igbo culture and this caused a conflict between the two cultures. Although these problems seem resolved in the present time, they still very much exist and are causing a clash between the two cultures.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge both the benefits as well as the challenges that resulted from European colonialism on Igbo society. The Igbo greatly benefited from the introduction of school and education in their society that helped curb the rate of illiteracy in the village. Because of it today most Igbo are literate individuals who have diluted their knowledge to be more “enlightened.” The Europeans also taught Igbo about their own culture, and although the Igbo found it difficult to transition from their own culture to that of a stranger, they learnt something new from it.

Nowtheless, there are challenges that face Igbo as a consequence of the arrival of the white



missionaries. Igbo lost most of the values that tied them together as one, social coherence between the individual and society was lost, coupled with their traditional values and way of life. Because of the confused state of mind of Igbo not knowing whether to reject or embrace these changes it ultimately led to their fall mainly because of their loyalty to the language.

The arrival of white missionaries in Umuofia was to take over the ruling of it and because Igbo are a compassionate society that was also unsuspecting of the white men's intentions they welcomed them into their land and also gave them a piece of their land not knowing that these men will be the cause of the collapse of their culture.

Without culture Igbo society is as good as dead, hence the significance of Okonkwo's death in the end. Like Okonkwo the Igbo committed suicide by not being suspicious of the white missionary's intentions in their land or questioning his presence.

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## **Metamorphosis of trouble-making girl-child into Jamila singer, a celebrity star: An image of girl child in the Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's children***

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**Abstract** The existing paper attempts to examine the Jamila Sinai's role in *Midnight's Children*. Jamila, a girl child in Rushdie's novel basically, from a conservative Islamist family who turns out to be a famous singer. The paper discusses the reformation from her nickname, Brass Monkey to a super-star celebrity Jamila-singer. Her freedom as a girl child is under the barrier of old-fashioned religious setting. On the other hand, the ill-treatment of this girl child takes copious silhouettes, the range varying from male sexism and over-fortification of the girl child by her own parents. The ever-present Indian edifying convictions think about female children reliant on their male caretakers. Interestingly this trouble making girl, Jamila despite deprived of privileges to her choice of career, attains what she desired for. Thus, in this paper place of interest is the representation of Brass Monkey in *Midnight's Children* who as a girl-child accomplishes a striking victory in her singing career not all the way through her female identity but through the arrangements of her religious father.

**Key words:** Girl-child, childhood, culture, gender bias, etc.

The present paper endeavors to analyze the Salman Rushdie's Brass Monkey, a female-child figure in *Midnight's Children*, with distinctive weight on her renovation from Brass Monkey to a superstar, Jamila singer. The off-putting stereotypes of girl-child are glimpsed in more or less every portion of life in patriarchal society. All and sundry speak about the autonomy of girl-child. However, sarcastically female child is under the cordon of outmoded religious and social way of



life. This mistreatment takes numerous shapes, the scale varying from male sexism and over-fortification of the girl child by parents. The ubiquitous Indian cultural convictions consider female children reliant on their male caretakers. Dr Jyoti Singh in her research article argues that, “to grow up as girl is different compared to growing up as a boy and it reflects the attitude of society towards female child. Indian literature, traditional as well as and modern is canonical, replete with statements and images rejecting a girl child and showing craving for a male child”(Singh-119). Of course girl children are deprived of their privileges to choice of career. Thus, in the same manner the paper highlights the image of Brass Monkey in *Midnight's Children* who as a girl child attains a dramatic success in her singing profession not all the way through her female identity but through the arrangements of her religious father. Though, the narrative of *Midnight's Children* deals with the male protagonist but the essential segment of the novel deals with the transformation of Jamila Sinai to super star singer. The current paper also seeks to probe that how a great deal Jamila's talent of singing is a result of her own creation? And how much it is product of patriarchal society?

## Discussion

Prior to setting off a meticulous analysis of Brass Monkey, a girl child in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. It may be beneficial to check up several gliding position of girl child in Indian postcolonial fiction in English. Unquestionably, India is terra firma of the age long traditions where adults are well-regarded but children are overlooked with apathy. Overlooking at the girl-child in the Indian society has pressed many postcolonial novelists to move up the concern for girl children in their artistic works. A case in point is *The God of Small things* where Arundhati Roy unfurls the truth regarding the indifferent treatment of Rahel, girl-child in Indian family. Rahel, a daughter of divorce-mother kept in her family did get the due love which every child need in childhood. The disproportionate conduct of male-child and girl-child in Indian society is at good strength painted by fiction writers. Reshma's comment is, thus, an incredibly insightful that even if traditionally childhood has been considered as delightful phase of protection with care but still this socially gender construction have its impact on childhood, “Girls are encouraged to move around with the



girls of similar social and caste status. Children thus learn to create their own groups based on gender, caste and family to which they belong. In this way culture shapes the child before he or she understands the significance of it" (Reshma-04). This inclusive lack of concentration on the girlhood is endorsed as age-long religious and cultural defined values where girl child is overlooked on the basis of sexual characteristics. Mostly, in Indian society the individuality of girl child is constrained by the cultural set of laws which make her distinctive woman. This gender specific childhood of girl children are all visible in the postcolonial novels where novelists have made girl child as key narrating consciousness.

The portrayal of Jamila Sinai in *Midnight's Children* is akin to that of millions of girls who are tutored by her religious family to be vigilant towards the society. Ironically, she as girl-child is viewed by her parents merely on the requisites of her outlook and responsibility in the direction of her family and Islamic society. It is in the book of the *Midnight's Children* Jamila Sinai comes into view as an instrument to amalgamate her brother protagonist in the novel. In relation to the protagonist-Saleem she is spellbound in twofold binary of good-bad and angel-demon game. Saleem as male child in the novel enjoys more fictional self-sufficiency than that of her sister Jamila Sinai who became central attention in book two of the novel. Besides, Jamila Sinai there is another important female child figure in the novel namely Evelyn Lilith Burns who is American by birth, a bicycle-riding gale child. Saleem along with his friend Sonny Ibrahim instigates to extend a romantic push on this American girl, Evelyn. But unluckily Evelyn likes his friend Sonny. And instead Sonny likes Saleem's sister, Jamila. A complex chain of love; yet, no love at all. It is indeed true in a sense that, girl children draw their attention simply when they are all set for romantic advances then they come into direct contact with the male cult. Both Jamila and American girl refuse the romantic advances of boys. Jamila and her friends thrashed Sonny and Saleem aims to get a hold on Sonny to Evelyn for himself, but Evelyn falls for Sonny. Saleem attempts to make an impression on her by learning riding a bike, but that did not make any impact on her mind. Child-Saleem expresses his feelings about the love for this girl, "before I climb into my first pair of long pants, I fell in love with Evie: but love was a curious, chain- reactive thing that year" (MC-185).





Though, *Midnight's Children* primarily deals with the male-protagonist but it gives significant glimpses of girl-child. A case in point is Jamila who is treated as an incapable of decision making when it comes her career advancement in singing. The privileged conduct of male-child and minor handling of girl-child is rampant in narrative which creates a dividing line between male and female child. Evidently, in the novel when Jamila come into view before public she is enclosed with white silk *chadar*, an emblematic representation of purity. The novel states, "the chadar of Jamila singer was held up by two tireless, muscular figures, also veiled from head to foot- the official story was that they were her female attendants, but their sex was impossible to determine through their burqas"(MC 245). This clearly shows how sexism and bigotry is customary in the novel with regard to the treatment of girl child. Even the counterparts of girl-children in the novel are indifferent to them. Take the instance of child-Saleem and Sonny Ibrahim who insist on girls with romantic advances without considering the autonomy of girl-child and their identity. Both Jamila and Evie reject these boys on grounds of their inner wish but on the contrary boys do not show any respect for their freewill. Both Amina and Parvati agree that neither Saleem nor Sonny value the freewill of Jamila and Evie who don't crave to be in relationship with these boys. But on the contrary, these boys stubbornly hunt on these girls apart from what girls yearn for. The sexiest remarks of narrator are an open confession of stubbornness he says, "once, I shyly gave her a necklace of flowers (queen-of-the-night for my Lily-of-the-eve), bought with my pocket money from a hawker- woman at scandal point" (MC-183). But Evelyn refuses to take it she simply denies by saying that "I don't wear flowers". (MC-183) Thus, for insisting foolishly to girl unfolds the fact that children are divided on the basis gender consciousness. The complex chain of love triangle in the narrative where Saleem is chasing behind Evie and Sonny is chasing behind Saleem's sister. As Sonny says, "Saleem's sister, you are pretty solid type! Or, listen you want to be my girl?"(MC-185) Instead Evie is inclined towards Sonny. Thus this cross inclination creates a dividing line among them. This is actually a result of familial upbringing wherein they are taught this stereotype behavior. As Reshma argues in her research article that:

Childhood in India is gender specific male children and female children are brought up in different ways according to familial practices and cultural demands. Indian girl realizes at



very young age that she is different from her younger brother or elder brother who is evidently given preference compared to her. (Reshma-4)

In Indian society this division between a male child and female child relationship crop up due to the predetermined standpoint of stereotype old age tradition by which they seek to comprehend themselves as well as others. In *Midnight's Children* Saleem's sister beats up Sonny just for the fault that he was pursuing her in love. He was ruthlessly beaten by Jamila along with her friends as mentioned, "she and the three beefy swimmers had jumped upon Sonny Ibrahim, street-sleepers and beggars and bicycling clerks were watching with open amusement, they were ripping every scrap of clothing off his body"(MC-186). But Saleem was watching and could not help Sonny he says to Saleem, "Damn it man, are you going just stand and watch?"(MC-187) It was indeed hard for child-Saleem to decide on whether to take side of her stereotype sister or to take side of his best friend. Ultimately scene of incident ends with the beating of Sonny "tata-ba-ta lover boy"(MC-187) Later Sonny asked Saleem about his sister's brutal conduct; he asks, "*Why she does it*" and in reply Saleem says, "She does things that is all" (MC-187). This harsh female behavior is result of social factors perhaps Jamila is from the Muslim background that she is taught to be critical towards boys. This is a process that goes on with childhood and even beyond. Thus the division in childhood on the basis of gender is social construction where parents direct teaching is responsible for creating barriers between girl child and male child in the social setting who do look at each other beyond the perspective of gender. This barrier is injecting on the inner psyche of children which make them gender conscious in childhood and result is isolated childhood experiences. The novel records the conversation between Sonny and Saleem where they express more openly the threat posed the female behavior:

'Listen Sonny; I pleaded, 'you are my friend, right?

'Yeah, but you did not even help...'

'No, so you have to do your own dirty...'

'Hey, Sonny, man, think only. These girls need careful handling, man. Look how the



Monkey (Jamila) flies off the handle! You've got the experience, yaar, you have been through it. You will know how to go gently this time. What to do I know, man? May be she doesn't like me even. You want me to have my clothes torn off, too? That would make you feel better? (MC-178)

This conversation between Saleem and Sonny unfold the fact that these boys foolishly pursue their counterparts without considering their will. They don't seem to look at these girls beyond the gender perspective rather they view them romantic-toys whom they want to play with. As Mccoby and Jacklin observes, "Children continue to learn gender roles throughout childhood, and pre-adolescence and adolescence are important stages in learning masculine and female behaviors" (Maccoby-89). This reveals the fact that biological peculiarities between sexes determines the manner of living for boy or a girl, which is evident in from the conduct of children, Saleem, Sonny, Jamila and Evie. Both male and female children have different understanding of each other.

*Midnight's Children* presents a developing image of girl-child Brass Monkey. It is on her fourteenth birthday party that she was known as Jamila singer. The emerging talented girl from the Muslim stereotype family was caught in the clutches of communal troubles like gender intolerance in the garb of religious and cultural restrictions. Same is case with Jamila who along with her brother Saleem arrived in Karachi on Feb-9<sup>th</sup>, where Jamila "*had been launched on the career*"(MC-237) She believed that if she had left Bombay however being here in Karachi proves to be a shining fame for my entire career of singing. Dilemma begins when major Latif asked Saleem to host a musical show of his sister Jamila in fact, major Latif had actually heard about Jamila's melodies voice. Saleem could not eject major Latif on spot. Saleem's belief was that his parents have recognized that their daughter's singing gift is extraordinary to remain to themselves. This stereotype approach of their parents is the result of age long silent gender discrimination where girl child is treated in utmost care and protection. The inclusive lack of consideration on the singing talent of Jamila singer is attributed to the narrow mindset of her parents who do not seem to see her desire for singing beyond the prism of religion. The novel states:

Their daughter's gift was too extraordinary to keep to themselves; the sublime magic of her



angel's voice had begun to teach them the inevitable imperatives of talent. But Ahmad and Amina had one concern.' Our daughter; Ahmad said- he was always the more old-fashioned of the two beneath the surface- is from a good family; but you want to put her on a stage in front of God knows how many strange men?(MC-278)

Under the congenial protection of this girl child her parents later changed their mindset only when major Latif assured them for complete safety of their daughter he told them that, "your daughter would be given much respect as mine"(MC-280). The way Jamila became a shining star. Jamila cooperatively succeeds in attaining transformation by performing with outfit outside her parental restrictions. The mounting attractiveness of Jamila singer in Pakistan had arrived at position that she could no longer keep away from an open public concert.

In Indian social order the girl children are made-up to comprise a life of safeguard however this often proved risky for girl children in the hands of those, who are supposed to look after them With Jamila's increasing fame in her singing profession, her brother, a caretaker of her begins to feel romantic sensation towards her. Paradoxically, it is in the land-of-pure called Pakistan that Saleem discovered himself in the impurity of sister-love. He says, "From the earliest days of Pakistani adolescence, I begin to learn to the secret aromas of the world, the heady but quick-fading perfume of new love, and also the deeper, longer lasting pregnancy of hate" (MC-272) Saleem yet asks a prostitute to try smell like Jamila but swiftly dashes away when he become conscious that the scent which stimulate him sexually is his sister's. Yet the girl child's gloomy image behind his own brother ends with shame. As Madelaine puts it:

Woman can either use their sexuality to confer male identity, or to destroy it. Such is the case with Jamila singer, who banishes her brother to the other reaches of the Pakistan army as a punishment for his forbidden feelings towards her. As a result, Saleem completely loses his memory and became emotionless figure of Buddha. (Madelaine-05)

The position of girl-child in India is an embodiment of oblique intermingling of comic disagreements. Looking profoundly into the postcolonial social reality Arundhati Roy carried out



the psychological suffering faced by the girl-child-Rahel due to collective limitations and authoritarian ethical set of laws. Thus, while highlighting the function and standing of girl children in the novel Rushdie sensibly put into words their psychological dilemma, and other than anything else the declining rank of the “second sex” for which the Jamila as a girl child was restricted to appear in public show. Ultimately, a trouble-making girl child Jamila becomes a star celebrity and celebrated performer which indeed shift from the customary immingling.

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## **The Sinner or The Saint: *Stone Mattress Nine Wicked Tales* by Margaret Atwood**

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**Abstract:** Atwood is a versatile writer whose major themes revolve round woman's issues. Her attempts in almost all the major genres of literature allows her to present women in all shades of life; sufferers, fighters, servants and what not? Besides, her novels and poetry, her short stories (rather tales) are the representations of a true female struggle. Her recent short story collection *Stone Mattress: Nine Wicked Tales* present women in altogether different shades at a different point of their lives. These women being old should have been satisfied at this stage of their lives but they continuously struggle to find solace with themselves and with their past and finally emerge victorious in establishing a satisfied (desirable) lives. In their respective struggles, these women find themselves often clogged and cloistered by the social, political and cultural patterns of their societies and in order to achieve a position of their own, they often clash with the already existing paradigms.

**Key Words:** Margaret Atwood, Woman, Female, Social, Political, Male, Society, Feminist, Gender, Short Story, Constance, Verna, Age, Old age, Rape, Bob, Struggle, Victim.

Margaret Eleanor Atwood (b.1939), an eminent novelist, poet, short story writer and a critic is a pioneer in feminist polemics. She attempts to focus on the new-woman as self-aware, independent, seeking to evolve an identity of her own. Her writings systematically thematize the personal quest for fulfillment as inextricably involved in a communal quest for cultural identity. Atwood developed as a writer during the same time when a growing cultural nationalism developed in Canada and the woman's moment expanded in North America. She has often told the story of how her nationalist and feminist consciousness was raised while attending graduate school in the United States in the early 1960's. Thus, years after such accumulation of experience she emerged as



a fully packaged writer who could equally represent Canada's as well as (Canadian) female's experiences in her writings and these works of her in turn represent the overall Canadian nationalist fervor and Canadian women's dilemma who are doubly colonized. She was well aware of the struggle to become a writer and the struggle that was similar to many of her contemporaries. With the changing scenario and paradigm, she recalls the advances made at the time when she began her literary career as:

Looking back on ... the early and mid-seventies I remember a grand fermentation of ideas, an exuberance in writing, a joy in uncovering taboos and in breaking them, a willingness to explore new channels of thought and feeling. Doon were being opened. Language was being changed. Territory was being claimed. The unsaid was being said. (If You Can't Say Something Nice. 20)

She goes on to remind us that the effect of change was not completely positive, for, even though it was alright to express negative feelings about women, except for mothers, "it was okay to trash your mother", she remembers sardonically (21). In reality she questions recent restrictions put on women writers by present day feminist: "Are we being told yet once again that there are certain 'right' ways of being a woman writer, and that all the other ways are wrong?"(24) For Atwood such a new restraint is as damaging to women writers as the cultural taboos that had already been dealt with:

Women of my generation were told not to fly or win, only to hobble, with our high heels and put our panty girdles on. We were told endlessly: thou should not. We don't need to hear it again, and especially not from women. (24)

Such sharpness of tone does not mean that in 1990's Atwood dismisses feminism as a derailed movement, rather, she points out the original and the most important track for women writers as, "the permission to say the unsaid, to encourage women to claim their full humanity, which means acknowledging the shadows as well as the lights"(24).

Margaret Atwood in her fiction has pointed out certain shared themes of powerlessness, victimization and alienation as well as certain ambivalences and ambiguities. For her language is largely a referential way for providing verisimilitude that is a staple of realist fiction and that





authenticates the world and the world's relationship to it. She uses and abuses the convention of both language and narrative in her fiction in an attempt to make us question any naïve critical notion we might have about modernist formalism and about realist transparency. Her fiction subjects both language and its various discourses to 'psychoanalysis', in order to reveal the structures, which shape it, and to show the ways it can be used to victimize not only women but at times men also. Yet, throughout her exploration of language and discourse, she suggests that language is available either to entrap us or to liberate us, irrespective of the sex. She has rejected the univocal statement or any concept of meaning or truth as single and determinate. She has explained that one must learn to appreciate the unsaid, which is more important. She furthers the literary convention of language as surfaces and depths, as a palimpsest, which hides what it means and thus she toyed with the deceptive devices of rhetoric and figures of speech, metaphors as essential to language. She insists that language is available for us in so many layers; either as a release or as a transformative power or as a trap and/or as a force of subjugation. Her fiction expresses these issues with powerful images and symbols. She has also used journey metaphors, both as a quest for identity and for unknown territories. By exploring various modes of gaining control over lives, she attempts to present that past needs to be regained. She dismisses the sexiest assumptions hidden in language which prevent women from taking hold of words and from writing themselves into new, powerful identities. Her works show the historical and cultural nature of 'natural' phenomena and subject them to control by analyzing their hidden assumptions.

Margaret Atwood is the author of more than thirty books of fiction, poetry and critical essays. In addition to her famous critical works like *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (1972) and *Second Words* (1982), she has written innumerable short stories which are edited in various collections. Her short story collection *Dancing Girls* (1997), attracted more positive response, winning The City of Toronto Book Award, The Canadian Booksellers Association Award and The Periodical Distributors of Canada Short Fiction Award. Her collection *Bluebeard's Egg* (1993) explores the question of women's marginal position within hegemonic discourse. *Wilderness Tips* (1991) is the collection of the stories with gothic overtones about women facing middle age mixed with narratives about confrontations with wilderness; followed by



*Good Bones* (1992) which is about female body parts and social constraints written with devastating wit. *Moral Disorder* (2006) presents interlinked stories so acutely observed, with sharp wit and confusing personal arena of respective lives. *Stone Mattress* (2014) are dark and witty tales with characters close to death or dead already or unwittingly doomed.

Atwood's new and recent short story collection, *Stone Mattress Nine Wicked Tales* (2015), is a return to the short story form since 2006. Though the author does not entirely eschew genre elements in her new book, the settings and characters are much more immediately recognizable — the insatiable Corpse Company have been overpowered, and there's not a rakunk or pigoon in sight. This is yet another collection of nine tales which provides the basis for launching her powerful critique of the prevalence of gender in our society. Focusing on the different ways in which women and men approach gendered mentality and its approach to aging, Atwood reveals how age and gender determine where a person exists within a given social structure and the quality of that existence. Thus, presents her respective characters as the sinners and the saints at the same time. Through the narration of several different elderly women characters, she invites her readers to consider how the norms of our society fail to address the difficult and inevitable process of growing up an independent woman with a worldview of her own. In keeping with the speculative mode of fiction she is known for, Atwood paints a disturbing picture of worlds in which people (particularly women) have no idea how to grow old (at times 'celebrated' in case of Constance) without feeling alienated and oppressed. Thus, these tales in *The Stone Mattress* reveal how the intersecting discourses of gender and aging shape the lives of the elderly women in contemporary Western society.

As a result, these stories draw attention to the woman's relationship to the power structures that prevent them from recognizing themselves as being oppressed. As noted by one of her critics,

Atwood explores in her {fiction} the ways in which individuals become implicated in power relationships that often manifest themselves in forms of domination and victimization. However, at the same time, Atwood's writing displays a profound awareness that involvement in a power structure often entails some degree of internalization of the ideology



that supports that structure, and that individuals are collaborators in the perpetuation of the assumptions that define their society. (Özdemir 58)

Thus, Atwood exposes interpretation of aging and the problems faced by the elderly women. As she examines the intersection of these discourses, she also speculates as to how future societies could be. By scrutinizing these problems and describing how they mirror current social practices, Atwood uses her works to portray the problem of aging and speculate what will result from the failure to address this issue. She also argues that the recognition of the problem will enable us to avoid it and embrace the identity of the elderly person, thus altering the way we perceive aging.

As Atwood hypothesizes ageism in *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies*, "The second-wave feminist movement was accused of ageism and ignoring the older woman; however, feminist writing about aging and gender has more recently begun to proliferate into a substantial critical literature" (Watkins 223). Through her works, Atwood provides this missing link in literature and presents that old age has only recently come into the conversation of gender in literature that does not mean it is a topic that is one to be omitted from feminist studies. As feminists have begun to tackle the crisis of ageism, they have discovered that the discourses on age and gender are intimately tied together in such a way that creates a social hierarchy that is discriminatory towards elderly women. Atwood's fiction is strongly grounded in the feminist studies of this intersectionality between gender and aging. Such intersectional perspective may be described as "an analytical strategy that facilitates understanding the experience of marginalized people enmeshed in constant identity struggles," and is able to "denote the plurality of identity grounds and the array of frames organizing social life" (Quoted in Wilińska 883). This intersectional perspective is crucial to examining *Stone Mattress* because one cannot discuss either theme of gender and aging without relating it to the other. This meeting point between age and gender is prominently displayed in the study of sociologist Monika Wilińska. In her study, Wilińska discovered that, while men are able to age and take on the role of a retiree, elderly women are confined to their roles as women and must continue serving society in this motherly role (Wilińska 890). Wilińska's study is echoed in Tobias's claims that "women never know when it's game over" (*Stone Mattress*). While Tobias does argue that aging is more difficult for men, he also claims that men are able to accept death more easily.



Like Wilińska, he notes that women are held to standards that encourage them to resist death and strive to maintain the roles associated with women such as mothers and caretakers. Men are acceptable to wither away, but women are continually expected to fulfill the same roles they perform in their youths. Outraged at this idea, gerontologist Nancy Hooyman argued that this common social perspective has “denied women’s centrality in the aging experience” and that “such an individualistic approach overlooks how existing structural arrangements of work and care giving create women’s dependency and low economic status in old age” (Hooyman 115). Therefore, social expectations of aging women contribute to and form the basis of the struggles they face as they age.

Such perspectives binds stories of *Stone Mattress* and reveals why Atwood’s female characters, none of which fill the chrononormative roles for women of their age, are unable to fit in with their societies. The opening story (or more accurately tale) features a character named Constance Starr who, under the pen name C.W. Starr, writes a series of commercial fantasy novels called *Alphinland*, and another piece centers on a writer whose first novel has become an “Instant Horror Classic”. However, the male characters in these stories have been pushed into the background. Indeed, one of the entries in *Stone Mattress*, “Lusus Naturae,” is about a young woman suffering from a bizarre genetic disorder mistaken for vampirism by the superstitious townsfolk (the girl’s family go so far as to fake her death in order to preserve her from a dire fate at the hands of her neighbors). “Stone Mattress” and “The Freeze-Dried Groom” closely resemble noir tales, their female characters taking on the mien of femme fatales, albeit given an explicitly feminist spin.

The narrative momentum in these stories is also welcome due to their major themes. The nine pieces in *Stone Mattress* are unified by a focus on the subjects of aging and mortality, females struggling to achieve a position of their own; making a place in the other otherwise male dominated space and many others. On looking back at past accomplishments and traumas, and at present-day taking stock of things, these females are not satisfied with their achievement but they believe in carrying on with their struggles. For example, in the first tale of the collection, “Alphinland,” we meet the character Constance, an elderly woman who goes to drastic means to preserve her younger self. Constance is a recently widowed world renowned author. Although her works are critiqued as being trashy( in her youth, by her then lover), they are incredibly popular, and it is in her world of



Alphinland, the setting of the books she writes, that Constance is able to run away from her sad and lonely life. In her work *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir points out that women living in this state of aging resist the distinction between the real and the imaginary, and that “one of the most salient characteristics in the aging woman is the feeling of depersonalization that makes her lose all objective landmarks” (623). Through her depersonalization, Constance creates a sort of double identity, one in which she balances among her obedience to her late husband Ewan and her independent power in Alphinland. Because Constance refuses to accept her husband’s death, she escapes from that certainty by continuing to interact with him as though he were still with her. In this story, Constance faces a snowstorm and throughout the blizzard she relies on her husband Ewan’s “voice” to guide her, how to survive? In her anxiety to ignore the reality of her old age and widowed status, she escapes by recreating Ewan in her imagination and interacting with him as if he were real. However, instead of freeing her, her desperation to escape actually hinders her rational state as she goes about her every day activities. By reverting to her past obedient self, she allows Ewan to become so engrained in her system that she fails to recognize that she is capable of taking care of herself. For example, when she prepares to go out into the storm, she attributes her careful planning to his guidance:

When she’s at the front door with the wheeled shopping bag, Ewan says to her, “Take the flashlight,” so she trudges upstairs to the bedroom in her boots. The flashlight is on the nightstand on his side of the bed: she adds it to her purse. Ewan is so good at planning ahead. She herself never would have thought of a flashlight. (*Stone Mattress*:8-9)

She recognizes that he is not physically there with her, yet at the same time she convinces herself that he is present and is still advising her on how to take care of herself. The fascinating aspect of this relationship is that, throughout her whole life, Constance has never actually needed someone to take care of her. In fact, it is quite the opposite. When she was younger, Constance first began writing her acclaimed book series in order to support her boyfriend Gavin who was struggling to make ends meet. Even though he humiliated and degraded her, she remained faithful to him and supported him under the belief that she needed him, when in actuality; it was he who needed her. Constance accepted the male dominated hierarchy that enclosed her, and as she ripened and



outlived the men who once dishonored her, instead of accepting a fresh and independent self, she instead runaway to her youthful way of thinking in which she was trapped by a patriarchal hierarchy. As Constance fanatically reflects about Ewan and her youth, one cannot help but perceive that she is doing so to fortify her awareness of her role in society. Because Constance has always believed that she needed a man, she reinforces the supremacy of Ewan's voice in order to continue her arrangement in the subservient woman's role she has always known. Constance, who won't even light a fire because it symbolizes renewal, is so obsessed with maintaining her past that she is keen to encourage the voices in her head so that she may prolong performances of a subservient partner, the role she has acknowledged for most of her life. By attempting to break away from her past, Constance sets herself up to endure in her present and thus provide into a social hierarchy that constantly oppresses her. Thus, she chooses a different present for herself.

When we switch from "Alphinland" to "Revenant," the second tale in the collection, we meet Gavin, Constance's ex-lover. Like Constance, Gavin also struggles to combat the strength that his youth has over him. However, while Constance escapes to her youthful mindset and decisively ensnares herself in it, Gavin is worried by the repercussions of his endeavor to escape. Gavin, who was known as being a womanizer in his youth, tried to preserve this icon by marrying a woman who was decades younger than him. At first, this youthful woman represented the perfect means of shunning the stereotypes of old age; because she was young, he would supposedly be able to maintain his image as a youthful womanizer. However, exactly the opposite occurs. Instead of escaping old age and his sins that he did with so many females, Gavin is only increasingly reminded of them, and he learns that trying to escape actually ensnares him more. Because it is impossible to escape from the things that one did, Gavin's wife uses this to her advantage and constantly reminds him of it, thus encouraging him to remain in a unending spiral of powerlessness. Gavin cannot escape his physical limitations and is thus tormented by his youthful ideals that, in their focus on overpowering women, are inherently designed to ridicule the aged man who is no longer able to have sex. In the book *Gender and Aging*, Susan Krauss Whit borne points out that,

Given that the human sexual response is highly sensitive to emotional and other psychological processes, one does not have to stretch one's speculative energies very far to





predict that the sexual behavior of aging men is likely to suffer almost as much from exposure to prevailing social attitudes as from any physiological changes (49).

Gavin, who used to be known as a womanizer, cannot bring himself to have sex anymore and is troubled for the sake of his youthful self. Unlike other men of his age, he does not have the excuse of blaming his wife for his impotence; because she is still young, he has no chance to craft excuses as a means of escaping the reality. Just as Gavin disgraced Constance when they were both young, Gavin's wife is able to do the same to him because she has her youth on her side. She is capable enough to retain this power because she is decades younger than Gavin, which means that she is not facing the similar problems related to aging as he is.

Since Gavin lacks the sexual prowess he had in his youth, he therefore has lost his powers as a man, which means that his wife, Reynolds, is able to overcome patriarchal power with her power of young age. Since he cannot bring himself to have sex with her, or with any woman for that matter, he foregoes any status he has as a male. Patriarchal standards can be as harmful to men as they are to women when men are unable to perform up to par. While De Beauvoir offers examples of how aging can be easier on men in her book *The Coming of Age*, she points out several cases where aging is just as horrifying for men as well. When talking about Yeats, De Beauvoir writes,

What infuriated him was the accidental, casual aspect of this inescapable old age; he too tripped over the odious stumbling-block of this unrealizable reality – he was the same person, but he was being forced to suffer revolting usage (297).

In other words, he was attempting to escape his old age by focusing on his youthful, mirrored image of himself, but was then aghast to discover that his attempts to run away only hindered him further. De Beauvoir's case is easily relevant to Gavin's because, like Yeats, Gavin was angered at how he could not escape his age and how he was unable to behave as he once did. He still feels the same way about women that he did when he was in his 20's, but now he is unable to satisfy his masculine identity by acting upon these feelings. Even worse, he is forced daily to face a woman decades younger than him, one that he cannot control because he cannot have sex with. Because he is not able to exert power over her, it is he who is weak, and it is in this powerless state that he recognizes that she is only paying attention in being with him so that she can inherit his wealth. It is this part of Gavin's story that makes us feel the most sorry for him. Because Gavin lives in such a way that he





is severed from his youth, we can see that the lack of love in his life further contributes to his spiraling loss of a sense of identity. This tale therefore emphasizes the importance of how feelings of genuine love contribute to the aging society's identity and how it is the relationships we form that help us rationalize our existence. Instead of encouraging the elderly patriarch to try to escape to their youthful pasts, we must instead encourage them to embrace themselves in their current state of being. On sexuality in the aging male, Whit borne states,

In expressing these feelings, the knowledge that one can love and is loved can provide a unique source of strength and inspiration to the identity of the aging person—male or female. (51)

Thus, without real relationships to ground us and prevent us from “escaping” reality, we lose a sense of whether or not our existence is meaningful in the social hierarchy in which we are rooted. Of all the tales in this collection, the titular tale “The Stone Mattress” is the story which offers the maximum and most dramatic sense of reconciliation with and freedom from one's past. The tale after which the collection is named is a story of a young but old woman named Verna who is obsessed with killing men. As a self-created widow, her yearning to overpower men led her to flirt with, marry, and eventually kill three of her suitors. This story attempts to trace her thought process as she contemplates what it really means to her to commend these murders. In this tale, Verna introduces herself to her targets during a simple yet provoking definition of her name:

“Verna,” he says. “That's a lovely name.”

“Old-fashioned,” she says. “From the Latin word for ‘spring.’ When everything springs to life again.” That line, so filled with promises of phallic renewal, had been effective in helping to secure her second husband (*Stone Mattress*:236).

This passage not only reveals her thought process, but also her meticulous understanding of men and of the process of aging as well. Just as she knows that women such as her own self struggle to protect their beauty as a means of preserving their youth, she also realizes that older men are worried to maintain their sexual strength, which is why she plays with that desire when she flirts with them. In this story, Verna embarks on a journey meant to serve people of her age, and even though she vowed to give up killing, she can't defy the thought of being active so as to prove to



herself that she can still do it. While she scans the throng of men, she observes that she is looking for ones who value the conviction that there are still some moments of life to be lived and that they are not too old to cherish it. Although this reveals further that she hates men, we do not perceive her reason until Bob comes onto the scene.

When she first sees him, Verna does not believe that this man has returned into her life. While he doesn't identify her, she knows him the moment she encounters him. It is this man who stimulated her abhorrence for men, which began back in high school. On the eve of her first prom, Bob asked her for a date, only to then molest her at the end of the night and leave her on the side of the road. Because of the socially constructed assumptions of human nature, it was Verna who was blamed for the whole ordeal. To make matters more difficult for her, when she found out she was pregnant, she was sent to a convent to wait out the pregnancy and then give up the baby for adoption when it was finally born. Verna's hatred is legitimized because Bob's actions ruined her childhood. Children, no matter their gender, are "autonomous individuals with a free future opening before them" (De Beauvoir 671). However, when female children are forced into adulthood, they become "servants or objects, imprisoned in the present... they are separated from the universe, doomed to immanence and repetition. They feel dispossessed" (De Beauvoir 671). After Verna was violated, this was exactly what happened to her. She lost control of her body when Bob took it from her, and from there her body was subject to her mother's control and humiliation as well as the nuns' domineering power. Because of this loss of power, her body becomes a means of labor and reproduction, and she did not recover control until she took it from the first man that tried to claim it. While Verna reflects on her life story, she also remarks that the word "rape" would have never been used to illustrate this event. Her account reflects the saga of the ages. De Beauvoir's claim that "Woman's powerlessness brought about her ruin because man apprehended her through a project of enrichment and expansion" (66) ornaments true to this story. While Bob may not have been looking to impregnate her, he did accomplish elevation by having sex with her and gossiping all over the town. As Verna is pleased that young women have additional rights now, she is correctly bitter that she was never able to gain conclusion. Consequently, as soon as she decides that she must kill him, she takes the Achilles' heel of her youth and gender and transforms it into power gained from her age and



experience:

Why should she be the only one to have suffered for that night? She'd been stupid, granted, but Bob had been vicious. And he'd gone scot-free, without consequences or remorse, whereas her entire life had been distorted. The Verna of the day before had died, and a different Verna had solidified in her place: stunted, twisted, mangled. It was Bob who'd taught her that only the strong can win, that weakness should be mercilessly exploited. It was Bob who'd turned her into – why not say the word? – a murderer (*Stone Mattress*:246).

Verna's reminiscences of that night reveal how she became the murderess she is today. Her mania with her ruined younger self established her narcissistic personality that empowered her to restructure her identity and fashion a new role for herself in the social order. As noted by Simone de Beauvoir,

If she [a woman] can put herself forward in her own desires, it is because since childhood she has seen herself as an object. Her education has encouraged her to alienate herself wholly in her body, puberty having revealed this body as passive and desirable" (668).

In spite of Verna's mother's wishes, Verna's education, i.e. her rape and the following torment of being locked up in a convent, only added customary recognition that she is an object of desire. As she learned this, she had two paths to choose between: One would be to conform to the society that tortured her or look for a husband who would take her for who she was. This is what her mother, and all of society, wanted for her. The other alternative, her selection, would be to embrace herself in an entirely diverse sense and propose up her attractiveness to the *Other* that could only be satisfied through her recovery of her body. In order to regain it, she had to first give it up to those who exploited her. Throughout the years, Verna has put aside the pressures of her ego and has striven for the desires of the *Other*, a higher form of herself that emerged from her sufferings. Because Verna was clever to create this new self, she was able to displace her situation in society. She thrived as a widow and suffused in new life, as pointed out by De Beauvoir, "Every woman drowned in her reflection reigns over space and time, alone, sovereign; she has total rights over men, fortune, glory, and sensual pleasure" (669). Instead of wallowing in her past, Verna used it to authorize herself and fashion a fresh identity that enabled her to relocate herself on the social



hierarchy and thus regain her body for herself. A remarkable aspect of Verna's scheme of rewarding her *Other* is how sensitive it is. The information that her rapist's name is "Bob" generates an image of a common man. As a result, as we reflect on the simplification of his name, one perceives that, when Verna kills him, she not only kills her rapist, but also symbolically kills all of the "average Bobs" out in the world who molests naive immature girls like her and got away with it. Just as he lured her away from the dance so he could rape and then discard her, so did she lure him away from the cruise into a cave – a symbolic image(of avenging her violation) of the female anatomy – where she could destroy him.

The split second before Verna kills him, she reminds him of who she is. At this disclosure, Bob smirks: "Bob capering triumphantly in the snow, sniggering like a ten-year-old. Herself wrecked and crumpled" (*Stone Mattress*: 254). She has a vivid picture of this smirk that provides her final justification for murdering him. Remaining true to his character, Bob shows no remorse. Because they aren't surrounded by others, he has no motivation to behave as he wouldn't – namely as someone who regrets his past actions – so he doesn't. One has no idea what would have happened had he regretted. Just as Verna's image was destroyed when he raped her and ruined her reputation, his face was physically destroyed when she slammed the stone up into his lower jaw and then repeatedly dropped it onto his face. The youthful Verna died when he raped her, that is why he also died before he could age any longer.

This story provides optimism for the future, not because Verna killed her rapist, but because she was able to "kill" the image of herself that had been constructed by society. Verna butchered her previous husbands as she was unable to bear what Bob did to her. Bob stood for the society that marginalized and tormented her, and because she did not realize this until she saw him again, she remained a slave to societal expectations even when she killed her other two husbands. By murdering the epithet of societal oppression, Verna rejected societal norms and created a new, true image of herself. Thus, emancipating herself from societal expectations.

Thus, these stories present the war within every female as these women struggle with the 'other' that consistently disturb and distracts them from within. These women are the sinners as well as saints as they dwindle between the two extreme edges of life, responsibility towards others and care



for their own selves. They try to emerge victorious in these wars that they face with themselves and at the end are able to resolve these tensions and achieve a semblance to lead a harmonious life ahead.

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## **Subverting The Site of Victimhood and Re-mapping It as of Power in *The Mole* by Ismat Chughtai**

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**Abstract:** The present paper focuses on the short story *The Mole* by Ismat Chughtai and tries to answer: (a) how Rani, the protagonist of this story uses her sexuality as a tool for obtaining agency – to subvert her vulnerable status of a subaltern and remap it to power; (b) how Chughtai has shifted the significance of her protagonist's name and reconstructed its connotations and discusses the story in the light of recent literature on desire; And (c) how Rani defies the dominant and oppressive narratives of monogamy and virtuosity. The paper also throws light on the subtle and ironic language of Chughtai which invites the reader to be an active participant in the narrative along with the fictional figures and also details it as a commentary on the inscrutability of female sexuality and patriarchal hegemony towards it.

**Keywords:** Sexual Politics, Sexuality, Agency, Desire, Patriarchal Hegemony.

Ismat Chughtai, a pioneer of feminist tradition of writing in South Asian literature, has been highly acclaimed by the subsequent generations for her outspoken realist fervor. Born in an upper middle class Muslim family in Uttar Pradesh in 1911, she used her writing to tore apart the veil of hypocrisy over the various social institutions and society itself. Inspired by Rashid Jahan, a feminist writer and her brother Azem Beg Chughtai, she started writing at a critical juncture in Indian socio-political scenario – the nationalist leaders had already 'resolved' the women's question and relegated the women folk of the nation into 'home'; the nation was heading towards independence and the intellectuals of both Hindu and Muslim communities were busy writing 'manual' books for women to mould them into perfect wives and mothers. Almost every literary work revolved around woman, she was there but either as an all sacrificing divine figure or as the femme-fatale; but the



‘real’ woman was missing from the literary scenario. Even her colleagues at the Progressive Writer’s Association limited their worldview to the plights of the downtrodden class of the society and were almost silent over the struggle more ancient than the class struggle - the sexual politics. Chughtai on her part gave a new dimension to the word ‘progressive’ and used her pen to explore an almost hidden territory in the context of South-Asian literature – feminine experiences. For her sexual and epistemological were inseparable. M. Asaduddin put it as: “... she brought into the ambit of Urdu fiction the complex and forbidden terrains of feminine sensibility and she treated them with panache and penetration” (Kumar and Sadique 76). Her writings radiated feminist fervor at a time when the waves of feminism have yet not touched this part of the hemisphere. A prolific writer, she tried her hand in almost every genre of literature, but her reputation nowadays lay mainly in the sphere of short stories. Written by her in Urdu, many of these short stories are widely available in English translation by scholars like M. Asaddudin, Tahira Naqvi and anthologized as *Quilt & Other Stories*. The present paper offers a textual analysis of one such short story *Til*, translated into English as *The Mole* by Tahira Naqvi, through the lens of feminist criticism. It argues how Rani, the protagonist of this story uses her sexuality as a tool for obtaining agency – to subvert her vulnerable status of a subaltern and remaps it to power. The paper argues the above in two ways: firstly, by demonstrating how Rani’s act of defiance makes Chaudhry feel defeated in the gendered site of battle; secondly, by discussing how Chughtai has deconstructed the tradition of romanticized representation of women in literature and attributed symbolic status on her protagonist. At the same time, the paper argues how Chughtai has shifted the significance of her protagonist’s name and reconstructed its connotations and discusses the story in the light of recent literature on desire and points out how Rani defies the dominant and oppressive narrative of monogamy and virtuosity. The paper also throws light on the subtle and ironic language of Chughtai which invites the reader to be an active participant in the narrative along with the fictional figures and also details it as a commentary on the inscrutability of female sexuality and patriarchal hegemony towards it.

Starting at ‘medias res’, *The Mole*, at a first glance seems to be a psychological tale, an “exploration of the psychosexual and affective landscapes of sexual repression”(Kumar 115) and





traces the journey of an artist from the state of sanity to insanity. But from a feminist lens it is a narrative of the power struggle between the sexes grounded on the field of class-caste and gender and places the artist as a victim of his own arrogance and hegemony, as his patriarchy-fed ego cannot handle the onslaught of unbridled passion of a woman. In the literature of that era, the figure of 'subaltern' woman, "whose labor as well as sexuality are vulnerable to exploitation" had already achieved "iconic status" as Mulk Raj Anand, the leading literary figure of that time put it (Gopinath 33). Chughtai in *The Mole* has subverted this image of vulnerability and has given it a new definition through her protagonist Rani who has agency over both her sexuality and labor. As the story opens we found the artist Garishchandra Chaudhury trying hard to discipline his subaltern subject Rani to pose for his masterpiece. But Rani, an adolescent, suffering from sexual titillations natural to her age is reluctant to obey him; she is bold, outspoken, passionate, vivacious and thwarts his sense of superiority by constantly uttering: "I am tired", "I cannot sit still anymore" (Chughtai 110) and makes him feel defeated:

And women from faraway places, both naked and clothed, felt honored to pose for him. But this sprightly, illiterate chit of a girl he had picked up from the filthy gutters to sit for his masterpiece, was completely unmanageable (Chughtai 116).

Romanticized representation of women in literature is an issue which has bothered feminists all over the world. Elaine Showalter in *Towards a Feminist Politics* says: "If we study stereotypes of women, the sexism of male critics, and the limited roles women play in literary history, we are not learning what women have learnt and experienced, but only what men have thought women should be..."(quoted in Moi 75). Chughtai, was also highly skeptical about the romanticized representation of women in literature. But what gave her a special mention is her 'foresightedness'- she raised her pen against this 'tradition' in the 1940's, a few decades earlier when Showalter grounded her theory on feminist writing. The female protagonists of Ismat Chughtai do not fit into the prescribed format of conformity; they are warriors; like their creator they fight relentlessly against the agents of oppression working against them. They are flesh and blood characters, not the patient, meek, docile figures inhabiting the pages of literature down the ages. Rani is also no exception. But among the trope of these courageous women Rani deserves special mention because



of her vulnerable position in connection with her class-caste identity. Chughtai throughout her writing career was mostly engaged in writing about the upper-middle class, most of her characters and protagonists belong to this class. We can mention Begum Jan, the aristocrat wife of a Nawab in *The Quilt*, or Sarlaben in *The Morsel*, Bhabi Jan and Shabnam in *The Rock* etc. But Chughtai shows her diversity as a writer by picturing the plight of working class women in stories like *Tinny's Granny*, *The Homemaker*, *The Mole* etc. M. Asaduddin has praised Chughtai's ability "to portray full-blooded country maidens" in stories like *Homemaker*, *The Mole*, *A Pair of Hands* and have praised their "vigor", "freshness", "innocence", "earthiness and incorruptible vitality"(88). Rani, the protagonist of *The Mole* is a poor woman belonging to the downtrodden lower caste – she is poorer than the poor. Chughtai, with her characteristic subtleness has not mentioned any caste markers such as surname or her profession clearly. But there are enough suggestions in the text that hints at her belonging to the downtrodden community. There is an indirect reference to her profession in the text when Chaudhry utters: "... don't you get tired when you're out collecting cow-dung on the roads?"(Chughtai 111). Chughtai has also not mentioned Rani's family background or even her parentage. She seems to be a symbol, an epitome of 'subaltern' women as Chughtai does not place her in some specific community or caste group.

Chughtai has always exhibited an extreme craftsmanship in naming her protagonists. While the protagonist of *The Quilt* has not been given any proper name and is referred as 'Begum Jan' to mock the institution of marriage; the protagonist of *The Morsel* is named 'Sarlaben', Hindi counterpart of the word 'innocent woman' to mark her gullible nature; Granny, the protagonist of *Tinny's Granny* also does not have any proper name, as she embodies the vulnerable generation of older women whose only identity is their relation to their off springs - she is a helpless 'grandmother'; Chughtai, in *The Mole* has ironically named a subaltern 'Rani', a Hindi counterpart of the English word 'queen' and shifted the significance of her name to a quite unexpected level and reconstructed its connotation, refined the constructed pattern of victimhood, and reinvented its signifiers. Rani has nothing in the world to claim as her own. She is a lower cast woman with no material property – she seems to be a queen in devoid of a kingdom. But her real wealth is her free spirit, which keeps itself free from the annoyingly close surveillance of social norms and refuses to



follow its oppressive rules. She is not a passive recipient of reformist projects of the bourgeois reformers, rather a subaltern who constantly subverted the site of victimhood - she not only shows reluctance to sit patiently as a model for Chaudhry's painting, but constantly defies him by her disobeying acts. Right from the beginning of the narrative Chaudhry has an authoritative take over her and considered her to be his rightful property, as his speeches and acts reveal. But Rani shows him his real position in her life by constantly defying him. Chaudhry wanted to make her learn the lessons of 'chastity', 'honor' and 'shame' by forbidding her to meet other men like Chunan and Ratan but she refuses to pay heed towards him and his lessons which denied women their share of pleasure and agency and continues her rendezvous with them. When he catches Rani red hand with Ratan, his servant playing in a pond, Ratan flees away but Rani refuses to go away: "Ratan grabbed his dhoti about him and made his escape from his side, but Rani stood undaunted (Chughtai 120) and when Chaudhry orders her to 'come out' of water, Rani refuses to obey him and when Chaudhry threatens her with physical violence, Rani flaunts her naked body in front of him and asks him: "Do you hit naked women?"(ibid) and the omniscient third person narrator of the story put it as: "Her fear had made her bold" (ibid) and emerges as a 'deviant body' who not only subverts her site of victimhood but also remaps it as of power.

All Chughtai characters are something more than fictional figures – they act as mouthpieces of their creator and Rani is no exception. Through her Chughtai gives voice to an issue never heard of in this part of the hemisphere before her arrival into the arena – female sexuality and desire. Gayatri Gopinath in this context writes: "As Rashid Jahan had done in *Angarey*, Chughtai was claiming for herself the right to write about female body, but she was also going further by recognizing it's claim to pleasure and fulfillment... the gendered and classed subject..."(67). Society and its self-proclaimed guardians expect women to repress her desires and be a passive commodity to be exchanged between men. But, Rani, like Lajjo in *The Homemaker* and Gauri in *A Pair of Hands*, refuses to be what Irigaray termed as "obliging prop for the enactment of man's fantasies"(23) and emerges herself as a desiring subject. The modern literature on desire has recognized it as a driving force – "...a fluid, multiple, a dynamic force that is transformative, destructive and life-changing"(Gorton 1). In the light of Alice Deignan's extensive study on desire,



*Desire as Metaphor*, Rani's desire can be named an "appetite"<sup>(1)</sup> – appetite for sexual love, appetite to explore her own body, appetite to measure the amount of pleasure that her body can provide her. She is a human being who is highly conscious about the amount of pleasures her body can provide her. In fact she is very much vocal about her own desires. She not only defies Chaudhry through her acts but boldly expresses her desire for him. Through her, Chughtai has also exposed the double standard of caste ridden Indian society where Chaudhry, a representative of the privileged section of society does not find it wrong to make Rani pose for him or to beat her, but finds it impossible to reciprocate her desire. Rani along with Lajo, the protagonist of *The Homemaker* is an epitome of "newly- born women" who ruthlessly rejected the male authority over their bodies and get indulged in "sexual jouissance" (Wadood 445). Rani constantly defies the dominant narrative of monogamous, virtuous womanhood by her acts. Lucy Irigary asserts that women's desire speaks a different language than men's (25). We get a complete fictional reflection of this in the case of Rani. She not only defies the rules of patriarchy in her act of self- assertion but also speaks a 'different' language of desire which Chaudhry is unable to understand. Her act of tapping the mole on her breast is interpreted by him as an 'obscene' act of inviting attention. But he is unable to understand this act of auto-eroticism; he does not understand that Rani finds pleasure in caressing her own body. Through Chaudhry, Chughtai points out the limited knowledge and hegemonic attitude toward female sexuality that society share at large. The self-sufficient nature of female sexuality has been pointed out here through Rani's act of self-caressing. In her, Chughtai seems to give a fictionalized pre-figuration of Irigary's notion of "multiplicity of female desire" (30). Society always has repressed female sexuality and tried to confine it to the limit of vaginal intercourse and reproduction. But Chughtai, an "iconoclast", frees the female characters from the shackles of stereotypical representation and portrays them 'as they are'. Rani, like the other fictional creations of Chughtai cannot be categorized into a 'type'. The fictional form of short story does not provide much scope for 'development' in a character. Yet Chughtai was able to create a female character like Rani, who does not fall into the prototype of female characters popularized in fiction and refuses to play that prescribed, passive role and takes agency over her sexuality, refusing to be an object of transaction she claims her right to pleasure.



No discussion on Chughtai is complete without attention to her unique writing technique, her 'écriture feminine'. While the grand-dame of British feminist tradition Virginia Woolf, in *A Room of One's Own* and French feminists like Cixous, Irigary let out a call for distinctive writing style for women writers, Chughtai, on the other side of the hemisphere, in spite of being unaware of their call, laid out her own 'écriture feminine' – her distinctive writing style. Along with strong women characters, new techniques in form and content, innovative and thought provoking themes are notable hallmarks of her writings. The subtleness and ironic quality of Chughtai's language invites the reader to be an active agent in decoding the fictional language of her narrative. *The Mole* opens with Rani calling out Chaudhry: "Chaudhry, O Chaudhry..."(Chughtai 110). Chughtai has always been very precise in her use of language. She never wastes a single word on unnecessary information or description, rather in a very suggestive language invites the reader to be an active participant in the action in the narrative along with the fictional figures. Right from the beginning of the narrative the reader of *The Mole* gets conscious that the story is going to be something unusual as Rani's tone and manner of calling out at Chaudhry is highly suggestive. The two principle characters – Rani and Chaudhry develop gradually and it is mainly through their dialogues the reader gets a track of that development. Chaudhry's desire for Rani is not expressed in a direct language; rather the manner of expression and language is highly suggestive: when Rani "lovingly" calls out her name, "Chaudhry felt something jump in his chest. The foundation of the world's axis swayed just a mite. To be sure something did happen"(Chughtai 113). Chughtai remarkably uses irony and satire in her writings to explode the balloon of hypocrisy and exposes the double standard of the so called pious, rigid and superstitious society. Chaudhry, both a representative of patriarchal repression and its victim, unlike Rani, is never able to give voice to his desire for Rani and always is in complete denial of it. But through Rani, Chughtai points out his hypocritical nature when Rani accuses him of seeing the mole on her breast through "the corner of his eyes"(Chughtai 120). When Rani confronts him naked, his confused reaction gives a premonition of the doom that awaits him: "...he felt ants crawling inside his brain..."(ibid) and his repressed libido is suggested as: "... a strong gust of cool, black wind blew over the pile over of embers, the spark was ignited and soon there were flames leaping in all direction. His eyes plunged at the black, fleshy mole like hungry



vultures and... Ohhh...As if transformed into a black stone by his revulsion, the mole crashed against his forehead..."(Chughtai 121).

Wagir Agha, writing about Chughtai's work, states that, Chughtai's female characters are not merely nameless adjuncts of the household machinery but shake to the cores, if not demolish time-honored values and customs" (Kumar and Sadique 195). But Rani not only 'shakes', but also 'demolishes' them – when towards the end of the short story Rani was condemned by the legal authorities for hiding her unborn fetus, she stood dauntless. A victim of her natural impulses she has the courage to face society without any feeling of shame regarding her actions. Being sincere to her writing agenda of "project[ing] a female character [in her] stories who refused to live by old values, that is, false ideas of shame and honor"(Kumar and Sadique 129), Chughtai has not put Rani into the traditional categorization of moral or immoral. When left alone to face the natural consequence of her natural and spontaneous desire, she does not play any prescribed role that society and its norms compel women to play – rather than feeling shameful or guilty or remorseful, she retains "her usual coquettish manner" before the court and deconstructs the myth of virtue when she utters her doubt about the parentage of her child on being asked: "...ask Chunan or Ratan. I can't tell you which one it is, I don't know" (Chughtai 126). At the same time she 'frees' Chaudhry of all accusations by "carelessly" declaring his impotence and robs him of his 'masculinity'. M. Asaduddin draws a fictional parallel between Rani and Durga, the protagonist of Bengali novelist Tarashankar Banerjee's novel *Ganadevata*(1948). He writes: "they are frivolous village maidens and preach a robust morality that is far more healthy and creative than the attenuating social morals practiced by the middle class"(88). Rani does not follow the path of activism, but like her creator is a feminist by practice. In this paper I have discussed how Chughtai has made her 'subaltern' protagonist Rani a symbolic character who turns the status quo upside down and by subverting her site of victimhood has remapped her site of victimhood; how Chughtai has opened up some hidden truths about female sexuality through her and also detailed the short story as a commentary on the inscrutability of female sexuality and patriarchal hegemony towards it. At the same time the paper brings forth how Chughtai has put forward a critique against both the tradition of exotification of the female subjects and romanticized representation of them. The paper also put some light on Chughtai's distinctive use of language through textual analysis and in textual analysis it is needed



to have a close look at the 'words' of the text concerned. But here, doing the textual analysis of *The Mole* the paper faced a major drawback – the text is a translated one. Tahira Naqvi has been hailed as the most authentic 'voice' of Ismat Chughtai by many academicians, yet the fact of her being a translator cannot be ignored. Muhafiz Haider writes: "... Ismat's fictional language has added innumerable words, phrases, metaphors and similes, specifically relating to the world of women, to the Urdu lexicon"(Kumar and Sadique 228). The reader of the translated version is always at a risk to miss that vigor of Chughtai's fictional language. In this context we should look at the words of Walter Benjamin, who in *The Task of The Translator* writes: "the purpose of translation is not to conceal the soul of the original"(quoted in Naqvi, last para). He argues further that "the significance of fidelity as ensured by literalness is that the work reflects the great longing for linguistic complementation" and "allows the pure language, as though reinforced by its own medium to shine upon the original all the more fully" (228). We get a complete reflection of this theory in Tahira Naqvi's soulful translation. Tahira Naqvi, the translator herself states, "What I have tried to achieve is, again, best expressed by Walter Benjamin: "a literal rendering of the syntax which proves words rather than sentences to be the primary element of the translator. For if the sentence is the wall before the language of the original, literalness is the arcade"(228) and any reader of the translated version of the text is a witness to her success at achieving this aim.

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## **Rethinking Nature: An Ecocritical Analysis of Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay's Popular Novels**

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**Abstract :** In an age of environmental crisis, the need of the hour is to re-think nature to keep the earth in better order. Ecocriticism is a comparatively new way of analyzing literature or art and is considered to be a mind-expanding theory as it seeks to expand our understanding of the environment that allows reading literature from nature's perspective and prompt eco-critics to think in a bio-centric way. The present paper studies three novels of Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, *Pather Panchali-Song of the Road*, *Aparajita-the Unvanquished* and *Aranyak-Of the Forest* from the perspectives of ecocriticism. The paper explores the three specific perspectives like ecosophy, deep ecology and ecocide which are brought into focus by the self-realization of the protagonists. Ecocriticism in Bandyopadhyay's, therefore, develops an ecological literacy among the readers. The present study is an attempt to reconnect man's lost relationship with nature in order to promote green peace.

**Keywords:** Bandyopadhyay, Nature, Ecosophy, Deep-ecology, Ecocide.

### **Introduction**

Literature has shared a very close relationship with nature down the ages. This intimate relationship between literary works and nature has been textualized in many poems, prose narratives, songs, plays etc since ancient Greek and Indian civilization. With the advancement of science and



technology, the man started dominating nature, therefore marring her pristine beauty. The early romantic writers thus started a revolt against the age of reason. But nature writing gets its momentum with the introduction of a new genre of a literary theory called Ecocriticism which does not simply mean the representation of nature in literature. It deals with how ecological concepts or ecological principles may be applied to the study of literature as described by William Rueckert. In fact, Ecocriticism studies the wider significance of nature in literary view-finder. This new movement has swept the land over the last three decades as it makes us think in a bio-centric way when the earth is suffering from global ecological issues like climate change and global warming. Literature cannot turn its face away from these man-made troubles. Literature certainly can develop ecological wisdom among the readers will be encouraged to take better care of the environment. The two most important Biblical works on Ecocriticism are *The Ecocriticism Reader* by Cheryl Glotfelty & Herold Fromm and Lawrence Buell's *Environmental Imagination*. In her edited book *The Ecocriticism Reader* Glotfelty writes, "Simply put, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender consciousness perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies"(Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996, xviii ). Lawrence Buell has added that this study should be "conducted in a spirit of environmentalist's praxis." Further ecocriticism does not simply mean nature study; it has distinguished itself from conventional nature writing first by its ethical stand and commitment to the natural world and then by making the "connection between the human and the non-human world".

Novels penned by Bibhutibhushan are nature themed. He admits, "I love not Man the less but nature more" (Roychoudhury 38). But nature here is not merely a backdrop of his long prose narratives. But this celebration is not merely a glorification of nature. Broadly speaking these novels celebrates the inevitable bond "between the human and the non-human". His autobiographical novel *Pather Panchali -Song of the Road* along with its sequel *Aparajito-the Unvanquished* is a journey from the ecosophy to the deep ecological understanding. Aranyak-Of the Forest though considered by many as mere travel writing is the best example of the term Ecocide.



These novels beautifully depict man-nature interrelationship in a very realistic manner and demand a universal appeal. The language in Bandyopadhyay has no hole, as said to be in the ozone layer.

### **Ecocriticism: A Brief Survey**

Ecocriticism proved to be an academic discipline with the publication of two highly influential books, both came out in 1996. The first work which is also known as the 'Bible' of ecocriticism is *The Ecocriticism Reader* edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. The second work is: *The Environmental Imagination* by Lawrence Buell. Ecocriticism gets its inspiration from the three important American writers like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, and Henry David Thoreau. Emerson enjoyed the impact of nature in his first reflect essay "Nature". Fuller's *Summer on the Lakes*, during 1843 encounters the American landscape at large. Thoreau's *Walden* "is an account of his two years stay from 1845, in a hut he had built on the shore of Walden Pond, a couple of miles away from his hometown of Concord, Massachusetts. It is, perhaps, the classic account of dropping out of modern life and seeking to renew the self by a 'return to nature'-this is certainly a book which has always exerted a strong effect on the attitudes of its readers." (Barry, 2002, 162). Thoreau wrote, - "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life " (Thoreau 3).

While the U.S version of eco-literature is known as Ecocriticism, the UK version of nature study of the new genre is commonly known as Green Studies. The UK version of Ecocriticism is greatly influenced by the British Romantics of the 1790's. The most influencing works are Jonathon Bate's *Romantic Ecology*, and Raymond William's *Country and the City* and Lawrence Coupe's epoch-making work *Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism*. The ecocritics make critical appreciation of nature in literary works. They make a scholarly study of nature within an ecocritical framework. They try to find out what role nature and the landscape play in a literary work. They search for 'image' or 'symbolic representation' of nature that an author constructs. They explore how nature and human emotions are co-related to each other in a text. They underline how nature affects our emotion; they study the relationship between humans and the environment in a text and how literary works can build up ecological wisdom among the readers; they explain how the environmental threat is being reflected in contemporary art or culture etc.



Ecocriticism is still a young theory spanning a period of about three decades. The scholars are still engaged in widening its scope. The green theory now proliferates into several subfields like ecosophy, ecocide, ecofeminism, eco-spiritualism, green cultural studies, deep-ecology movement etc. Although all ecocritical writings studied nature from manifold perspectives, Ecocriticism shares a common motive that our global environment has reached its margin; unless we are very careful the world will lead to destruction at a Titanic speed to the ice-berg.

India is a land rich in biodiversity and different landforms. So the physical environment of the country has a deep impact on the culture of man. Many writers have written on the theme of nature. Our ancient Veda has a beautiful treatment of nature and its advocacy for the preservation of the physical environment for the benevolence of mankind. The same tune is found in the works of Gurudeva Rabindranath Tagore, R.K. Narayan, Ruskin Bond, Mahasweta Devi, Arundhati Roy, Amitav Ghosh etc. Their writings plead for the environmental protection as well as the need for the human nature bond. The Indian ecocritics like Bandana Shiva, Nirmaldasan, Suresh Frederic, Nirmal Selvamony, Rayson Alex are doing the yeomen service for the expansion from the first stage to the second stage of this movement. Nowadays Conferences on eco-literature are being held in India, more and more scholars are engaged in research with Ecocriticism and many Indian writings are coming under the purview of this revisionist movement.

### **Objectives**

- The main objective of this article is to explore the eco-critical praxis of Bibhuti novels that very much popular even today for their classic beauty and eternal appeal.
- To explain how nature plays a mysterious role leaving a deep impact on the human world and how all his characters are deeply interconnected with nature.
- To ensure that the present study accomplishes an eco-critical understanding of these three novels from the perspectives of Ecosophy, Deep-Ecology, and Ecocide.

### ***Pather Panchali- Song Of The Road: An Ecosophy Of Life***

One of the important subfields of Ecocriticism is Ecosophy or ecological philosophy. It is commonly known as 'the philosophy of ecological harmony or equilibrium'('Ecosophy-



Wikipedia", 2017). The word was termed by the Norwegian deep ecologist Arne Naess and French philosopher Felix Guattari. Naess emphasizes on ecological wisdom and defines of ecosophy in the following way: "By an ecosophy, I mean a philosophy of ecological harmony or equilibrium. A philosophy as a kind of sofia (or) wisdom, is openly normative, it contains both norms, rules, postulates, value priority announcements, and hypotheses concerning the state of affairs in our universe. Wisdom is policy wisdom, prescription, not only scientific description and prediction. The details of an ecosophy will show many variations due to significant differences concerning not only the 'facts' of pollution, resources, population, etc. but also value priorities" ("Ecosophy - Wikipedia", 2017).

On the other hand, Guattari considers ecosophy as a pluralistic critical field of study. "Ecosophy in his sense is the study of complex phenomenon including human subjectivity, the environment, and social relations all of which are intimately interlinked" ("Ecosophy - Wikipedia", 2017). Guattari opines, "Without modifications to the social and material environment, there can be no change in mentalities. Here, we are in the presence of a circle that leads me to postulate the necessity of founding an "ecosophy" that would link environmental ecology to social ecology and to mental ecology" ("Ecosophy - Wikipedia", 2017).

*Pather Panchali-Song of the Road* (1929), Bandyopadhyay's first novel beautifully depicts the natural landscape of rural Bengal, which becomes highly symbolic in the novel. The placid flow of rural life is not like a blustering river of mountain region like 'Tista' but it is like the gentle flow of 'Ichhamoti' river in the plain landscape of agrarian Bengal. The realism of poverty-stricken rural life in a Bengal village like 'Nischindipur' has been deftly depicted by the novelist in an eco-poetic style. Again life sometimes is as ruthless as summer noon for Harihar and Sarbajaya- Apu's parents who live in abject poverty. However, this does not make any impact upon nature loving children for whom nature proves to be the best refuge. They are as green and spontaneous as nature herself. In their crystal clear mind nature lays deep impact which never withers. Children make their own toys with the elements of nature and drink life to the lees amid fruits and flowers, birds and animals, skies and rain. Apu's love of nature begins with *Pather Panchali-Song of the Road*. He is, in fact, half man and half nature. He and his sister Durga use to enjoy the sweet rain which makes their



faces as lovely as jasmine flowers usually after a shower. The rural landscape was their joy land of heaven. The green meadows, the vast canopy of sky, the rain-drops, the clouds- every natural object- all tell us of the never ending saga of life blended with happiness and misery. The jungle near their house has its deep impact on them to bring peace and consolation to their hearts despite their grim struggle for existence in the midst of poverty and snobbery of wealthier neighbors. They collect mangoes, make fun and feast in the forest, gather vegetables and remain untouched by the horrors of poverty. The Harihar's family draws the sustenance from the natural environments. It is as though nature has her own resource to meet the needs of the dispossessed. Nature abounds in the gifts of fruits and flowers with which the children make their own joys. Durga herself is a part and parcel of Nature which gets tremendous vitality with her very movement into the wild. She leaves no stone unturned to make her brother happy with trifle things of nature which we carelessly pass by. Yet she is paid less importance than Apu. Being a girl child she is given little food. Even her elementary education is neglected, although she is more intelligent than her brother. She is even brutally bitten due to her childish mistakes. Yet it is she who is the first teacher of Apu who makes him learn to read 'the book of nature'. 'She knew the bushes where the *bashok* flowers lay hidden, the secret recesses of the forest where the *chatim* blossoms slept in the shade of their trees, the clusters of green reeds by a bend in the Ichamoti where the indigo and *kolmi* huddled together, and the thorn trees where the baby tailor-birds had just woken up in their little nests of straw' (Bandyopādhyāya & Clark, 2004, 179). The maltreatment of Durga is the other name of exploitation of nature which reacts violently by rocking the land with thunder and torrential rain disturbing the normal activity of life. Bibhutibhushan himself being a wayfarer roaming through the ways of the physical universe, his heart felt an irresistible pull to the simple and innocent joys of earthly life as exemplified in the characters like Apu and Durga. Although Durga dies the novel ends with a message of hope and positive vision as the journey of life continues in spite of the hurdles on the road. This journey goes on to find out a better environment at a different place. It continues to quench the wonder thirst of Apu, the protagonist. His mind here expands from rural to urban, from regional to a global understanding of the ecosphere. The novel got eternal appeal when it was translated into film by Oscar-winning film director Mr. Satyajit Roy who gave





Bibhutibhushan a universal recognition. In fact, UN has chosen Mr. Roy as one of the twenty world thinkers whose art has transformative power. He has been selected for preserving and immortalizing in an art that section of people whom we carelessly pass by. Some pictures of *Pather Panchali-Song of the Road* have been selected for exhibition as a part of Time for Action to fulfill sustainable UN Goals to combat climate change. In fact, *Pather Panchali* deals with an eco-sophic understanding of our physical environment which is an integral part of our very existence.

### ***Aparajito -The Unvanquished: A Study In Deep Ecology***

The ecocritical term deep ecology was also coined by Arne Naess who rejected the idea that anything can be ranked according to their relative value. The philosophy provides a foundation for the green movement fostering environmental ethics of wilderness preservation, a harmonious relationship among organisms, and simple living ("Deep ecology - Wikipedia", 2017). Bibhutibhushan's second novel *Aparajito -The Unvanquished* (1931), is a sequel to *Pather Panchali*. It carries forward Apu's ecological vision through his close intimacy with nature. His love of nature gets its maturity here in this novel. The novelist says- "The shadowy woods, the distant call of a bird on this lazy evening, the sky that was a shade of peacock blue, the soft scent of bakul, were all mixed with a touch of intoxication. The strange mixture of emotions that rose in his heart-pride, enthusiasm, a breathless anticipation for the unknown, made Apu feels quite lightheaded". (Bibhutibhushan & Majumdar, 1999, 76). No one can deny the human nature interconnection in the above lines.

The novel mainly deals with two themes, Apu's struggle for existence and his yearning to go back to his roots. For the sake of Education, Apu has come to Calcutta, cannot complete the higher study due to poverty, searches for the job and finds life in the city suffocating. The tranquility and peace of Nischindipur village, his juvenile playground pulls him back. But every now and then environmental imagination of the village haunted him like a passion. He discovers the inherent worth of every rural object of his village life. Bandyopadhyay writes "Apu felt suffocated in Diwanpur. His only relief came from his imagination. In his notebook, Apu described the land his mind felt thirsty for. In it, there was a river, deep dark woods, singing birds, a golden sun at dawn and at dusk, and flowers innumerable, endless flowers. Even without stepping out of his little room



in the boarding house, he could take a walk by the river, or down a green meadow"(Bibhutibhushan & Majumdar, 1999:53). The village boy is the big metropolis of Calcutta to quench his insatiable thirst for knowledge leaving aside the traditional family profession of a priest. He works hard from dawn to night 'to earn a living to acclimatize himself with the ways of city life'(Bibhutibhushan & Majumdar, 1999:x). He never understands the artificial city life where he finds himself imprisoned like a bird in the claustrophobic atmosphere. 'While working as an account clerk in the house of a big landowner, he hankers for a small piece of blue sky, the verdure of the open fields, for the magic of the open emptiness of the horizon' (x). 'The only source of joy in his stale, claustrophobic life was Aparna'(Bibhutibhushan & Majumdar, 1999:238).She was the full moon and a goddess herself who took utmost care of him. Aparna herself is like nature with which Apu felt an inseparable bond to sustain him even in the odds of life. Having left Mr. Seel's office 'Apu felt as if he had been released from prison-the terrors of Mr. Seel's office had already faded away. His fun loving heart danced with joy. After all, he had ties of blood with the green expanse that now met his eyes, the scent that rose from the water'(Bibhutibhushan & Majumdar,1999:246). Though Apu suffers the grim realities of life (first having lost his parents one by one and then his wife Aparna who was a source of joy to him) he continues to live happily with his like-minded son Kajal, without any material pursuit. Like a phoenix, his spirit remains unvanquished despite grim poverty and loneliness. With the exploration of the unknown and the unseen of this beautiful earth, he finds enough pleasure in close intimacy with nature. In this novel the writer also warns us against the indiscriminate deforestation resulting in environmental hazards long before people became aware of environmental pollution;-

"Occasionally, when Apu thought of the steady destruction of the earth, particularly in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Africa, he felt that one day nature would take her revenge. Every act of man's arrogance-the building of empires, the naming of mountains and lakes after kings and queens, the killing of animals and birds to promote trade, the destruction of glorious pine forests to open factories-every ruinous attempt would be crushed, every score settled"(Bibhutibhushan & Majumdar,1999:352).Bibhutibhushan's concept of 'nature' is akin to the Vedic thought as believed in 'the enormous strength of the forest and the powers of nature'(352). To him, nature is 'apparently



lost in silent meditation like Shiva, all her fury curbed and controlled for the moment, but just waiting with infinite patience for the right time, the opportunity to strike'(Bibhutibhushan & Majumdar,1999:352). The impact of Nature on Apu is such that he even gave up hunting a deer which resembled the large , clear, expressive eyes of Kajal (his child) brimming with innocent wonder. Bibhutibhushan, the high priest of nature was also a pioneer of environmental conservation.

The novel shows how Nature's solitude can mould one's character. The nature mystic Apu of Pather Panchali has now undergone a study of deep ecology reading the book of nature here in this novel. After Aparna's death, Apu spent a few years of carefree life. He got the best refuge in the open lap of nature. In fact, one may renew one's self in nature. He went into the forest: the silent night and the damp air seemed to talk to him. He wished to see a deer which did not appear there. Yet he had a very strange experience "Disappointed though he was, Apu realized one thing. Being alone in these isolated places brought a change in his state of mind. In the city, one's mind might be wholly preoccupied with thoughts of self, desire or ambition. Here, under the colossal expanse of the star-studded sky, these things seemed both irrelevant and insignificant. The mind could expand here, learn to be more generous, tolerant and observant. One's whole angle of vision could change"(Bibhutibhushan & Majumdar, 1999:316).

Thus rural Apu learns a lot as urban Apu; the child of natural environment meets with the built environment. Yet he never forgets the inherent worth of the natural things. So he brings his son back to his childhood joy land. He does not want his motherless child sink into the materialistic society of the metro city. He never wants his son to become a victim of the artificialities of urban life. Exploring the flora and fauna he will learn how to satisfy one's creative self which Apu himself used to do during his formative period of life. The motherless child is put to his another mother, i.e., mother-nature for its proper nourishment. Apu's understanding of deep ecology led him to bring up his child without any alienation from the natural environment.

### ***Aranyak-Of The Forest- An Ecocide***

The term ecocide refers to extensive damage done to the ecosystem of a territory due to human atrocities or to such an extent that the normal living of the inhabitants is severely disturbed



("Ecosophy - Wikipedia", 2017). Human nature is essentially anthropocentric which assumes the primacy of man over other organisms in the environment. We are committing ecocide by deforestation of a land, burning fossil fuel, emitting greenhouse gasses from the industrial hubs, by exploiting the natural ecocritical understanding of *Aranyak-Of the Forest* (1976) in the light of ecocide. Ecocriticism is best exhibited in *Aranyak-Of the Forest* where the protagonist Satyacharan, a city dweller gets hypnotized by nature. Initially, urban lifestyle revolted against the loneliness of the forest. He has been sent to the forest as an estate manager to clear up a forest land of 30 thousand bighas. But as the novel progresses he fell madly in love with nature. The novel is told in the manner of a reverie whichever haunts his imagination. It is a good example of an ecocide. The narrator mentions "But these memories do not give me pleasure; they are filled with sorrow. By my hands was destroyed an unfettered playground of nature. I know too, that for this act the forest gods will never forgive me. I have heard that to confess a crime in one's own words lightens somewhat the burden of the crime. Therefore, the story" (Bandyopādhyāya & Bhattacharya, 2002: 3).

The novel deals with the protagonist Satyacharan's development of his attitude to Nature. The votary of urban life has transformed into a devoted lover of nature in her pristine beauty. The city man Satyacharan was to draw up new tenants. His role was that of a colonizer to set up more human habitation or industry in the forest. At first, he had hardly any care for the forest land and its so-called savage people. He writes "It all felt very strange to me, as though I had been exiled from our familiar earth and had been drawn into the mysterious life of an unknown planet somewhere in space"(19). The loneliness of the forestland set upon his breast like a stone. But as time passes by we see that nature has got him in such way that he can never be able to get separation from her for even a brief moment. Therefore, he says, "I began to feel that I would not be able to return to the hurly-burly of Calcutta forsaking the vast tracts of forest land, the fresh fragrance of the sun-scorched earth and the freedom and the liberation they represent" (Bandyopādhyāya & Bhattacharya, 2002:22). He enjoys horse ride in the forest on a moonlit night; He even sends Jugalprasad with enough money to the impenetrable forests of Jayanti Hills to bring saplings of 'dudhia' flower for beautification of Saraswati Kundi where variety of amazing birds like magpies,



pheasant crows, wild parrots, sparrows, chat shares, ghughus, harials, shyamas and hareets flocked to take refuge after a huge part of the forest becomes a victim of deforestation. He enjoys wondrous solitude in the unbroken quiet of Saraswati kundi which serves as a heaven to him with its honeybee creepers, wild sheuli, and its supernatural surroundings.

A clear change in his attitude to nature is evident in his recollection here in these lines. "This was a different sort of life, I mused, as I rode through the moonlit forest. This was a life for the eccentric wanderer- one who did not care to remain confined within the four walls of his house did not have housekeeping and domesticity in his blood. When I had left Calcutta and came to this terrible loneliness, to an utterly natural sort of lifestyle, how intolerable the uncivilized life here had seemed: but now, I feel this is the better life of the two. Nature- rude and barbaric here- had initiated me into the mysteries of freedom and liberation; would I ever be able to reconcile myself to a perch in the bird-cage city?" (Bandyopādhyāya & Bhattacharya, 2002:62). The protagonist here would never like to exchange this happiness for all the wealth in the world. He now understands "What nature gives to her devotees is invaluable. However, it is a gift not to be received until one has served her for long...if you lie immersed in her, the greatest gifts of nature- beauty and exquisite peace- will be showered on you so abundantly that they will drive you to ecstasy...drawing you closer to immortality"(Bandyopādhyāya & Bhattacharya, 2002:95).

But he has to destroy the forest land against his will for earning more revenue as his master has assigned him to do so. This creates in him a deep sense of guilt and remorse, a pang of conscience that leads him to beg mercy to the forest goddess "Forests, primeval and ancient, forgive me"(Aranyak, 254). Thus, like his creator Bibhutibhushan, Satyacharan has undergone a transformation in his thought process. Bandyopadhyay once said, "I have learned to look on Nature"(Chattopadhyay, 2010: 24).

The novel also shows the impact of nature on man. We see Satyacharan himself taking care of Saraswati Kundi where he asks Jugalprasad, a nature-loving soul to plant rare species of plants. He also expresses his anxiety over the fact that this part of natural beauty may not exist for a long time for- "Human beings are only too greedy" (Bandyopādhyāya & Bhattacharya, 2002:213). None can miss the ecological touch in Raju Parey's words: "The forest you see here is very beautiful. The flowers have been blooming for a long time and the birds sing. Each with their own call; the gods



themselves have merged with the wind and have left their mark on the earth. But whenever there is money or transactions of cash, loans, and receipts, the air becomes polluted. Then the gods choose not to stay any longer. So whenever I pick up the cutter and the axe, the gods come and snatch away my tools. They whisper such thoughts into my ears that all thoughts of land and property are driven away from my mind"(Bandyopādhyāya & Bhattacharya, 2002: 76).

The narrator also laments "The settlers did not care much for the majesty of trees, they did not have eyes to see the grandeur of the land; their only concern was to fill their stomachs and to survive. If it were any other country, they would have had laws to keep the forests intact and preserve them for nature lovers, as they have done with the Yosemite Park in California, the Krugger National Park in South Africa or the National Albert in the Belgian Congo. My distant employers do not care for the landscape: all they understand are taxes and revenue money- the salami, the irshal and the hustabood" (Bandyopādhyāya & Bhattacharya, 2002: 213). So the novel may be related to both the domination model as well as the caretaking model of ecocriticism. Bibhutibhushan here advocates the conservation of forests in India.

At the same, time Satyacharan is critical of the city people who cannot appreciate the beauty of nature. He is critical of Rai Bahadur Family from the city who came on a visit to the forest as "they lacked the vision to appreciate what they saw. In fact, they had come with the sole purpose of hunting, as though birds, rabbits, and deer were all awaiting them by the roadside, waiting patiently to be shot"(Bandyopādhyāya & Bhattacharya, 2002: 189). Although they were all educated they failed to understand the tranquil beauty and solitude of forest life. He then added "The women were motley collection, completely devoid of imagination. They ran about gathering twigs for their fire on the edges of the forest and chattered endlessly, but not one of them was around to see where they were, either at the spot where they were going to cook or at the natural beauty of the forest around them"(189). He has a fervent appeal to all to save the remaining Mahalikharoop hills and the forest land of Bhanmati's family on the Dhannjhari range "Perhaps a time would come when men would no more be able to see forests: all they would see would be fields of crops or the chimneys of jute and cotton mills. They would come then to this secluded forest land, as though on a pilgrimage. For those people, yet to come, let the forest stay pristine, undisturbed" (Bandyopādhyāya &





Bhattacharya, 2002: 248).

Hence, the novel brings about a radical change in the thought process of Satyacharan, the protagonist. The votary of urban life has turned to be a devoted lover of nature. It is not a mere travelogue or a diary of some individual. It is the eternal saga of the poverty stricken people of the earth who are deprived of the equal share of the natural resource due to the dominance of the so-called capitalistic society. These people are not afraid of facing the odds and adversities of forest life; rather they are the best example of the struggle for existence in their hostile environment. They lack the material comfort of city life, yet they are happy with what they find in the forest. When ecocide occurs these people prove to be the worst sufferers.

### Conclusion

The novels of Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay allow one to rethink nature and to study them from nature's perspective. In an age of anxiety and anger ravaged by post world war disillusionment, Bibhuti novels prescribe solace for mankind into the world of 'Nature'. They advocate environmental protection which is a much-talked matter during today's ecological crisis. His characters in the novels may not be regarded as heroes in the traditional sense. But they teach us how to lead a life in the most optimistic manner. They are the common run of people who lead a simple life with an ecological vision. The novelists in Western countries deal with violence, sex, alienation and psychological problems, but Bibhutibhushan deals with the basics of human life. His characters are interconnected with nature, the rural environment, the rivers, the mountains etc. While *Pather Panchali* is the healthy boy's pure delight in the open air; *Aparajito* is the maturity of his eco-philosophy of life. On the other hand, *Aranyak* is the self-realization of a city man who has committed an ecocide during his six long years of stay in the forest land. The great nature prophet foreshadows the evils of 'the growth of the soil' and his novels make us think in a bio-centric way. Through his green narratives, the novelist has a strong message that human life devoid of nature is meaningless while living in the lap of nature is absolute freedom and happiness. They indicate how the text is associated with the writer's connection to the environment to build up an ecological literacy among the readers who are environmentally aware when the text is read and reread. The study insists on rethinking nature as part of our very existence. Hence, Bandyopadhyay's novels are





the best example of ecocritical context even though they were written much before the term Ecocriticism came into existence.

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## **Decoding The Act of Oppressive Rituals And Possessed Women In Baby Kamble's The Prisons We Broke**

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**Abstract:** The prisons we broke is an extraordinary masterpiece by Baby Kamble, recounting the horrors of Brahmanical hegemony and patriarchal domination as faced by the Dalit community, particularly 'Mahars'. This paper will analyze the construction of some violent rituals along the lines of suppressing the 'other' gender (here Mahar women) that eventually affects the shaping of once identity on cultural, social and personal levels. Also, evaluate the tradition of oppressive customary rituals in relation with Mahar women from the explanatory framework of 'functionalist, psychoanalytic, physiological, symbolic, and theatrical' approach. Another imperative discussion area in this paper is the religious practice of spirit possession and the performance of Mahar women's possessed self and body as a method of creating a presence, free space and to display resistance, which they are deprived of in both private and public spheres.

**Keywords:** Baby Kamble, The Prisons We Broke, Rituals, Spirit Possession, Mahar Women, Oppressive.

Baby Kamble's *The prisons we broke* originally written in Marathi as '*JinaAmucha*', is the first groundbreaking autobiography by a Dalit woman, recounting the horrors of Brahmanical hegemony and patriarchal domination. It can be labeled as a social biography of a Dalit woman, taking up an unprecedented endeavor of presenting a self-critical reflection on the life of Mahar community of Western part of Maharashtra as well as capturing the transformation that Ambedkarite movement had brought to their lives. Kamble depicts the structural imposition of hegemonic norms of caste-society on Mahar women often exercised by the people of their own



community, victimized oppressors<sup>1</sup>, thus caging them into a vicious cycle of tormentation, and therefore possibly betraying any hope of their liberation. Kamble presents a Dalit feminist critique of patriarchal order by giving a detailed account of the oppressively ritualistic practices performed within Mahar community, reflecting how they are prisoners of their own deceptive faith and its practices. *The prisons we broke* depicts various religious and mundane rituals, practiced by the Mahars before their conversion to Buddhism, strictly cemented around their everyday life experiences. These social rituals of varied nature and complexities which are performed with utmost sincerity by Mahars illustrate for us the oppressive nature of Brahminical rituals with which they were surrounded, and at the same time, their quest for liberation manifested by their participation in Ambedkar's anti-caste movement. As depicted in the book, Mahar women face harsh circumstances and exploitation throughout their lives on the account of their caste-gender location (being Dalit women) and location of their gender (as women) within caste-system as they are triply marginalized and treated as 'Mahar amongst the Mahars'. They suffer myriad types of abuses such as child marriage, domestic violence, patriarchal-subjugation, sub-human existence etc.

The idea of ritual is not restricted only to a religious phenomenon; it can be referred to any repetitive action resultant of conditioned behavior and state of mental indoctrination, all are being the epistemic locations of the dominant groups within the society. As Jack David Eller in his pursuit of providing a flexible understanding of ritual, quotes Thomas Barfield, "In its broadest sense, the ritual may refer not to any particular kind of event but to the expressive aspect of all human activity. To the extent that it conveys messages about the social and cultural status of individuals, any human action has a ritual dimension"(Eller). Further to point out some core characteristic of ritual as an event, and gain a more fluidity in the understanding of its nature, he depicts ritual as habitual, obsessive or mimetic in its making. However, the theoretical explanation of a ritual as an action may differentiate it from various conceptual ideas like belief with which it is intertwined, and can not exist in an isolation. As extrapolated by Catherine Bell, "beliefs could exist without rituals;

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<sup>1</sup> The term Victimised-Oppressor here refers to Dalit men. In this context of this biography, it refers to Mahar men as being men; they are often responsible for holding of patriarchal notions and thus subjugating Dalit women. But at the same time Mahar men being the oppressor in the context of patriarchy, they are also victims of Caste system. This very theoretical location of Mahar men is the basis of coinage of the term called Victimised Oppressor.



rituals, however, could not exist without beliefs”(Bell).

It is this *working* of a strong beliefsystem along with a ritual that assures its unhindered continuation in a specific society. It can be divided into two categories of religious and quotidian, in relation with the Mahar women, who stood at the receiving end of an exploitative system that is an amalgamation of caste-based discrimination and domestic violence.

Under the strict normative culture of caste-system, Mahars are made to live deplorable lives in an abject poverty, deprivation, and hunger. The locality in which they used to live was called ‘*Maharwada*’, situated at the margins of the village. In spite of the fact that Mahars were made to lead a life of sub-human, it was the realizationof collective consciousness by them, shaped by their sense of sharing a common chord of pain, became an ostensible working-principle within their community. Everything became social and a community affair. From cooking of the dead animal to the distribution of the collected leftover food into equal share and an active participation in religious festivals, ritual and marriage ceremonies. The community ideals like its customs, beliefs, cultural and social practices which were vital markers of the community identity were treated higher than personal interests. Thus, their individual identity was projected by their communityas well as their collective consciousness and was treated secondary or submissive. They,as untouchables,were thrust into poor socio-cultural-religious conditions being discarded from the society by the Hindu philosophy on the one hand and on the other hand, theywere made to uphold the Hindu religion, customs, rites and gods. In this process, they consider worshipping their gods a *holy* act and they believe that these gods acted as social beings,interfering in the lives of their devotees for their own betterment. These practices were so widespread thateach Mahar house had the figure of gods placed on a raised platform. The importance of religion in their community could be understood from the fact that the size of platform and number of gods stations would become a symbol of prestige and this would determine their family status.The ritual appeasement of their local gods was considered as a holy duty which they take as a magical nostrum to end all their griefs and sufferings.Mahars then believed insupernatural entities and their lives were guided by umpteen superstitious beliefs that they followed before becoming Buddhists in 1956. Ritual

offerings like *murali*<sup>2</sup> and *jogtin*<sup>3</sup>, were offerings of a young girl in the service of the local gods and goddesses was the most prevalent practice among Mahars and was considered as an honor. The inhumane nature of treating women as mere objects during these offerings to divine deities is what makes it an oppressive ritual.

The biggest and happiest occasion in their lives was the religious month of *Ashadh*. It was the month of “ritual baths, house cleaning, and polishing of floors with dung... yet it was a month of comfort.... Ashadh was an antidote”(Kamble). It would be a hectic month for women who were expected to perform cleaning rituals regularly and various other domestic chores. After a young Mahar girl transforms into a married woman these rituals become an integral part of her *expected* “gender norms” through which excessive control is exercised and she is exploited during its performance. The compliance offered by the oppressed Mahar women suggest towards their helplessness and practice of self-discipline. Thus, the nature of oppression on the women runs both internally and externally. The internal oppression within Mahar women through their social conditioning tends to exaggerate the conformity with the oppressor's suppressive norms. Mahar women were often seen adopting a self-disciplining behavior where the slightest sense of digression from the prescribed dominant social norm would make them express their anguish to themselves.

Mother-in-laws enjoyed a temporary dominant position in the community with their roles as possessed women. In the midst of religious festivity, the oppressed self of a daughter-in-law would yearn for the sweet food, the rewards they patiently waited for a whole year. They perform a rather passive role in these religious rituals, unlike their mother in laws. Young married women were considered Suwasini who would put “*kumkum and haldi*”<sup>4</sup> on the foreheads of possessed women as a mark of their undying devotion and submission to both the goddesses and to their authoritative mother-in-laws. Possessed women would put up a performance of nonstop dancing, moving freely to the rhythmic beats of drums played by Potraja<sup>5</sup> in front of the whole community. They would go carefree with open hair, wild bodily movements, no pallav over their heads, making loud shrill

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<sup>2</sup>A girl offered to god Khandoba in marriage.

<sup>3</sup>A girl offered to goddess Bhawani/Ambabai as her ritual worshipper.

<sup>4</sup>Vermilion powder and turmeric powder.

<sup>5</sup>Ritual worshipper of the local god Khandoba and goddesses like Ambabai of the Mahar community



noises, enjoying a temporal sense of liberation they are otherwise not allowed to experience thus registering their protest against the patriarchal hegemony. In this temporary transgression, she literally takes on a dominant personality in the ritual space, uplifted from sub-human level to the level of divinity as devotees fell at her feet. It helps to release out her internal desires and the ability to offer remedies and protection to others that allow her to exercise sufficient authority and social control within that space. This ritual also symbolizes Mahar (possessed) women's ability to regain her autonomy as a human agency as she becomes a matter of divinity and respect during this period. Her dominant position during the ceremony is expressed in the following lines: "The man of the house would then literally fall at his wife's feet. He begged her to have mercy on him" (Kamble). At another instance, the husband says, "I'll even untie my turban and put it at my wife's feet to express my humility. But please don't torture her body" (Kamble). Her descendance to the corporeal world and gaining a sense of consciousness is marked with a return to her old submissive self and marks a willing reinforcement of the repressive norms by her immediate self-monitoring. This is captured in the lines elaborating her action: "Hurriedly, she tied her disheveled hair into a knot and pulled the pallav on her head, becoming, once again, a docile and virtuous wife. Then she exclaimed in anguish, 'oh, is my mamaji here? Oh god, how my pallav has slipped from my head, like a slut, in front of all these elderly people!' (Kamble). A discriminatory behavior is witnessed in Mahar men, assuming a "ritual subordination"<sup>6</sup> (Michael and Wulf) in front of possessed woman while she is treated as "other" with gaining of her consciousness. Elderly men of the community would also show this selective reverence towards women of the community and its temporary nature, they hurl condescending remarks on them, like, "Hey you, are you women from good families or female donkey? Go and fetch the Kumkum box like a good wife" (Kamble). She is constantly reminded of her ritualistic behavior of a good wife and the submissive roles of '*stridharma*' that she should

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<sup>6</sup> I have taken the term "ritual subordination" from the anthropologist William Sax's essay entitled: "Emotional Detachment and expression Garhwali Possession Rituals, where he is referring to the submission shown by an upper caste possessed person (can be male or female) towards the Jagar, who is the sole controller of the possession ceremony and belong to a lower caste. Whereas, I have used the term in the context of gender ---submission during the possession ceremony among Mahars where a dominant male temporarily becomes submissive in front of the possessed women representing the divine spirit in the ritual space.





never forget. The brutality became more severe because these were child brides and sasus<sup>7</sup> who would slander them for not covering the face with pallav properly. At this point, all the ladies or sasus would defame the young girl, calling her names like “slut”, “bitch”, and “*Kalwatin*”<sup>8</sup>.

### **Mundane Rituals**

The degenerating notion of purity rituals forced Mahars to maintain a safe distance from upper caste men and women. As Uma Chakravarti notes, “Notions of purity were regarded as the most powerful protection against social contamination and efforts were made to erect it as the universal hierarchical principle, and as if it had the consent of all the castes (Chakravarti). Mahar women had to take strict care of this purity ritual such as they had to change their path if an upper caste male was coming. While selling firewood or grass to upper caste women they have to take care that they don’t leave behind any hair or thread from a sari. Women were obliged to greet upper caste men with a ritual chant “The humble Mahar women fall at your feet master”(Kamble) and if an oblivious young bride forgets to do so she would have to suffer the wrath.

As Paulo Freire said, “The oppressed wants at any cost to resemble the oppressors. The oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend themselves to become oppressors.” In the same context, if the process of Conscientization<sup>9</sup> is yet to be taken place, the desire to dominate others is irresistible and Kamble points toward this vicious tendency and deeply rooted slave mentality amongst Mahar community when she says, “The other world had bound us with chains of slavery... And we too desired to dominate, to wield power. But who would let us do that? So we made our own arrangements to find slaves-our very own daughters-in-law! If nobody else, then we could at least enslave them”(Kamble). Among Mahar women, there existed a hierarchy between superior mother-in-law and inferior daughter-in-law which speaks of a struggle in their relationship. Kamble narrates the dehumanizing treatment towards daughter-in-laws:

These sasus ruined lives of innocent women forever. Every day the Maharwada would resound with the cries of hapless women from some house or the other. Husbands, flogging

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<sup>7</sup>Mother-in-law in local language.

<sup>8</sup>A dancing woman from the Kolhati caste: also means women artist. The word is also used as a term of insult, signifying a woman with loose morals.

<sup>9</sup>Read Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*





their wives as if they were beasts and would do so until the sticks broke with the effort. The heads of these women would break open, their backbones would be crushed, and some would collapse unconscious. But there was nobody to care for them.

Mother-in-laws use their 'disguised voluntary possession'<sup>10</sup> as a weapon to instigate their sons against daughter-in-laws and validate their false claims. Eventually, her wicked conspiracy would lead to the involvement of other members of her family, her husband and son would join hands in torturing the young bride. Many times daughter-in-laws would make a futile attempt to runaway from the house in the dark. However, this would turn into a futile escape because even her own maternal family would disapprove of it and showed no sympathy towards her. As Kamble describes, "Even her brother and father would flog her mercilessly and ask the in-laws to take her back" (Kamble, 2009: 99). Later she would be punished with another violent ritual of tying a makeshift device to her leg in order to control her movement. This practice was to restrict her mobility to an extent that it became impossible for her to even think of an escape ever. Sasus' pretentiously crying and virulent speech would make her son furious so much so that he would get ready to chop his wife's nose. After chopping off her nose, she was thrown out of the house in disgrace to roam around with a bleeding nose. Her entrance was barred from the so-called good houses, as her mutilation became emblematic of her ostracized identity. Another ritual is of tying her sari in such a way that its border doesn't show and became a marker of her caste identity. These aforementioned violent rituals were imposed on young girls by the entire community with a collective consent so that the oppressed or victim would have nowhere to go and couldn't find an alternative solution. The rituals become a site of imposed norms, behavior, stereotyped-roles, mannerism and closed-choices upon Mahar women. The violent rituals eventually affected Mahar women at psychological level. In the process of their tormented existence they encounter a lot of savage challenges and ultimately these hapless women were left to embrace an oppressive ideology with the silence against which they alone could not resist. When the violence gets established in a community, with time, the oppressive acts which are monotonously performed tend to become

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<sup>10</sup>As it was made to believe an involuntary possession and that the agency of the divine spirit has overtaken the medium's body and the spirit is speaking through them.



Kamble recounts how the caste oppression and patriarchal dominance injected and supported by the Brahmanical social order would continue function without any revolt from the oppressed, she writes emphatically, “Each generation left their children to serve their oppressors and quietly got wiped off from the face of the earth”(Kamble). These rituals are obsessive, hierarchal, and hereditary in nature and their practice would leave no space for any protest. Any slightest resistance is met with strict rejection. Since the idea of personal identity among Mahars was directly attached with the phenomenon of the community such that any deviation from its prescribed norms would create a fear of losing one’s identity. Thus, a strong tradition of consent and conformity with regressive practices remained intact, even at the cost of someone's life. Despite all, Kamble reminiscent the stir Ambedkar’s call caused among Dalits to annihilate caste, un-follow humiliating Hindu religion for a collective change in order to transcend the boundaries of caste and patriarchy. Kamble’s expression becomes critique to this very idea of oppressing as she tries to question the very structure of oppression and hegemonic ideology that interpellate people into slaves. *The Prisons We Broke* is in many ways a unique piece of narratives to understand the oppression in India at multiple levels: the systematic structures of oppression and a complex web of caste-system. Coming out from such a complex structure of oppression as a manifestation of articulation of oppression and discursively questioning the very structure of oppression, Kamble’s book can only be viewed as the manifesto of rebel.

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## **Aesthetics of Nonsense in *Abol Tabol***

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**Abstract:** The paper proposes to explore Aesthetics of Nonsense in selective verses of Sukumar Ray's *Abol Tabol* ( English translations by Sampurna Chattarji). Aesthetics, explored in this nonsense text, can be mainly divided into following two categories- Linguistic and Logistic. Linguistic techniques are Neologisms, Portmanteau, Reduplication and Sound- over- sense. Logistic techniques are Paradoxical simultaneity of meaning, nonsense tautology, non sequitur and arbitrariness, absurd precision and imprecision, faulty cause and effect, and the use of infinity. By delving into these aesthetics, the paper also explores simultaneity of 'Nonsense ideologue' that "meaning is contrary to its own self." (Heyman li)

**Keywords:** Nonsense and Aesthetics.

### **Introduction**

*Abol Tabol* is a collection of nonsense verses and is originally written in Bengali. That is why, the paper focuses on verses of Sukumar Ray translated by Sampurna Chattarji. These verses are taken from her book *Abol Tabol: The Nonsense World of Sukumar Ray*. *Abol Tabol* is an original, pioneer work of Nonsense written in colonial India. Trailokyanath Mukhopadhyay's *Kankabati* was written earlier but it is a Bengali translation of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and not an original work. As recorded in *The Tenth Rasa*, Sukumar Ray is one of the pioneers who actively sought to write as well as promote nonsense in India (li). A prolific children's writer, all his works are brimming with humor. For a long time, Sukumar Ray's work was limited to Bengal as it was written in Bengali. When Satyajit Ray translated it in English in a work titled *Nonsense Rhymes* in 1970, it was the first time that a non Bengali could soak his brand of nonsense in. In last decade or two, translation of



*Abol Tabol* in Indian vernaculars has brought his work to the fore. In Hindi, there are translations by Gosvami (1997), Sinha Roy (2002), Dev (2003) and Kusavaha (2006), among others (Bhadury 11). The oeuvre of Ray's work include *Abolabol* ("Gibberish"), novella *"HaJaBaRaLa"*, short story collection *"Pagla Dashu"* ("Crazy Dashu"), play *"Chalachittachanchari"* and many more.

### **Nonsense**

Nonsense is a kind of play, one that is not pure exuberance, not unrestrained joy and, above all, not gibberish (though all of these are often elements of it). Rather, it is an art form rooted in sophisticated aesthetics, and play with logic, and it is the art of nonsense that is one of its most appealing aspects. (Heyman xx- xxi)

Encompassing a repertoire of non- sense in its shroud, a nonsense text abounds in sense, for in a nonsense text, there must be a "balance between 'sense' and 'non- sense'" (Heyman xxiv). In this balance the 'sense' scale occupies more space. The case is similar to fulcrum, in which if cotton and sugar weighs same, than, cotton occupies more space. The nonsense scale defies sense, "primarily on the logical and semantic level . . . nonsense operates not by ignoring the rules of sense but by subversively playing with them- stretching, squeezing, flipping upside down, yet, in the end still depending on their existence" (ibid). In other words, a Nonsense text mimics a child's world- fun, arbitrary yet firm in whatever catches their attention for the duration.

Nonsense usually emerges from an excess of sense rather than a lack of it, or as [Wim] Tigges states, through a 'multiplicity of meaning [balanced] with a simultaneously absence of meaning.' (xx-xxi)

Though writer John Hoskyns is credited with invention of English nonsense verse in 1611, its (Nonsense) origin is difficult to pin down. Moreover, in *The Tenth Rasa*, English translations of nonsense verses written in Indian vernaculars are available. Some of these are older than Hoskyn's work. The opening section contains English translations of Hindi *Sabda* 62, *Sabda* 2, and *Sabda* 52 from *Bejak* of Kabir. Kabir was a 15<sup>th</sup> Century Indian Mystic poet and saint (3- 5). Similarly, translations of Nonsense works of Tenali Ramalinga- jester and poet of court of Krishnadeva Raya- date back to sixteenth century (6- 7). In Europe, John Taylor was more prolific in its use in later years of seventeenth century but it is in mid nineteenth century, with the works of authors such as



Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll, that the revival of English nonsense verse took place (Kwoka n.p.). *The Tenth Rasa* traces “spirit of whimsy” (Heyman xii) convoluted with nonsense, in Indian history. In the introductory essay “An Indian Nonsense Naissance,” Mychael Heyman states that ‘modern or literary nonsense’ in India is not only influenced by, but is an extension and a hybrid of colonial contact. Bengali literature was pioneer in imbibing “the foreign brand of Nonsense” (xii). It (Bengali literature) alloyed this “foreign brand of Nonsense” with ‘spirit of whimsy’ and ‘nonsense thread is woven in Indian literary culture’. Spirit of whimsy manifested in India is as quaint and peculiar as ‘*Om hring cling*’ of tantra Shastra or Ulti Language (inverted language) of mystification. In Spirit of whimsy, a undercurrent of spiritual is found. For instance, verses on infant Krishna’s antics written by Surdas, Meera Bai and many more are devotional in nature.

From Bengali, the influence has been sporadic to other Indian Vernaculars or in other words to ‘the literature of the United Indian Union.’ Some luminaries as well as pioneers of Bengali nonsense genre (or Indian nonsense genre as Indian literary Renaissance in nineteenth century started with Bengali Renaissance) are Sukumar Ray, Rabindranath Tagore, Trailokyanath Mukhopadaya etc.

The paper focuses on verses of Sukumar Ray translated by Sampurna Chattarji. In translation, to capture nonsense is difficult but “as Sukanta Chaudhari writes in his translation of Sukumar Ray, people ‘might debate whether nonsense can be translated; but I reassure myself that at worst the result will still be nonsense’” (qtd. in Heyman xviii).

Genealogy of Nonsense is threefold- sophisticated Aesthetics, Linguistics and play with logic.

Aesthetics is mainly a branch of philosophy which critically studies art, nature and culture as manifested in perceived texts. While engaged in critical reflections, there are always devised underlying principles that form the basis of existence as well as evaluation of that perceived text. Both Western Philosophy and Indian Philosophy has delved and explored into it.

According to Indian Aesthetic theory of *Natyasastra* by Bharata Muni, there are eight rasas in any art form and that each rasa, correspondingly evoke one emotional effect. These rasas are-

RASA	BHAVA	MEANING
<i>Shringar</i> (Erotic)	Rati	Delight

<i>Hasya</i> (Humorous)	Hasa	Laughter
<i>Karuna</i> (Pathetic)	Shoka	Sorrow
<i>Raudra</i> (Terrible)	Krodh	Anger
<i>Veera</i> (Heroic)	Utsaha	Heroism
<i>Bhayanaka</i> (Fearful)	Bhaya	Fear
<i>Bibhatsa</i> (Odious)	Jugupsa	Disgust
<i>Adbhuta</i> (Wonderous)	Vismaya	Wonder

Abhinav Gupta added one more rasa- *Shanta* Rasa (evokes bhava of calmness) and total number of Rasas became nine. Rabindernath Tagore called Nonsense “chodda” or “balarasa” (*chodda* or *bala* mean child in English) as he first discovered it in folk rhymes and stories composed for children. Sukumar Ray called it “Khayal Rasa.” Bhava or emotion produced by a rasa is critical in studying the respective Rasa. According to Tagore, emotion produced by nonsense hasn't been given any name but it is pure, innocent, beautiful, neither thick, nor pungent. (Heyman xli) Mychael Hryman, in tradition of Bharata Muni and Abhinavgupta, called it the tenth Rasa.

The main shoot of aesthetics in a nonsense text can be mainly divided into following two subshoots- Linguistic and Logistic.

Linguistic techniques found in a Nonsense text are Neologisms, Portmanteau, Reduplication and Sound- over- sense; and Logistic ones are Paradoxical simultaneity of meaning, nonsense tautology, non sequitur and arbitrariness, absurd precision and imprecision, faulty cause and effect, and the use of infinity. As name indicates, linguistic techniques are based on play of language and are as follows:

- Neologisms- Neologisms are words invented by the author.
- Portmanteau- portmanteau are words that are formed by joining together of existing words.
- Reduplication- in reduplication, words are repeated. For instance good-good, go- go etc.
- Sound- over- sense- in this type, sound is more important than word as *mitti*- Hindi word for soil evokes more poignant connection with homeland than *bhoomi* and *jamin*.

Logistic techniques are



- Paradoxical simultaneity of meaning- Paradoxical simultaneity of meaning "... generally refers to the simultaneous existence of two or more, usually contradictory, meanings" (Heyman xxvii)
- Nonsense tautology- "it occurs when two different words or phrases are used side by side, implying a different meaning but actually having the same meaning" (Heyman xxviii)
- Non sequitur and arbitrariness- non sequitur and arbitrariness refers to a conclusion or reply that doesn't follow logically from the previous statement. There are three further types of Non sequitur and arbitrariness-
- Absurd precision and imprecision- "A particular Kind of arbitrariness, absurd precision, is the inclusion of detail, often numbers, which are so precise as to imply some significance in that precision"(Heyman xxix)
- Faulty cause and effect- when there is no apparent relation between causes and its effect, the result created is called faulty cause and effect.
- The use of infinity- it is a kind of accretion and go on and on. For instance 'A Never Ending Tale' or 'What happened next?'

People often confuse Hasya (comedy) Rasa with nonsense. Two genres sound similar but whereas Hasya (comedy) is based on humor, nonsense is based on whimsicality.

*Abol Tabol* Verses written by Sukumar Ray translated by Sampurna Chattarji

"Gibberish-Gibberish" by Sukumar Ray. Translated by Sampurna Chattarji

Come happy fool whimsical cool  
come dreaming dancing fancy-free,  
Come mad musician glad glusician  
beating your drum with glee.  
Come o come where mad songs are sung  
without any meaning or tune,  
Come to the place where without a trace  
your mind floats off like a loon.  
Come scatterbrain up tidy lane





wake, shake and rattle and roll,  
Come lawless creatures with wilful features  
each unbound and clueless soul.  
Nonsensical ways topsy-turvy gaze  
stay delirious all the time,  
Come you travellers to the world of babblers  
and the beat of impossible rhyme.

At first sight to call “a happy fool whimsical cool” to a world of “impossible rhyme,” “topsy-turvy gaze” to “wake, shake and rattle and roll” seems meaningless but a closer look reveals that the poem is brimming with meaning on many planes. The poem is definition of a nonsense verse itself- “the world of babblers and the beat of impossible rhyme.” The poem is exhorting “scatterbrain”, “clueless soul”, “lawless creatures with wilful features” to the world of nonsense. The “scatterbrain” is busy lifestyle and the world of nonsense offers a respite to his conscious to “float off like a loon.” To “clueless soul” the world of nonsense is the spiritual world. “Lawless creature with willful features” represents stubborn man mired in chaos of life. The world of nonsense offers “a topsy- turvy gaze” to understand it.

To achieve this apparent meaning in meaninglessness, the poem incorporates use of neologism, portmanteau, nonsense tautology and Sound- over- sense techniques. “Happy fool and whimsical cool” have apparently same meaning. Fool or whimsical is happy for his stories are becoming more creative. But at the same time when run on, create a distinctive meaning that since fool is happy, that is why, his whimsical world is creating cool stories. So, the technique used here is Nonsense tautology. Similarly, “dreaming ... fancy free” is a paradox but when run on as “dreaming dancing fancy-free” creates the meaning that happy fool is exhorted to enter the world of nonsense dancing and in a dream like trance but at the same time he is obviated from having fantasies or exaggerations about this “nonsensical world.” Another instance of nonsense tautology is “wake, shake and rattle and roll.” In this line, all words means the same but their run on creates the urgency to shake off lethargy by indulging in immediate action. “Glusician” is a neologism.



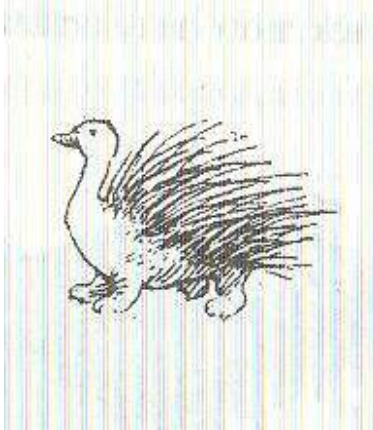
“Scatterbrain” is a portmanteau which is coined by joining of two words- scatter and brain. The “nonsensical world” emerges in the poem “because of the nature and sound of the language used rather than language simply being used to describe a world” (Heyman xxviii). The title of the poem “Gibberish-Gibberish” is an instance of reduplicative pattern and according to Michael Heyman, Indian languages/vernaculars show more use of this technique. For example, *chi- chi, chup-chap* and many more.

There is use of Paradoxical simultaneity of meaning. In line “mad songs are sung without any meaning or tune,” a reader needs to fight against the implication of distinction created by the language to reach a meaning. The songs apparently have the meaning of madness in them but they are sung without meaning, is paradoxical. The peculiar part is that both meaning simultaneously exist to lend beauty to the verse.

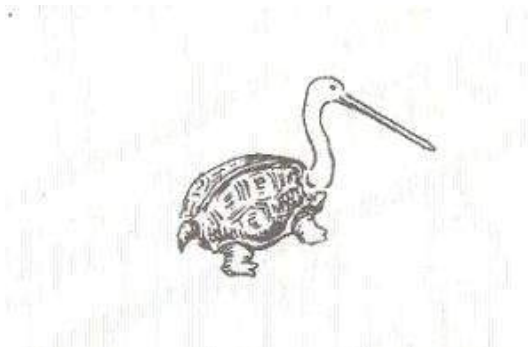
The whole poem is permeated by Sound- over- sense. The onomatopoeia evolves essence of the “nonsensical world” by more use of rhyming couplet (free- glee, loon- lane, fool- cool, roll- soul and many more), alliteration ( “come dreaming dancing fancy-free,/Come mad musician glad glusician”) and by resonance (musician- glusician, mad songs- tune, floats off- loons, scatterbrain-tidy lane, babblers and impossible rhyme) than reference and litigation.

“Mish Mash” by Sukumar Ray. Translated by Sampurna Chattarji

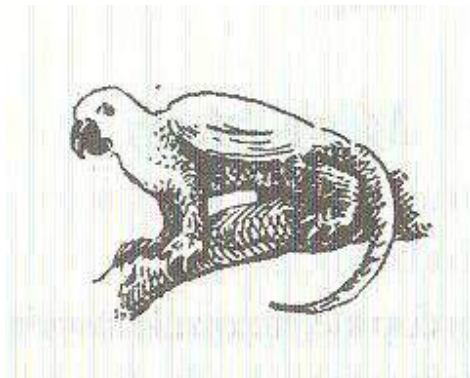
A duck and a porcupine, on one knows how,  
(Contrary to grammar) are a duckupine now.



The stork told the tortoise, 'Isn't this fun!  
As the stork, we're second to none!'



The parrot-faced lizard felt rather silly-  
Must he give up insects and start eating chilli?

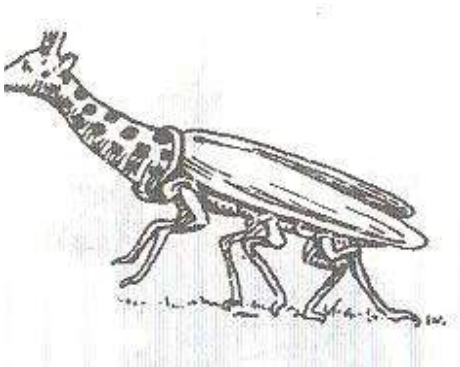


The goat charged the scorpion at a rapid run

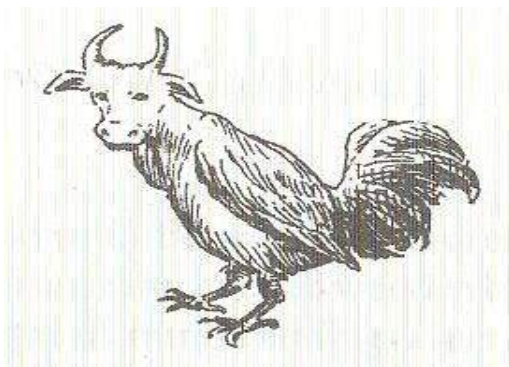
jumped on his back, now head and tail are one



The giraffe lost his taste for roaming far and wide,  
like a grasshopper he'd rather jump and glide.

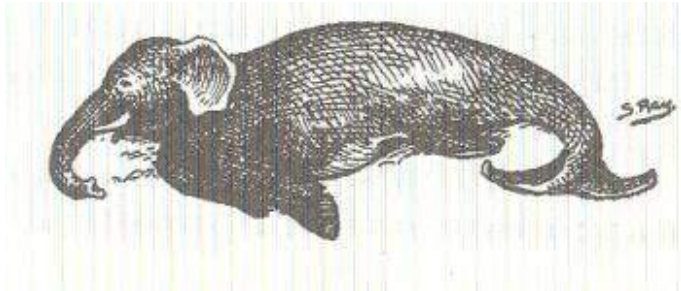


The cow said. 'Am I sick, too, from this disease?  
Or why should the rooster chase me, if you please?'



And oh the poor elewhale – that was a bungle,

while whale yearns for the sea, ele wants the jungle.



The hornbill was desperate as it had no horns,  
merged with a deer now, it no longer mourns.



The poem, at first sight, seems to have no meaning and superficially indulges in a child's fancy of mixing up two animals and whimsically fancying up the result. But underlying philosophy of 'what if' and 'mish mash' insinuates that these questions don't end at 'mish mash of animals' only. This philosophy works at a very basic level in the poem and is extension of more elaborate transcendental questions of life that start with 'what if.' These mish- mash animals show myriad of emotions and personalities which renders them more reality than they are real. Some animals react favorably like "The hornbill was desperate as it had no horns,/ merged with a deer now, it no longer mourns."



Some of these, voice their confusions as “The parrot-faced lizard felt rather silly,/ Must he give up insects and start eating chilli?” When goat charged the at scorpion at a rapid run and jumped on his back, a new animal forms which has now one head and tail. So this mish- mash is not convivial but forced too. Some animals are showing their discomfort also as cow is confused about rooster’s chasing and Elewhale is in pain as “while whale yearns for the sea, ele wants the jungle.” Assessment of results of these ‘what ifs,’ into some being positive, some into obstruction and some into unresolved issues, provide some insight into quandaries itself. The poem also emphasis on the necessity of ‘creative indulgences’ of minds. Use of portmanteaus- “Duckpine,” “Stortoise,” and “Elewhale” are accompanied by illustrations- renders these fancies more concretion. Poushali Bhadury in her paper “Fantastic Beasts and How to Sketch Them: The Fabulous Bestiary of Sukumar Ray” provides an alternative interpretation that these illustrations are satire on colonial hybrid subject of Sukumar Ray’s times. These mish mash animals are symbolic of hybrid psyche of an educated Bengali (Indian) who was vacillating in his attitude towards then ruling British Government.

The phrase “contrary to grammar” works as a case of Absurd precision and imprecision. It highlights the precision of going against the rules of grammar but simultaneously renders that this imprecision necessary.

When “The stork told the tortoise, “Isn’t this fun!/ As the stortoise, we’re second to non,!” in the phrase “second to non” the number ‘second’ serves the function of precise grand revelation of imprecision of them being a significant mish mash.

When “The goat charged the scorpion at a rapid run/ jumped on his back, now head and tail are one,” in here, the technique of Faulty cause and effect is used. The jumping of goat on scorpion should not result into their being one animal. The cause doesn’t lead to effect but to fault.

In lines “The cow said. ‘Am I sick, too, from this disease?/ Or why should the rooster chase me, if



you please?” sexual innuendo is created through the use of Absurd precision and imprecision. The cow is precisely lamenting and asking the imprecise question why the rooster is chasing her?

The onomatopoeia via rhyming couplets( for instance how- now, fun- non, silly- chilly, run- one wide glide, bungle- jungle, horns- mourns), alliteration (“while whale yearns for the sea,” “taste for roaming far and wide,”)and resonance (for instance whale- sea, ele- jungle, hornbill- horns, grasshoppers- jump and glide) evolves the nonsensical substance of the poem.

**“The Ol’ Crone’s Home” by Sukumar Ray. Translated by Sampurna Chattarji**

Mouthful of puffed rice, smiling and chomping,  
In a ricket-rackety house, a clickety crone is stomping.  
Bedful of cobbywebs, headful of soot,  
Inky-Blinky bleary eyes, back bent like a root.  
Pins old the house up, glue sticks it down,  
She herself licks the thread that winds all around.  
Don’t dare lean too hard or bare boards may break.  
Don’t cough hick-hack, the brick-brack will shake.  
Plonk goes the streetcart, honk goes the car,  
Smash goes the beam, crash the house on to the tar.  
Wonky-wobbly are the rooms, holey-moley walls,  
Swept with dusty brooms causing musty splinter-falls.  
The ceiling gets soggy and saggy in the rain,  
The ol’crone all alone props a stick in vain.  
Fix it, nix it, day and night a-grouse,  
The clickety-clackety crone in her rickety-rackety house.





A poem, seemingly without meaning, it contains the travails of an old lady living alone and going through hardships of life. The sense part of the verse tends to be darker but nonsense part keeps it light. The nonsense is purely employed at linguistic and logical level. Instances of Reduplication frequently employed are clickety-clackety, rickety-rackety, Inky-Blinky, hick-hack, brick-brack, holey-moley, and soggy and saggy. The poem creates sensations of sound and sight by using words that represent sound. A few instances are “a ricket-rackety house,” “a clickety crone,” “cough hick-hack,” “the brick-brack will shake,” “Plonk goes the streetcart,” “honk goes the car,” “Smash goes the beam,” “crash the house on to the tar.”

“Wonky-wobbly are the rooms,” “holey-moley walls.” Streetcart, Bedful of cobbywebs, headful are instances of Portmanteau created by joining the words- street and cart, bed and full, and clobber(friends) and webs respectively. Rhyming couplets are used in this poem as well. A few instances are chomping- stomping, soot-root, down-around, break- shake, the car- the tar, walls-falls, rain-vain, grouse- house. “A- grouse” is an example of nonsense tautology. It has two meanings and both meanings are true. A **grouse** is a small game bird. But the verb ‘to grouse’ is different. It means to gripe about how unhappy you are.

## Conclusion

In the above poems, the whimsical world is weaved with logical and linguistic techniques. Spirit of



whimsy is clearly visible in the creative use of words and imagination. Overt manifestation of emotions evoked is difficult to pin down. These emotions are pure, innocent, chic, neither thick, nor pungent. Beneath pun riddled babble, each poem is brimming with multiple layers of meaning. The heavily tilted side of sense is balanced by nonsense created by linguistic as well as logical techniques. In fairytales or other folktales, there is always a moral given at the end. In *Abol Tabol*, despite apparent nonsense, there is undercurrent of meaning, philosophy and moral that mimic these other genres. This is another characteristic that is peculiar of Sukumar Ray. Neologisms, reduplication technique, sound over sense technique, nonsense tautology is adopted in all poems. Onomatopoeia is created by means of alliteration, reference and rhyming couplets which truly captures a child's heart.

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## **Role of Memory in the articulation of Identity in Shashi Deshpande's *A Matter of Time***

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### **Abstract**

**Abstract:** According to Elaine Showalter, 'self discovery' and 'a search for identity' is the main theme of women's literature. Postcolonial women like women in India do not only have to suffer because of patriarchal domination but also due to the cultural and social factors which further add to their miseries. Women suffer not only physically but also endure psychological violence. In Shashi Deshpande's fiction, we get the galaxy of silent women who embrace intolerable sufferings for survival and yet struggle to articulate their self and establish an identity of their own. This paper based on the study of Shashi Deshpande's *A Matter of Time* (1996) looks at the role of violence and memory which leads the heroine to recapitulate the past memories for re-understanding her relations with her parents, husband and daughters but ultimately results in her articulation of her identity.

**Keywords:** Memory, suffering, silence, quest, violence, identity.

Oscar Wilde in his novel *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1998) retorts "Memory... is the diary that we all carry about with us" (57). Like a shadow, memories follow a person wherever he/she goes or whatever he/she does. In Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, "memory" is defined as "a thought of something that you [person] remember from the past" (959). Hence memory can be an episode, image, incidence, or experience that a person remembers from the past. Saint Augustine in his *Confessions* (398 AD) compares memory to "a large and boundless chamber" where images "are with an admirable swiftness caught up, and stored as it were in wondrous cabinets, and thence wonderfully by the act of remembering, brought forth" (212-13). He likens memory to a storehouse where all the past impressions are stored and these impressions are brought back by the person through an act of recalling. Memory is not a mere recalling of the past but is a re-interpretation of the past in the present. Dan McAdams also remarks, "Certain events



from our past take on extraordinary meaning over time as their significance in the overall story of our lives and times come to be known” (295). Our past events might not hold any significance for us when they take place but the person realises its worth when he gets a new version of his/her past by recalling those memories.

Women’s writings reflect the role played by memory in the lives of women and how these memories help them in forging their own individual identity: “It is an alluring voice, undulating, carrying the current of a roar that reminds them of who they have been in the past, but it is also a comforting voice of a woman...” (Vera 62). Memory acts like a voice that speaks to woman about her own self in the past and at the same time, provides her a relief that how she has progressed from her past.

Women are considered as the weaker sex as compared to men. They are the victims of violence, both physical and psychological at the hands of their male counterparts. Their identity is suppressed under the patriarchal domination. Therefore, women must exhort themselves to seek an identity of their own. According to Elaine Showalter, “a search for identity” is the main theme of women’s writing since 1920s. And memory plays an important role in the articulation of identity in women’s literature. Even Mary Wollstonecraft in *The Female Reader* (1789) recommends that a woman should learn to “exercise the memory and form the judgement at the same time...” (xii-xiii). By an act of remembering, she will form an altogether different opinion of her past and her judgement regarding her memory of the past will be useful to her in the present. Women writers through the memories of the women characters in their works resurrect the self with “a transcendent survivalist aesthetic that speaks to women’s ability to overcome male oppression by whatever means necessary” (Morrison 98). The accustomed women suffer silently the injustice done to them by the male-oriented society. Their traditional values do not provide them with a voice to speak for themselves. Thus, their recollection of past memories acts as a means for looking at their sufferings in the past and encourages them to search for their own identity in the society.

Shashi Deshpande’s *A Matter of Time* (1996) also reflects the role played by memory in the articulation of an identity of Sumi, a leading character in the novel. Anita Singh also remarks that *A Matter of Time* “deals with the theme of quest for a female identity” (112-13). *A Matter of Time*



opens with Sumi watching TV when she is suddenly interrupted by Gopal who informs her about his decision to walk out on her:

‘I want to talk to you,’ he says and abruptly begins. And she sits and listens in silence to what he has to say to her... The telling of what he has come to say takes him so little time that when he has done, the song is still going on. He looks at her for a reaction, but she is gazing at him just as expectantly, waiting for him to go on. The realization that there is nothing more to be said—by either of them—comes to them almost simultaneously and he goes out as quietly as he had come in. (MT 8-9)

The memories of the background song ‘*jeena yahan, marna yahan*,’ on TV makes her comprehend that “this world is all we have and therefore there is nowhere else for us to go” (9). She decides to confront this world bravely and therefore straightaway accepts his decision. She feigns to be calm and stoic from outside as she knows that she is the only support for her daughters but from inside, she was suffering and therefore becomes a victim of psychological violence. After his departure, “it seems impossible that she can ever sleep” (29).

She leaves her marital home and returns to her parental home along with her three daughters, Aru, Charu and Seema. However, in her natal house, she feels unhappy to see the unstable relationship of her parents, Kalyani and Shripati who are living under the same roof without any communication. Shripati, her father, ceases to have any interaction with her mother Kalyani and confines himself to a room when she loses their mentally retarded son at the railway station. By pondering over the past memories of her mother and her own, Sumi resolves to live alone and create an identity of her own: “Self- continuity depends wholly on memory, recalling past experiences links us with our earlier selves, how different we may since have become” (Lowenthal 197). Her reminiscence of the past provides her a link between her past and present and helps her to live her life independently. Therefore, she takes up a job as a teacher and becomes economically independent.

*A Matter of Time* presents how Sumi gains an understanding of herself by memorising the past memories associated with Gopal. Dorothee Birke says “By comparing our present with the selves we remember, we experience ourselves as being in time— an experience which is crucial for



our sense of self” (2). She differentiates herself from her mother by recollecting the past impressions of her mother which are replete with her silent suffering. After her desertion by her husband, she feels helpless but is unable to articulate her feelings to anyone because she feels that “to expose oneself... to the gaze of all, is perhaps to seek to survive, but through a perpetual suicide” (Blanchot 64). She wanted to live a life with dignity. Therefore, she does not want to be pitied by exposing her emotions to anyone and to ask for help from anyone. She behaves normally to help her daughters in going on with their lives. Her daughters are perplexed by Sumi’s behaviour. Everyone in the house probes for the reason behind her husband’s departure: “They keep pulling things out of past, each memory like a grappling hook bringing up a question- was it because of this?” (MT 17). But she pretends herself unaffected by their talks as “for the picture she pretends to the world is one of grace and courage, to be admired rather than pitied” (172). She wanted to be admired as a graceful and courageous woman rather than becoming an object of self-pity.

She memorises the moments she has spent with Gopal in the past which helps her to gain an understanding of him. She recollects his talks which she interprets as the hints that he was surely going to desert her. In the past, he once explained her about the concept of *sa-hridhay*: “It’s two hearts beating. They can never beat in such unison that there’s only one sound” (24). These strange talks of Gopal would fascinate her but now she does not find them interesting. However, she does not hold him responsible for the “shame and a disgrace” (13) brought on her but accepts his decision because she has realised at this point that the reason for her desertion by him is he himself: “While the others are trying to find reasons for what he has done, she knows that the reason lies inside him, the reason is *him*” (24).

Sumi has decided to leave Gopal and her marital house forever. Her marital house is a storehouse of the past memories which give her both pain and hope that Gopal will return one day: “As long as the house is theirs, they still have a home and the hope that Gopal will return... To give up the house, as Sumi is saying they have to do, is to pronounce the death sentence of that hope” (28). As Andreas Huyssen explains, “the same space cannot possibly have two different contents. But... [it] may well put two different things in one place: memories of what there was before, imagined alternatives to what there is” (1). While vacating the house, the past scenes come forth





such as Gopal coming out of the bathroom and singing, Aru tackling with the cockroach wildly, Gopal saying 'Shaabash' to Seema, Aru and Charu playing chess etc. For Sumi, leaving her marital house means separation of her life from Gopal's life as the "lost space is tied to lost time" (Huat 7).

In her parental home, all their belongings were stored in the small room: "This room becomes a place of refuge to the girls, a kind of recreation of their home" (MT 32). Now they feel like a part of this house. They no longer feel like visitors. Everyone managed to settle in the natal home except Sumi "who has the air of being lost, of having no place in her childhood home" (MT 33). She feels lost because she finds herself struggling between her childhood memories and the present circumstances: "when with the benefit of hindsight one begins to search one's past for... 'turning points', one is apt to start seeing them everywhere" (Ishiguro 175). She sees the image of her mother, Kalyani outside her father's room, "standing before the closed door, banging on it with her open palms, shrieking out something... all the sounds fading away, finally leaving a silence" and "the child going down swiftly... thinking— I didn't see it, I saw nothing, nothing happened" (MT 74). As a child, she has seen her mother lying there. She suddenly thinks "Kalyani's past, which she has contained within herself, careful never to let it spill out, has nevertheless entered into us... it has stained our bones" (75). She keeps on pondering over her mother's endurance of the sufferings bestowed on her but feels happy to see that Kalyani is no longer a "hysterical, self-punishing woman" (184). She has come out of her confinement and has engaged herself with her granddaughters. She observes that "her mother seems to have finally come out of the room she had inhabited in her childhood... a room that in her memory was always dark" (184).

Sumi realises the change in her daughters "each pursuing her own activity" (59). She sees that her daughters have adapted to live in the house the way she lived during her childhood. She "has an odd feeling that the house is accepting them, like it did Kalyani and her daughters all those years back, making them part of itself" (59). When she finds that the unstable relationship between her parents is affecting her daughters, she starts searching for a house of her own. This is her first step in establishing an identity of her own.

While examining the small room where Gopal dwells after deserting her, she remembers the





Purandaradasa song that Gopal used to sing:

...like a bird that flies in,  
Perches in the courtyard  
And then flies away  
the very same instant.  
So should one live. (59)

She connects his room to the room in the outhouse where he resided before their marriage. She realises that he is going on with his life like he did as a bachelor. He is not affected by his separation from her. This recollection of the song makes her feel that they “can never be together again... his life has moved on, it will go on without me. So has mine” (85). She decides to go on with her life. She even considers her weight loss as necessary for the change in her: “what she has shed is unwanted matter; what now remains is the essential” (70). According to her, the change that is taking place in her physically and psychologically is indicative of the change in her attitude towards her life. This change allowed her to think of herself as an individual. She decides to take up a job of a teacher instead of depending on others. She “has turned resolutely away from even her immediate past, she is preparing herself for the future, for the job which she is soon to start on” (122). After looking at her past memories, she starts her life anew by doing something for her own self.

While gardening, Sumi discovers the talent hidden inside her. Her remembrance of the story of the Princess and the tree whose “characters seem to come out of her childhood into the present, bringing their story with them” (156). She decides to write a play ‘The Gardener’s son’ for the inter-school play competition for her school. Her memory of the story that she has heard in her childhood helps her in finding a creative writer in her. She then decides to deal with the more daring themes like female sexuality. She decides to write the story of Surpanakha, “a woman charged with sexuality, not frightened of displaying it” from a different perspective. She thinks Surpanakha unique in contrast to the women of her age: “Female sexuality. We’re ashamed of owning it, we can’t speak of it, not even to our own selves” (191).

She visits Gopal and reminds him of the night she came to his room when they had decided



to marry. She reminds him of the words he had said on that day that “at any time if either of us wanted to be free, the other would let go. We are not going to be tied” (221). Though she did not understand the meaning, she agreed with him. However, when she moved back to her parents’ house, she was frightened to see the change in her mother: “It seemed like something being repeated” (222). She was scared that she will meet the same fate like her mother. But she decides not to suffer like her mother. She gives Gopal the freedom from the conjugal bond so that she can go on with her life autonomously. She informs him about her new job in Devgiri and her plan to shift there with Seema. She remembers her “saying the same sentence when, as a girl, she had stealthily visited Gopal in his room... the look on Gopal’s face that he is thinking of it too, that they are, after a very long while, sharing a memory” (224). This memory highlighted her transformation into the same independent girl as she used to be before her marriage.

When she informs her daughters about her job, they object on her decision to which she remarks “This is the first thing in my life I think that I’ve got for myself” (230). Though she unfortunately dies in the end but she has found her own identity before her death when she proudly says “I’m getting my own place... a room” (231).

*A Matter of Time* exemplifies the importance of memory in the life of Sumi in creating her own identity. Her reminiscences helped her in understanding the peculiarity of her parent’s relation which effectively resulted in her understanding of her own self. Memory of the past events helped her to overcome loss and to define her identity. For Sumi, memory offered a catharsis through which she looked at her past and found a meaning of her life.

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## **In The Warmth of Her Love**

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I could feel your joy, for having me in your womb.  
You are very conscious about my health and safety.  
You try to communicate with me in your dream.  
You ignore all your favourites for my sake.  
I'm proud of your sacrifices for my welfare and growth.  
I just can't wait to kiss you.  
Yet, I'm in your womb.  
After successful forty weeks, I'm there in your hands.  
There is delight in your eyes, for a single smile of mine.  
I promise to be the best child of the world's best mother.

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## Love & Lust

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Rain poured form sky  
They decided to fly  
Wings flickered in vain  
They enjoyed the beautiful rain.

They flap very high  
F follows M in sky  
Both were in jest  
Flapped without rest.

Love transform in lust  
Couple were ready to burst  
They wish to have mate  
Not happened due to ill fate.

F felt pain in wings  
Both sacrifice their longings  
Their wishes were end  
They come back to land.

Determination & love is prior  
That fetches them from higher  
In life Love is need,  
Sex is only greed  
Love is the bonding of hearts;  
Sex is only in body parts.



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## **‘Maa’ The Secret Fighter**

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Since I was small  
I used to fall  
Mother holds the hand  
Confirmed my firm stand  
Taught with full of grace  
Not be afraid try always fresh

Weep were my armor  
She poured grace warmer  
Whenever deeds were cheat  
I got free only after little beat  
Her love compassion need  
For me with hidden heed.

Sometime she wept  
Where her tears being kept?  
I always thought but never got  
Only she remembered other forgot  
Once I saw how she screamed!  
When father angrily whipped.

I cried and frightened  
She wept but pretended  
She rushed and said what happened?



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Took me into her lap and strengthened

I did not know even now

Where's she knew and how?

What kind of mystery she is?

I try to seek but always freeze

For me mother is whole universe

Who drinks poison but never cursed

How broadened her heart and lap

What eternity in her fight that not stops.





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## **Season's Hue**

**Neelam Dadhwal**  
Poet  
Chandigarh, India.

Last circle was incomplete  
when the valley drifted between  
slope roads went far  
I plucked few flowers and flew birds  
in range raindrops soaked  
the pebbles carried reflections.  
The grey sky moved  
dried leaves scattered beyond sight  
the only crunch song played  
on my mind the solitariness.  
Smile there were memories  
when I bent to pick cinnamon  
and sun came rising  
when a peak covered a view  
and we travelled a whole distance  
to moon and stars.



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## **Destiny**

**Pinaki Bakshi**

Destiny is a means, not an end,  
That can make you achieve anything, which is not done.  
You are a sunrise, you are a path,  
Fetch your dreams and don't let them to fall apart.  
More you go more you become,  
Destiny is still waiting and it is half done.  
Don't you stop, stick like storm,  
Be the tiger heart, be the tiger form.  
Destiny can be yours anytime,  
Just grab your dreams and don't wait for the right time.  
Remember, waiting is not destiny; it's just a means,  
Be high, grab dreams and let them to esteem.



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## Vanquisher Of Death

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One day heaven summons my name,  
I gone fly away,  
Confronting with death  
Paused for a while;  
Horrors of death closely I feel,  
Ah! what a painful it is!  
Trembling I for impending death,  
O death! why are you so brutal?  
Snatch away the dearest one  
From the most beloved's breast.  
Ah! what a painful it is!  
I came down to death first,  
Death seizes my throat,  
Feels agony of the time.  
O devil! depart you I say\_\_\_\_  
But it suffocates me,  
As if, black cloud descends upon me;  
Scarcely I can see\_\_\_\_  
Into the darkening horrors;  
Merely It roars like a wild beast.  
Oh! how a terrible insight it is!  
Still I undergo all that,  
I laid-down in save  
Where I stood before,



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I saw death loosens my spirit;  
And get freed from its horrors.

I cried out with joy;  
And all because I was daring.



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## Deadly Silence

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I never imagined myself in such a small congested space ever in my life. The cold and rough floor makes the ordeal of squatting on the floor a herculean task, not even room enough to stretch my legs without brushing and aggravating the others. The others seem to be thugs, ruffians and goons, in their sweaty, stinking cloths, spitting in all directions at their convenience, indifferent to the others around. Look around and the peelings of dried spittle make it clear that it is not the first time people are spitting here but a routine and in the four corners it looks like it is never allowed to dry. It is then I felt the nauseating smell of chewed tobacco spittle and started retching wondering how can people savour such a loathsome substance.

It is as if in a dream everything happened in just a whiff of a time. Was this how I was brought up ... ? Absolutely ... nooooo! There is no streak of violence or violent background in our family. Is it a rare occurrence that the ancestral Neanderthal barbarianism dormant in the homo sapiens surfaced in me?

Stepping on an inanimate, blank, torn piece of paper, I am trained to seek pardon from Goddess Saraswathi, mother of knowledge and intelligence; dropping a coin or a rupee note, I am tutored to touch it to both my eyes and kiss it, to show my obeisance to Goddess Lakshmi, mother



of wealth and prosperity, who may otherwise get angry and abandon me or depart from my household.

I can clearly recall my childhood days when we would wait for power failures, so our parents would let us free from behind the book bunkers and let us breathe some fresh air. It was the time for all age groups to gather with their own likes. Children playing, forgetting all their home works, projects and assignments; and teenagers eagerly sharing their new found secrets and unraveled taboos. The youth lurking in the darker corners trying to grab a glimpse of their beloveds who are also in similar endeavours, but at times looking towards someone else. It was the adults who were more occupied than anyone out there, having an eye on all the age groups and cursing the 'power people' for the power cuts, ready to call back and gather their fold at any time the supply resumes.

Bad weather during such times would keep us tied down to the confines of our house, leaving us to entertain each other with our skills in hand shadow puppets dancing on the walls. One of us would get bored and would sit near the candle, chasing flies and beetles hovering over the flame. Occasionally an insect would fall into the flame and we catch and drop the second insect watching it wriggle, stuck in the melted wax, being pulled up by the burning wick. Once noticed, this act of brutality would invite the wrath, if not a slap from our elders bidding us not to harm any creature, however small it is.

Jostling in a crowded bus, when we stepped on someone's legs or brush our legs against theirs, we were taught, or better say observed and learned to express a gesture of respect. On inquiry our elders would say, 'the other has a part of the 'Atma', 'All of us have a particle of the



Paramatma'. So every human deserves respect for having something divine in oneself. May be in a hurry, may be my fault or the other person's; clearly unintentional, the act of brushing the other with one's limbs especially legs would provoke a prompt response. Both our hands would touch the other and rest on our hearts invoking our household deity's name.

I wonder at what happened to all this training and all the respect for the 'other', for the 'Atman-in-the-other' ingrained into every thought, instilled into every nerve, infused into every cell? I curse myself for paying a deaf ear to my parents' instructions, never to promise anything when happy, decide anything when sad or upset, do or say something when you are angry; to keep away from brawls and quarrels; not to join a crowd when they are angry or be curious to know about every silly and stupid thing happening around.

I deeply regret joining the crowd to see what was happening. With people moving in and out of the mob, many more pushing themselves in to see what was happening I soon found myself in the center. The elderly person lying down on the road was trying in vain to plead with folded hands and say something. But none gave him a chance to speak. A young ruffian, whom I don't see now with me here, was beating him with a muddy old slipper ... on the face. Curious to know the antecedents and why what was happening was happening, I was struggling to hold my position in the center. One other ruffian was shouting, 'you did it intentionally, only to hurt our sentiments' and showered punches with his youthful fist anywhere he could. One other shouted, 'he was laughing at us and was talking back when we questioned?' and kicked him in his stomach.

Seeing the old man being mauled by the beasts in these humans, curiosity took the upper hand and I was still trying to hang on and listen to what the old man was trying to say. He was





trying to utter something, but except for a feeble hoarse crackle nothing was heard, sticky bubbles of saliva mixed with blood was dripping out of his mouth, half shut with fully bruised and swollen lips. The young ruffian with the muddy slipper in hand, started shouting at the top of his voice, “this should be a lesson to all, here after no one should dare eat what you ate. Either you stop eating or pack and go to your land”. Shouting obscenities against his parents, siblings, kith and kin and cursing his children with all possible swear words he pushed the slipper into the old man’s bruised mouth, making him groan in pain. I remained a mute witness to what was happening, not adding a stone nor removing one.

A person whose face is rather familiar to me, moving out of the center was saying, ‘let them be’... ‘they have been doing this for centuries now, and why find fault with it now’. One other added, “How can good turn to bad overnight?” Though they voiced out their views as they were going, I’m sure no one paid attention, neither did I. But only to regret for life later for having witnessed what I witnessed.

I was still not so sure of what was it that he ate to hurt people’s sentiments. Did he steal food offered to God meant only to be consumed by the few who feel full and belch all the time? If so where are they asking him to pack and go? No, it is not about the delicacies offered to deities. Yes... enlightenment descended upon me ... I think I understood what he did... or what the mob thought he did. As the realization dawned and before I could weigh the pros and cons of the act, decide for myself whether it was really a crime, it was too late. For in a frenzy people started kicking their target and pushing him around with their legs. In just a few minutes the old man remained motionless with his clothes torn and bleeding all over. As if summoned elsewhere, the



crowd dispersed as fast as they gathered, except for a handful laughing at the old rag, with a few feet still resting on the motionless body.

As in many bollywood movies, the police arrived too late to save the old man from the moral police. They are growing in numbers these days, taking law into their hands and deciding on instant punishments in the name of safe guarding culture, tradition and values. They appear from nowhere, judge and execute their sentence and disappear in a twinkle of an eye, just like all the rescue operations of superheroes in movies that abound these days. But the handful of us left there were surrounded and loaded into the van.

Whom can I blame for dragging myself into this mess? Is this how God wishes to punish me for my oppressive silence? For in the face of injustice, the silence of the spectator weakens and betrays the oppressed and that same silence also strengthens the oppressors. Today it is the old man, tomorrow it is someone else and then one day the mob would be around me, to silence the silent spectator... punish me for something they think is wrong. And for sure there would be all these silent spectators standing there around me as I was standing, a mute witness. Fear gripped me... and my throat went dry...

As fear gripped my throat, sweat drenched me and my clothes stuck to my already sticky body. A few hours in custody felt too, too long and I could not think of anything. From the place I was sitting, a glimpse across the classic from 'behind the bars' scene sparked a ray of hope. I thought I saw a familiar figure moving around in the station. Did I really see or am I hallucinating in a state of delirium? I do not have a clear idea but the lighted flame of hope kept me busy hoping, against all odds, for something good to happen.



All the prayers I uttered, all the vows I made to God pleased Him and my hope against hope bore fruit and the familiar figure I saw turned out to be a distant relative with a lot of political influence. Though he is not straight away in active politics, he is known to be the backbone for many a figure, both in the ruling as well as the opposition parties. This I could never understand, for how can a person be there for both the ruling as well as the opposition. He stood far away and waved his hands and I responded very energetically, waving my hands vigorously so as not to miss and not willing to take chances that he comes for someone and goes without noticing me, for it is the last place anyone may expect to meet me. Gesturing, as if to say wait, he turned to business. After a short while, when a constable walked towards the cell calling out my name, I jumped and stood, pushed myself forward only to be pushed further back by the one whom I pushed aside, shouting a few expletives. But the constable looks at me and turns back without a word. After an hour or so the constable comes and takes me along and within no time I am out on the road scot free with my uncle, and join a few relatives waiting outside who escort me home.

I returned home, shaken and in the state of shock could neither feel happy for the release nor could do anything. Though on our way back my uncle assured that nobody would disturb me again, every time when someone comes knocking to inquire of what happened, a chill would run down my spine ... Are they here for me? ... Are they feeling threatened that I would identify them before the police? ... Or is it the police?

Only days later did we get the facts that it was based on a mere supposition that the old man ate beef and was having some more in his possession that he was publicly condemned. And a mobs verdict was executed on the spot, with no second thought. Though this assumption turned out to be



false, there is no one who can take back all the blows showered on the old man or bring him back to life.

In the light of the happenings, pondering over their demand to pack and go, I realized their intentions... their dubious ways of driving a wedge between people living in harmony for centuries. I heard of all sorts of discriminations, based on race, religion, class, caste, age and gender. It is the birth pangs of a new discrimination that I witnessed... that of diet.

Much more shocking was the news that out of the thirty odd arrested only two still remain in the custody and two more were arrested a few days later, to pacify the few who go around demanding that the culprits be booked and justice be meted out to the victim. Given my own case I realized, how people are penalized or left scot free, how rubbing shoulders with the so called 'big shots' works.

It is years and the case is still awaiting closure, the old man's family for justice and the spirit of the deceased happy that it changed at least one person, for I decided never to let silence prevail in the face of injustice and am ready to die for a just cause.