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In Pursuit of Happiness: The Parsis Search for an El Dorado

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Abstract

The Parsis are an ancient race following the religion of Zarathushtra. Pride in their ancestral heritage is reflected in the desire to reinvent the past within the framework of the novel so as to identify and capture their cultural traits. And to this end their novels reveal constant references to their culture- their history, the Zoroastrian world-view, food-habits, dress, rituals, attitude towards women, beliefs etc. Religion and history are thus interwoven to establish their ethnic identity.

Having found refuge in India after their persecution by the Muslim hordes in Persia, they seemed to be happy in being allowed to follow their own religion in peace. Yet the post independence era found them migrating in large numbers to western shores, following in the trail of the British.

This paper will explore through select novels of Rohinton Mistry and Thrity Umrigar, the reason for these mass migrations of a people who appear to be unhappy in the land adopted by their ancestors and their quest and pursuit of happiness in migrating to foreign shores.

Key words- Parsis, Migration, happiness, ancestors, foreign, religion.

The Parsis as the word suggest, come from Pars, a province in ancient Persia. They came to India seeking shelter from the marauding Muslim hordes in Persia, and were given shelter in India on promising that they would dress up like the locals, speak their language and not convert the local populace to their religion. They mingled with the locals and lived in peace and harmony since they were allowed to practice their own religion. The coming of the British to India and the need to



develop Bombay gave a chance to these industrious Parsis, who till then had been occupied in pursuing occupations such as carpentry, farming, weaving etc., to form closer ties with the British and become their agents. There was no stopping the Parsi then as he rose in power and stature, owning vast tracts of land in Bombay. They became the 'brown sahibs', behaving like the British and looking down on the Hindu majority.

Constant allusions to the past made by Parsi writers in novels written by them testify to the immense pride taken by the community in their history. Snippets of Persian history are woven into the novels informing readers of their glorious past, their rich ancient culture and civilization with their beautiful architecture and opulent palaces. Stories of their brave and noble kings like Cyrus and Darius find pride of place in their narrations. Bapsi Sidhwa, Thrity Umrigar and Boman Desai all narrate the 'Sugar in milk' story of the arrival of the Parsis in Sanjan, India.

Making a human connection with the past, Thrity Umrigar in *If Today be Sweet* writes about the arrival of the small band of refugees who had arrived in Sanjan and how the Hindu ruler sent them a glass of milk filled to the brim, to tell them that he couldn't accommodate them:

But the Zoroastrian head priest was a brilliant man. Removing a small quantity of sugar from their supplies he dissolved a small quantity of sugar in the glass, careful not to spill a drop of milk. This was his famous answer – the answer that became a source of pride and a blueprint for future generations: like sugar in milk, our presence will sweeten the flavor of your life, without displacing you or causing you any trouble. (Umrigar, ITbS 255-256)

The Parsis were thus able to stay in India. The overt emphasis by the novelists to fragmented historical events enables them to recreate the past as a story which allows them to open it to the present. What matters to them is the telling of the story of a painful past, of the story of loss (of Persia) and recovery (of prestige under British rule) and a loss (of status after independence) again. The present paper has tried to analyse why the Parsis, who got shelter in India after they fled from Persia from the marauding Muslim hordes have been leaving the country of their choice, where they were given respect and the right to practice their own religion, to western shores. The paper will study the novels of Rohinton Mistry and Thrity Umrigar who have recorded exclusively the lives of their minority community and brought out the Parsis' search for a Utopian land.



In pre-colonial India, the Parsis indulged in rural activities like farming, carpentry, weaving etc. But during the British rule the community progressed, enjoying an elitist status under them. With the decolonizing of the country the Parsis suffered a setback and considered themselves destitute and stranded. Differences in religious faith, colour, and language, all contribute to a sense of a widening rift between the Hindu majority and the Parsi minority. Having alienated themselves from the local populace, they had to fend for themselves in a country where they felt marginalized, decentred and socially isolated. The feeling of being alienated from the Hindu majority population, due to cultural and social differences is well documented by both these novelists.

The synchronization and melding with the new culture that a race has a tendency to achieve when it goes to a new culture; we find is missing in the case of the Parsis. This conscious resistance to Indian culture on the part of the Parsis may partly be due to the fact that they wanted to avoid a mongrel culture, but the imitation of the ways of the British may also be due to the fact that the British culture was considered superior. As Tanya M. Luhrmann in *The Good Parsi: The Fate of a Colonial Elite in a Post Colonial Society* writes,

For at least one hundred years Parsis as a community had taken the British as their community ideal. They had encouraged their men to spend hours in “physical culture” and cricket to become as manly as the British; they had devoted significant amounts of time and money to English education; they had worn the hot, uncomfortable British dress – crazy in the Bombay heat – because that was what the British did; they had gone to great lengths to separate themselves by breeding and origin not only from other Indian groups, but from India; they had travelled to London for holidays the way Muslims went to Mecca.... The good Parsi, the esteemed and ideal Parsi, was almost English. (21)

The alienation of the Parsis is reflected in their attitude towards the other communities, who are in the majority, as inferior to their own ‘westernised’ and therefore superior ways. That the Parsis look down upon the Hindu culture and way of life becomes amply clear when Nusswan in *A Fine Balance* tells his sister how fortunate she was to be born a Parsi, for according to him, “Among the unenlightened, widows are thrown away like garbage. If you were a Hindu in the old days you would have had to be a good little sati and leap onto your husband’s funeral pyre, be roasted with him” (Mistry, AFB 52).



The Hindu caste system and its associated crimes are also disparaged by the Parsis, as they become the “other”. Thrity Umrigar in the *First Darling of the Morning* writes,

Occasionally someone brings up a news item about a particularly heinous attack on the Untouchables or Harijans by an upper class Hindu mob and then they all speak contemptuously about the damn caste system and how backward some of these rural Hindus are, to follow its ancient prejudices. The unspoken text is that we are lucky to be Parsis, lucky to be ‘Bombay born and bred’, and therefore free of the oppressive bigotries of people less civilized than us. (146)

The cultural ‘other’ the Maharashtrian becomes a target for attack by the Parsis. Recalling the riots in Bombay when the bank windows were shattered by the mobs, Dinshawji in *Such a Long Journey* says that the local Hindus scattered like cockroaches at the slightest hint of aggression. Later blaming the Shiv Sena leader Bal Thackeray for the attitude of belligerence in the Maharashtrians, he says, “that bastard Shiv Sena leader who worships Hitler and Mussolini. He and his ‘Maharashtra for Maharashtrians’ nonsense. They won’t stop till they have complete Maratha Raj” (Mistry, SaLJ 73). And it is not only the Hindus that they look down upon. Dinshawji in *Such a Long Journey* and Yezad in *Family Matters* talk disparagingly about the Christian girls and how their own Parsi girls would never behave like ‘those’ Christian girls.

The actual presence of the Parsi ‘brown sahib’ left behind after independence was present only physically –with only a physical existence in India but with their souls in England. Emulating the western culture presupposes its superiority and as a result the assumption of the inferiority of the native culture. Espousing their devotion for western culture has further led to a cultural alienation with the locals.

The Parsi predicament of being trapped between loyalty to the western world and India, of living in the past where they flourished under the British and the present where their declining fortunes have resulted in the feeling of a fall from grace which they are trying to escape, comes out clearly in the novels of Rohinton Mistry and Thrity Umrigar.

The head start which the Parsi community got through good education under the British rule and then consequently getting good jobs was being threatened after independence as the group at Mehernosh’s wedding in **Bombay Time** feel. The present situation where the “paan-chewing”



Maharashtrians were also getting educated was a threat to Parsi supremacy and so the elders feel the need for Parsi boys to pull up their socks. The fear of being left behind, of not being the cream of the crop, of losing their privileged position here comes out in the comments of the entire group who wish to see through the success of Mehernosh, a revival of the prestige and position which they once enjoyed during British rule.

The Post-Colonial period found the westernized, elite Parsi left with a British hang-up, in a city burgeoning with the Hindu majority masses. The community which had helped in the construction of the city of Bombay, owning huge tracts of land, now had to share space with the rural 'other'. The metropolis mushrooming with large scale migrations from the rural areas had hardly any space for the original inhabitants. As Luhrmann explicates, "They were going to become a tiny minority in a world of the Hindu masses whom they had tried so hard to see as Other" (Luhrmann 21).

The prestige and status that the community had garnered for itself had gone with the British. Nor were they the only ones who were educated. The 'Other' the locals soon emerged with degrees from schools and colleges becoming rivals and strong contenders for jobs. The Parsis thus felt the need to migrate to foreign shores in search of better opportunities and prospects.

The rush to America and the western world by the Parsis reflects the uncertainty of the community about its future in India. Writes Niloufer Bharucha "In pre colonial India, although they had not been an elite community, they were a respected minority. In colonial India, of course, they had enjoyed elite status. In post-colonial India their status was downgraded and they felt threatened by the rise of regional powers like Shiv Sena" (Crane and Mohanram 78).

For the migrants the necessity to find and create a perfect world, an 'El Dorado' (*Such a Long Journey*) or a 'Camelot' (*Bombay Time*), or the 'Big Enchilda' (*The First Darling of the Morning*) where the 'lack' that they find in this country can be fulfilled seems to be an earnest desire. The country adopted by their forefathers now seems to have nothing to offer except filth, pollution, long waiting queues at the bus and railway stations. We find Yezad in *Family Matters* placed in this predicament from which there seemed to be no hope of deliverance. In order to escape the 'apeman' existence he had applied for immigration to Canada. He wished for "clean



cities, clean air, plenty of water, trains with seats for everyone, where people stood in line at bus stops and said please, after you, thank you. Not just a land of milk and honey, also the land of deodorant and toiletry” (Mistry, FM 137).

The desire to live in a clean and healthy environment, far away from the uncouthness of the locals was a dream for some, egging them on to try to immigrate to a foreign land, with better prospects of living for them and their families. We find the Parsi expatriates living not only in England but also America, Canada and Australia. The resistance to sharing space with the vulgar masses, the sudden transformation of the city from a beautiful island into the present-day chaotic megapolis with a lack of associated conveniences what Yezad calls, “this dying city, rotting with pollution and garbage and corruption,” (Mistry, FM 283) and Noshir Daruwala describes as a country where there was “so much heat, so much chaos, so much insecurity...” (as quoted in Crane and Mohanram (Desai, AU 17)) all stimulate a longing to break away from the original country of refuge.

The appeal of the western world is not only because of its cleanliness, honesty and availability of plenty of resources like Yezad in Family Matter feels. For many, education was the main motive for migration abroad. Sohrab, (ITBS) Binny (BT) and Jimmy (BT) and Mehernosh (IFTB) are some cases to the point. But the eventual motive for deciding to settle there varied from person to person. What each person desired and discovered, to induce them to inhabit those foreign lands was different though a common factor that is found in all the cases was a fundamental ‘lack’ in the country of first migration. For Sohrab in *If Today be Sweet* the appeal of America lies in the feeling of liberation that he discovers. “Here was a sky-is-the –limit country of towering ambition and large dreams, a fabled country that believed in dreams, that was itself a kind of a dream. And it fit Sohrab like a glove” (Umrigar, ITbS 138).

The difference between India and America felt by Sohrab was not only the lack of freedom in India but also the difference in the mind-set of the people. Whereas in India ambition, competitiveness and aggression were looked down upon, in America these qualities were revered because of which the people prospered. A person could aim as high as possible and no one would criticize the attitude, no one would give the example of Icarus flying too close to the sun and



getting burnt. He realized that in America, on the contrary these were rewarded and even revered. It was Sohrab's competitiveness, ambition and "single-minded pursuit of success" (Umrigar, ITbS 138) in America which was rewarded with what every Indian going to America would aspire; material things like a house in the suburbs, two cars and a number of jobs where he excelled and also a family he loved -a smart wife, and a wonderful son. The disparity between the attitude of the two countries and the free outlook of the Americans appealed to Sohrab and made him realize what a misfit he was in his own country of birth, as were "millions of other... who arrived at America's shores brimming with energy, bursting at the seams with pent-up ambition..." (Umrigar, ITbS 138). What Sohrab considers lacking in India is the encouragement of ambition and aggression. The warnings of 'pride comes before a fall' (Umrigar, ITbS 138) by family and friends did not let the free imagination soar and thus restricted growth and development.

For Yezad the "immigration story had two parts: dream and reality" (Mistry, FM 248). The dream consisted of the possession of material comforts like house, car, computer, CD player and clean air. But reality consisted of something else. The Parsi dilemma of migration can be better understood if we understand the 'lack' that the Parsis felt in this country. We notice that a 'lack' leads to desire, fantasy and fulfillment, in stages. We see Sohrab in *If Today be Sweet* hankering for the things he could not get in India and after he achieves everything – material wealth and prosperity and a very loving family, he comprehends the price that he had to pay to achieve what he had. He had left behind the comfort of home, family, friends and a city he was familiar with. And now that he has achieved what he wanted to, a good job, a beautiful, smart wife and an intelligent son, he wants to fulfill a retroactive lack- the presence of his mother in his life to make his happiness absolute. He feels he could be complete only if he could fill up the lack of mother to complete the family. His past in the form of his mother, his wife and son as his future and as he put it, "I felt whole, like someone had stitched me back up" (Umrigar, ITbS 137).

Tehmina in *If Today be Sweet* wonders why all her son's friends whom she met in America were so bitter about India. The bitterness of the migrants concerned everything pertaining to India, the education system, the corruption, the postal service, the slow moving traffic, the bureaucracy, in fact they were unhappy with everything. It makes Tehmina wonder if that was the



reason they left India. The help rendered by Tehmina and her husband to Percy, Sohrab's childhood friend, gave him an impetus and later in America, she realized, that he seemed transformed, as did all the young people she knew. The American Constitution which mentioned the 'pursuit of happiness' as one of the necessary rights of the people may perhaps be responsible for this transformation in people she realized, since on coming here "most of them gained weight, most of them talked louder and laughed louder, some of them even grew an inch or so in height, improbable as that seemed. But the most important thing was they became happy in America" (Umrigar, ITbS 151).

The change noticed in the people once they migrated, the happiness that seemed so palpable, the self-assurance and self-reliance that they achieved are all pointers to the elimination of the lack in their lives and the realization of their dreams and aspirations.

Tehmina in *If Today be Sweet* wonders if this substitute culture was worth the things which were left behind. "The strong family bonds, the way the neighbours looked out for one another, the busy warm aliveness of the streets, such a contrast to the sad, bleak, solitariness of life here." (Umrigar, ITbS 148)

But the flip side was that she herself felt the freedom which she had not experienced in Bombay where she could not eat an ice cream on the streets and not feel many hungry eyes following her, she was not conscious about her 'female body' in America as she was in India and she did not carry herself in that 'guarded way' she did in India.

Binny in *Bombay Time* went abroad to study and settled there. Her father who visited her in London fell in love with the city and what he loved in the city reflects the 'lack' that he feels in Bombay. He loved the "broad, clean roads, its green parks, even the damp and chilly weather that everyone else detested." (Umrigar, BT 20) This was in direct contrast to Bombay with the "sweat, the grime, the black exhaust fumes ... the bleeping horns, the constant stream of people who darted in front of traffic." (Umrigar, BT 20) His disgust with Bombay is reflected in the satisfaction he feels at getting his daughter out of the city. Unable to leave Bombay which is like a "waiting bomb" he gets vicarious pleasure at the thought of his dear daughter having left this living hell and residing in London.



We notice in these novels that apart from economic reasons and material comforts the protagonists in the novels also crave greater autonomy, freedom and happiness associated with the countries of their relocation. The price that they pay for such transplantation in a new country is heavy and yet they are willing to pay the price of such uprooting since the scales seem to tilt more towards self fulfillment and actualisation of their dreams.

Having imbibed British culture - studying British writers, watching English movies, getting trained in English music and art, in short getting an English education, the Parsis were disconnected with the Indian way of life and culture. The Lake Como puzzle of Jehangir in *Family Matters* becomes a metaphor for the Parsis. Like Jehangir, seeking a haven, a refuge from the real world by escaping into the world of Lake Como, the Parsis sought to retreat from this world of trials and tribulations to an idyllic world. Brought up reading Enid Blyton books they perhaps believed like the kids that “there was a better world somewhere. You could dream of a place where there was lots to eat, where children could have a midnight feast and raid the larder that was always full of sumptuous delicacies.... A place where there were no beggars, no sickness, and no one died of starvation” (Mistry, FM 373).

Just as Gustad in *Such A long Journey* believed the IIT to be the El Dorado and Shangri-La, the Atlantis and Camelot, the Xanadu and Oz, (Mistry, SALJ 67) the Parsis believed the western world to be a land of prosperity and plenty offering freedom and material comforts and success and wealth, dreams that may not be possible to achieve in this country for a long time to come. Quick prosperity could be reached out for in America.

The second migration of Parsis to western shores thus seems to be a need for filling up the lack found in India and a search for a land as prosperous and progressive as the lost land of Persia. Tehmina finally decides to settle in America with her son and his family and as the year comes to an end, she decides that she will wish everyone “a new year filled with hope and dreams and yearning. She would not wish any of them success or prosperity or wealth because the magic was in the dreaming. She knew that now. America had taught her that. How wise, to talk about the *pursuit of happiness* and not of happiness itself” (ITBS 295).



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Arab Anglophone Fiction: A New Voice in Post-9/11 America

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Abstract

This paper is a study of novels written by Arab American writers in an attempt to analyze how such works of fiction portray the life of Arab Americans in a post-9/11 America. The paper shows how Arab Americans deal with the consequences of 9/11, and it also reflects several other aspects that characterize Arab American writing as an emerging post-9/11 new voice. It investigates the role of Anglophone Arab fiction in paving the way for more intercultural understanding and attempting to de-orientalize the Arab. Some writers often try to negotiate with the American culture in order to arrive at an identity that incorporates multiple elements from both the culture of origin and the host culture. Hybrid and cosmopolitan in their approach, such writers also attempt to be cultural mediators, and they show growing concern about subverting the normative judgment and stereotypical images that have fixed the Arab American.

Key Words: Anglophone, Post-9/11, Hybridity, Identity.

Introduction

Arab Anglophone literature has been in existence for more than a century, but it only gained a wider recognition after the tragic incident of September 11, 2001. Since that time, there has been a dramatic increase in publication by Anglophone Arab writers. This literary burgeoning, as seen by Lisa Majaj, “reflects in part the shifting historical, social, and political contexts that have pushed



Anglophone Arab writers to the foreground, creating both new spaces for their voices and new urgencies of expression, as well as the flourishing creativity of these writers” (62). Due to such and many other factors, Arab Anglophone fiction came to the limelight with many emergent voices, expressing the anguish and the harsh experiences of Arabs in an attempt to talk back to and negotiate with the American culture.

Since colonial times, there have been many Arabic novels which were translated into English and contributed to introduce Arabic culture to the Western readers, but the Anglophone Arab novel is uniquely different in the sense that it encompasses various elements from the host literary tradition and culture as well as the literature and culture of its place of origin. In this regard, Zahia Salhi has also explained that such a hybrid literature is “neither entirely Arab nor fully English, but instead occupies a place where both home and host cultures converge, intersect, and even clash, resulting in a third culture”(qtd. in Syrine 7). Interestingly, it is this hybrid nature of the Anglophone Arab literature that makes it a promising literary and cultural field of research, not only for its minority status, but also because it would serve as a primal bridge of communication between the Americans and the Arab world in a time of ongoing conflict and tension growing between the two sides. Culturally blended, this fiction would provide the Western readers with fresh portrayal and authentic perspective originating from the Arab world, away from what has been transmitted to them through Orientalists’ works as well as manipulated media channels. Thus, in giving a vivid and authentic picture of the Arab world with its diverse cultural manifestations and its religious and political specificity, Arab Anglophone fiction is more likely to maximize the possibilities of constructing cross-cultural bridges between the West and the Arab world.

Arab Anglophone authors increasingly demonstrate both the diversity of the Arab cultural roots on which they draw and the diverse ways in which these cultural roots play out in the West. For some, Arab Anglophone literature remains a domain that simply narrates leaving behind one identity and acquiring a new one. For many others, it seems to take a prominent place on a global scale, a major constituent of a worldwide Arab diaspora in which cultural ties can be revived. It is



this notion of ‘cultural ties’ which is of great interest today and which would promote cultural understanding. This is in light with what Layla Al Maleh stated about the capacity of Arab Anglophone writers in playing a crucial role in “disseminating through the wider world their images of hyphenated Arabs and of the Arab people as a whole, thereby fostering acceptance through understanding” (5). Such fiction that fuses foreign linguistic backgrounds with Arabic cultural contexts would, indeed, contribute to the reshaping of bridges of cross-cultural and trans-cultural dialogues away from political, geopolitical and socio-economic tensions.

My attempt is to examine the ways in which the works by authors of Arab origin reject the boundaries that once were drawn by Orientalists and to show how these works blur the distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’, ‘here’ and ‘there’. What I intend to do is to broaden the scope of current investigations by moving beyond the dilemma of 9/11, as in today’s globalized world, there is a need to know the “other” more closely and to promote mutual understanding between the two sides, rather than romanticizing and fossilizing Arab Anglophone fiction in the labyrinth of displacement, split identity, and exclusion. Thus, my attempt is to explore the extent to which Arab Anglophone writers employ literary strategies to subvert the stereotypes commonly associated with Arabs in the U.S, and how they look at the Arab American communities from within in order to examine some of the problems they encounter. For this purpose, I selected three novels *Once in a Promised Land* (2007) by Laila Halaby, *The Hakawati* (2008) by Rabih Alameddine and *The Night Counter* (2009) by Alia Yunis.

Home and Abroad: Perceptions and Cultural Interactions

What can be easily observed in Arab Anglophone fiction is that the concept of home has various articulations. It cannot be considered as a unified experience; it rather takes its shape as a consequence of the ongoing interactions between the present and past as well. Sara Ahmed states that “the definitions of home shift across a number of registers: home can mean where one usually lives, or it can mean where one’s family lives or it can mean one’s native country” (338). One may have multiple homes, as in the case of Laila Halaby, Rabih Alameddine, and Alia Yunis. In almost



all the works of fiction produced by Anglophone Arab writers, we come across various conceptualizations of 'home'. What one easily notices is that through the three phases of Arab immigration to the United States, 'home' was perceived differently. For the writers of the first phase of immigration, 'home' was not an issue of much significance. As Al Maleh explained, "they reflected in their works a sense of collective optimism, celebration, exultation, and there was a kind of 'metropolitan' hybridity ensconced in the heartland of both national and transnational citizenship, a hybridity that undoubtedly helped them negotiate the 'identity politics' of their place of origin and their chosen abode with less tensions than their successors" (4). Seemingly, there was no place for displacement and identity crisis in the literature they produced. The writers of that period, according to Al-Maleh, "maintained their balance amidst the disjunctions of temporal and spatial distance and to have preserved their dual allegiance" (4). In a way contrary to their successors, writers of such phase viewed the past and the present critically as they did not betray their cultural memories nor did they disclaim their past.

More than expected, the backlash of the horrific incident of 9/11 revived a strong sense of home and nostalgia among Arab American communities because of the increased stereotypical and biased representations of Islam and the Arab world in the media to the point of damaging the status, demonizing Islam, and distorting the self-image of the Arab population and Arab American community. In this regard, Orfalea has stated that "9/11 represents a crucial moment in Arab American history, as it subjected the Arab American community to an extreme visibility and gave rise to feelings of deep vulnerability" (312). Thus, we see fear, despair, anger as well as vulnerability reflected in the works by Arab American authors published after 9/11. Arabs, indeed, faced collective hysteria that destabilized their emotional state and, consequently, made them feel as if they were betrayed. They came to the United States to pursue their dreams, yet after 9/11 America became for Muslims and Arabs in particular a land of no promise. The horrific incident of 9/11 brought a sharp turn in the lives of Arab Americans. It was only at the wake of the 9/11 that they began to rethink and reconsider their home, and therefore, they gradually became fully aware of their Arab identities as they realized how monstrous America is, tricking immigrants and their



children into believing the American dream. What one realizes is the infatuation of America and embracing a comfortable American life style deceived many into nurturing a sense of American belonging. It was only the daily prejudice, suspicion, and downright racism after 9/11 that raised in them a sense of injustice and outrage which turned later into a nostalgic feeling.

It is in Laila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* that we find the tragedies of the 9/11 compel the characters to re-examine their past, allowing their memories to flash back and replay over and over again. In their post-9/11 life, the straight and narrow were not normal as they were before but curved and widened, leaving them paralyzed with disturbed minds. Salwa, the protagonist in the novel, recalls her grandmother's childhood tales trying to find meaning in them. When a customer came to the bank to deposit an amount of money, Salwa offered to serve that customer who never stopped staring at her. Out of no curiosity but suspicion, the customer asked Salwa where she was from. Salwa answered saying that she was from Jordan, but unfortunately the woman, who was the customer, flared up. "What does that mean?" "Does it mean that you will steal my money and blow up my world?" the customer burst out, leaving Salwa's desk and seeking somebody else's service. Apparently, the novel portrays the mistrust that surfaced overnight. Salwa was really numbed to realize that her dream and interest in her job all evaporated. Her husband, Jassim, kept assuring her that it would pass, as he was confident that it was momentary. But when he himself tasted the same bitterness, he began to rethink the matter over and over again:

Each day that Jassim had gone swimming since that fateful Tuesday when the planes hit, his mind had not cleared on entering the water but rather captures memories, mostly of home, and rolled them around for the duration of his swim. The memories were neither pleasant nor unpleasant; it was as though he had a stack of DVDs to review that could be seen only while he swam (Laila Halaby 62).

Though Jassim and Salwa are American citizens, this only augmented their agony. They could not handle this anymore, nor could they tolerate the violent racist actions that targeted them.



Salwa, even though she is a holder of an American passport, thinks about abandoning the United States. One can sense how severe the treatment against them was, and consequently home, for them, is the only home, as America turned to be sham. Tragedy made them re-examine their past and allow their memories to be revived.

On the contrary, writers, such as Rabih Alameddine and Alia Yunis, think of home in fluid and porous terms, a site of inhabitation, constant transformation, and mediation. While for other writers, home was of greater significance and their characters are usually set between the host culture and the culture of origin, home, for Rabih Almandine, triggers memories of history, civil war, loss and despair, and he, therefore, finds his America as a safe haven. In his novel *The Hakawati*, he crafted stories within stories with an aim to break the reader's preconceived ideas and rattle the misconceptions about the Middle East. Osama Al-Kharat, the protagonist in the novel, who has been living in the United States for years, returns to Lebanon to see his dying father. In the novel, there are a number of tales, anecdotes, and fables drawn from various sources, Quranic, Biblical, traditional and historical, and are all stitched altogether with humorous threads that grab the reader's fascination further. The author was capable to juxtapose both truth and fiction, delineating the misery of today's world and the sorrow of the ancient one. As the family reunites in Beirut to stand vigil at the dying father, Osama beguiles them with his stories which could be described as palliative, as they all gathered to ease the dying father. Through his stories, Osama proves that his stay in the United States, with all the mirth and wealth, could not erase his memory of his culture and heritage.

Alameddine goes deeper and deeper into the Arab ancient culture peeling a layer after layer, rather than deploying nostalgia and gloom. He dazzles the reader with stories of lust, adventure, murder, scandal, and war, all drawn from the Western and the Eastern traditions, a celebration of both civilizations that he intends to mark. He, in one way, shows how diverse the Middle East is. Rather than dispersing gloom, Alameddine's 'hakawati' thrills his audience with stories that picture



the complex Middle East. In another way, his perception of the world is macrocosmic rather than microcosmic.

In Alia Yunis' *The Night Counter*, the concept of home is also persistent, but, we observe a broader notion of home. For example, we see characters whose parents are troubled with the idea of assimilation. Fatima, the grandmother, realizes that some of her daughters' children fit well in the American culture and show no interest in exploring the idea of home. The later generations of Fatima's family seem to be more reluctant to accept the idea of one home. Fatima and Ibrahim, her ex-husband, used to speak to them in Arabic, yet they respond in English, an indication of their reluctance to accept the language and culture of their parents. On the contrary, even though some characters in the novel had desire to assimilate, their attempts raised absurd contradictions. We see Randa, Fatima's daughter, with her pathetic attempts to establish an American identity. She moves to Texas, dyes her hair blonde, and changes her name to Randy, and persuades her husband Bashar to change his name into "Bud". Trying to demonstrate her "Americanness", Randa also offered to work for the FBI and told her family that she and Bud didn't want anyone to think that they were terrorists. In the same way, Amir thinks that he is an American in all sorts, as he is gay. On the contrary, Nadia and Elias, Zade's parents seem to be interested in pursuing a different perspective. Both are professors and used to teach Arab things mostly to Arab kids. After 9/11, their classes became full as there were many people who want to learn about the Middle East. They embraced their culture, and this encouraged their son to open a café under the name Scheherazade's Diwan Café, which became a cultural centre for Arab Americans, a place where they can smoke hookahs and enjoy sipping cardamom coffee.

Fatima brought something of Lebanon to America to remind her of her home. She brought seeds and planted them there, creating a Lebanese garden in Detroit with the seeds of her grandmother's garden in Lebanon. Arab food and smoking hookah are also pictures of home. Feeling that she has only some days left in her life, Fatima tirelessly attempts to convince Amir, her



grandson, to accept her bequeathal of her house in Lebanon and also her other possessions, such as photos, wedding dress, and letters from her mother.

In Alia Yunis' novel *The Night Counter*, the characters of the novel offer a new dimension to the ongoing discussions and theories on diaspora by offering a new concept of home. Her novel centers on the life of Arab American characters in the United States. She gives an authentic portrayal of Arab Americans' everyday life, Arabian food, costumes, tradition, and what constitutes the makeup of Arab community. The characters are not troubled with the concept of home, yet their issues are all concerned about how to come to terms with the American culture, while also being Arab. As diasporic persons living between homes and identities, they realize the significance of the acceptance of their in-betweenness, thus reconciliation with having no home. Such realization brings out their celebration of non-belonging to any particular home. The concept of home for them remains fluid and constructed as a process rather than a place. This is what Lisa Majaj found out in her analysis of basic themes and concepts in Arab American literature. She concludes that in the case of hyphenated identities like Arab Americans accepting either side of the hyphen as the sole place of belonging is not the solution (10). She argues that "what is needed is the ability to move with fluidity between worlds" (10). Indeed, feeling of the celebration of non-belonging to any home, culture or identity, is what permeates Alia Yunis' novel *The Night Counter* and Rabih Alameddine's *The Hakawati*. In both novels, home is a history and perceiving diaspora is no more as a negative but a positive value. The central point is that having no home to belong to appears to bring about changes and transformation at the financial, educational and cultural levels. The characters in *The Night Counter* attempt to create a home within themselves, and thus construct a fluid and liberating homeland with a transformative agendas. Most of the characters in *The Night Counter* are born, raised, and educated in the United States. It is, therefore, not easy to expect them to denounce their American identity, nor is it possible for them to accept a full Arab identity. In this case, I think maintaining a hybrid identity would resolve the tension.



It is obvious that after 9/11 some Arab American writers initiated the move towards cultural understanding. Alia Yunis, for instance, in her novel *The Night Counter*, offers an intercultural mobile text that draws its energy from the life-sustaining art of storytelling of Scheherazade even as it reconfigures her tales in a comedic fashion that alters their significance for Arabs in America. The novel in a charming way provides us with disruptive appropriations as well as cultural relocations. By adopting redemptive strategies, anti-nostalgic and celebratory embrace of various cultural flows that make up Arab American plurality, Alia Yunis intends to mitigate the ongoing tensions within and between both Arab and American realities. The intersecting stories that she weaves in her novel open a space for producing new intercultural understandings through the mobile flow of people between and across multiple and intersecting sites of identification and cultural expression. Hence, Alia Yunis offers us a trans-cultural narrative that does not only encompass the techniques form *The Arabian Nights* but also attempts to reverse the Orientalist image of Arabs in the United States from potential terrorism suspects into mere fictional representations.

In *The Hakawati*, Rabih Alameddine shows much concern about subverting the Orientalist discourse which is based on the East-West dichotomy. In his novel, he focuses on the commonalities of the two sides, finding himself trapped in-between two different and at the same time similar worlds. In his novel *The Hakawati*, Alameddine invokes many narrators, interlinks plots, employs various genres and styles, and makes up a novel with mixed and different storylines. He seems to be struggling hard to tell “his-story” about American homophobia, Lebanese sectarianism and also the outcomes of civil war. For Alameddine; “Once the story was told, it was “anyone’s,” it became “common currency,” it got “twisted and distorted,” for “no story is told the same way twice or in quite the same words” (Rabih Alameddine 137).

Moreover, by mixing the storytelling of his novel, Alameddine is creating a sense of distrust and also disbelief in the reader. It is all mere fictional construction primarily meant for entertainment. The motif of survival in the *Arabian Nights* is reflected in the three novels. They all tell stories and suggest storytelling for survival. For Arab Americans, therefore, the idea is that, like



Scheherazade, if you have a good story, you can survive. They attempt to create history by telling their stories.

Most literary critics tend to look at Arab American writers in a way that attempts to place them in the category of culture/identity politics, and also their attitudes towards either identification or non-identification with the culture of their home countries. Laila Halaby, Alameddine, and Alia Yunis do not really lend themselves to such categorizations. In their narratives, they all display cosmopolitan or hybrid characters. Their novels propose a different kind of reading and they solely aim at creating new modes of discourse in opposition to the Orientalist discourse. Their fiction is less nostalgic, yet emphasizing intercultural mobility. Their conceptualization of home is fluid, and thus, they show willingness to embrace different cultures. Their characters transgress the boundaries and resist confinement, as they feel joy in mobility and freedom. More importantly, the drastic situation in the Middle East, particularly in the last few years, makes it difficult for anyone to even dream of a peaceful life. Their obsession with stories reflects their interest in their history, but they also cling to their Americannes. Alameddine does not accept the East versus West polarity; he rather turns it into a fiction. For him, it is nothing else but a work of fiction. In his style, Alameddine is a postmodernist. The fragmentations and frequent interruptions in *The Hakawati* are indicative of the author's conception of this world. In his novel, he creates a literary cuisine in which mixed characters residing in various geographies are postmodern catering to different tastes.

Mostly depicting the reactions of Arab Americans to 9/11 attacks, post-9/11 fiction charts the Arab Americans' responses to such a horrific incident which wreaked a severe backlash on all Arabs/Muslims. Post-9/11 writers produced magnificent and unprecedented works of fiction that are replete with multiple voices and numerous narrative techniques. Laila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land*, Rabid Alameddine's *The Hakawati*, and Alia Yunis' *The Night Counter* are just a few examples which went deeper into the psyche as well as reflected the various different shades of the lives of Arab Americans in the United States.



Conclusion

The paper is an attempt to explore how Arab American writers incorporate the ‘realities’ imposed after 9/11 into their narratives, and how they define and propose intercultural understanding. Arab American novels are mostly counter-narratives, yet they construct fluid and porous perceptions of home, even though they resort in times of tragedy to imagining an idealized home through memories of the past. They also reflect the different realities imposed upon them in a post-9/11 America, hyper-visibility and otherness. It is observed that the attitudes of the first generation differ from those of younger generations, as the first generation emphasized that they had maintained their ‘authentic’ Arabness, while the later generations easily identify with American language and cultures. Writers, such as Rabih Alameddine and Alia Yunis, attempt to introduce themselves as bridge-builders and cultural mediators. Their fiction deploys anti- nostalgic narratives, and they are not obsessed with the bygone times which are very prominent in the works of some ethnic writers, especially those writers who write about their present life in the host country. Though they let their memories flash back and retrieve images of their homelands, they are less motivated to idealize their countries of origin. Writing in English, these writers introduce Arab traditions, cultures, and customs to a wide range of western readership. Not only this, but they also combine elements of other cultures in their works, creating multi-cultural atmosphere.

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Perpetuating Ethical Numbness: The Plight Of Ecological Refugees

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Abstract: The paper entitled “Perpetuating Ethical Numbness: The Plight of Ecological Refugees” demonstrates how the eco developmental projects such as conservation of biodiversity and construction of mega dams have not only deteriorated the ecosystem, but also deprived the tribal or indigenous people of their traditional means of livelihood. India ranks second in terms of tribal population. Tribal people are often referred to as “adivasis” which means original inhabitants of the land. India has nearly 360 tribal groups who speak over 100 languages and dialects. Since nearly 90 percent of the tribal population depend on forests and forest resources, displacing them in the name of development would deprive them of their familiar environment, homeland and livelihood options, thereby affecting their well-being. An attempt has been made to unveil the adverse effects of the eco developmental projects on the tribal people and their resistance to restore the lost ancestral lands with reference to C. K. Janu's *Mother Forest: The Unfinished Story of C. K. Janu*.

Key words: Eco developmental projects, ecological destruction, environmental degradation, indigenous people, displacement, poverty, underdevelopment, ecological refugees.

You cannot live a political life, you cannot live a moral life if you're not willing to open your eyes and see the world more clearly. See some of the injustice that's going on. Try to make yourself aware of what's happening in the world. And when you are aware, you have a responsibility to act.

- Bill Ayers, cofounder of the Weather Underground

The large scale developmental projects in less developed countries contribute to various forms of ecological destruction and environmental degradation. Economic globalization, trade



liberal policy, privatization and modernization have not only deteriorated the ecosystem, but also deprived the tribal or indigenous people of their traditional means of livelihood. In the name of Eco developmental projects such as conservation of biodiversity and construction of mega dams, and other developmental projects like construction of roads, railways and industries tribal people and poor agricultural peasants are displaced from their lands and are left with less livelihood options. In other words, the life sustaining resources of the tribal or the indigenous people are explored and exploited by the transnational corporations and elite class of the less developed countries in the name of developmental projects. As Rajkishor Meher remarks, “In the name of modernizing backward countries and regions and civilizing the ‘less civilized’ indigenous people in these areas, the current form of LPG development is creating wealth for the modernizing elites at the cost of the livelihood and security of the indigenous peoples in these areas.” Foreign direct investment (FDI) and technologies are invited to exploit the unlimited natural resources of the backward areas where the indigenous people reside over, just because, the government and the elite class of the less developed nations believe that these mega developmental projects “will increase export earnings and accelerate economic growth, which in turn will develop basic infrastructure and bring about the progressive socioeconomic transformation of the indigenous population” (458). But in reality, these developmental projects do no good to the indigenous people. They are dispossessed of their lands and are deprived of their life sustaining livelihood options. As Arundhati Roy elucidates, “They’re a brazen means of taking water, land and irrigation away from the poor and gifting it to the rich. Their reservoirs displace huge populations of people, leaving them homeless and destitute” (57). In short, these mega developmental projects only benefit the multinational corporations and a few elite classes at the expense of the lives of the tribal people.

India ranks second in terms of tribal population. Tribal people are often referred to as “adivasis” which means original inhabitants of the land. India has nearly 360 tribal groups who speak over 100 languages and dialects. According to the presidential order, they are categorised under the scheduled tribes (STs) since 1950). These tribal groups generally live in the forests and hilly regions which are often termed as the backward regions of the country. They fully depend on the forest and the agricultural lands for their survival. Hunting, foraging and cultivation of lands are



the traditional means of their livelihood options (Mallavarapu 35). Since nearly 90 percent of the tribal population depend on forests and forest resources, displacing them in the name of development would deprive them of their familiar environment, homeland and livelihood options, thereby affecting their well-being.

It becomes significant to know the three major economies of the world such as nature's economy, sustenance economy and market economy to understand how the mega developmental projects affect the overall well-being of the commons. Nature's economy is the primary economy of the world. In this economy, the goods and services are produced by nature such as "the water recycled and distributed through the hydrologic cycle, the soil fertility produced by microorganisms, the plants fertilized by pollinators" (Shiva 16). These natural resources are produced and reproduced by ecological processes. Sustenance economy is the economy in which the people work directly with nature to create a favourable condition for their living. The sustenance economy is engaged in "craft production, peasant agriculture, artisanal fishing, and indigenous forest economies" (Shiva 17). Nature's economy and sustenance economy offer sustenance and support to all human activities. The dominant global market economy depends on these major economies for their profits. So as to accumulate capital, the global market economy destroys the ecological process by over-exploiting the resources of nature. The rapid economic growth produced by the destruction of livelihoods and the unlimited exploitation of the resources of nature's economy and sustenance economy would eventually lead to underdevelopment and poverty. As Shiva elucidates:

The poverty of the Third World has resulted from centuries of the drain of resources from the sustenance economy. Globalization has accelerated and expanded the methods used to deplete the sustenance economy—the privatization of water, the patenting of seeds and biodiversity, and the corporatization of agriculture. This deliberate starving of the sustenance economy is at the root of the violence of globalization. (17-18)

Hence, it is obvious that the global developmental projects which destroy the sustenance and livelihood options of the commons will result in poverty and underdevelopment.



The Developmental projects often result in the displacement of the indigenous people from their own ancestral lands. In projects such as the construction of industrial plants, roads and railway lines displacement of people is more visible than in Eco developmental projects such as conservation of biodiversity, construction of dams and canals. Displacement is often carried out by forcible or involuntary eviction. This kind of forced displacement deprives the basic needs of the tribal people such as home, livestock assets, livelihood options and familiar environment which in turn result in the sense of estrangement, alienation and insecurity. Roy comments, "India's Adivasi people have a greater claim to being indigenous to this land than anybody else, and how are they treated by the state and its minions? Oppressed, cheated, robbed of their lands, shunted around like surplus goods" (34). Since tribal people and their histories, their customs, their deities are considered dispensable; they must learn to sacrifice everything they once possessed for the greater common good of the nation (35).

Globalization accumulates wealth by the enclosure of common properties which are the collective assets of the poor. It is said that the enclosures would bring growth and prosperity to all. However, in reality, it brings unprecedented poverty to the common people. For instance, the enclosure of forests from the indigenous people to the state benefits the private paper and pulp industry by providing them with cheap raw materials. So also the mega dams, which are built in the name of common good, aim to satisfy the water needs of the global corporations and private industries (Shiva 30). Hence, it is apparent that globalization and its developmental projects benefit only a few at the expense of the majority.

Earlier people are displaced in the name of nation-building, but now it still continues under the cover of economic growth of the country. In other words, the shift from nation-building to globalization has accelerated displacement by development. According to a recent report, over 60 million people have been displaced during the last 60 years (Mathur 3).

Meher comments on the waves of economic transformation and its effects on the tribal people as:

It should be noted that during the first wave of economic transformations that led to the birth of settled agricultural economies, the indigenous peoples were pushed into the hilly and



mountainous regions by the more technologically advanced sections of the population. Now in the current era of globalization in the name of modernization and higher economic development, they are being pushed into oblivion and displaced by the modernizing invaders. (459)

The adverse effects of displacement on the indigenous people caused by the developmental projects are hard to assess. Roy points out the negligent behaviour of the government towards the displaced indigenous people as, “the government has not commissioned a post-project evaluation of a single one of its 3,600 dams to gauge whether or not it has achieved what it set out to achieve, whether or not the (always phenomenal) costs were justified, or even what the costs actually were” (59). According to the national and state rehabilitation and resettlement (R and R) policy, the displaced tribals should be provided with “land to land or cash compensation”. Minimum agricultural wages (MAWs) must be given as an additional means of financial support to the project affected persons for the loss of customary or grazing rights. They should be relocated in the nearby area “so that they retain their ethnic, linguistic and cultural identity”. Additional lands can be offered for the purpose of community and religious gatherings. Representatives of project affected people should be included in the rehabilitation and resettlement (R and R) committee (Mallavarapu 37).

In essence, the displaced tribal people are often promised to provide decent compensation with proper rehabilitation and resettlement (R and R). However, it has not been implemented as promised. As a result, the extent of their suffering has increased to greater heights. If they have been resettled to a place which has equivalent or better living conditions, their problems would have reduced except the sense of loss of their accustomed place which could easily fade away with the better standard of living. However, in reality, the tribal or indigenous people are provided with insufficient compensation. They are often resettled in worse lands where there are less livelihood options and even their lives are under threat. In the process of relocation, they not only lose their assets and life sustaining livelihood options, but also encounter the socio-economic and cultural issues such as social exclusion and discrimination. Thus, Meher comments, “Their status changes from self-sustaining members of their local ecosystem to ecological refugees who are forced into



the slums of the large urban centres and urban-industrial towns created by the development pathologies of our time” (459).

Apart from the establishment of mining and mineral-based industries, the government concentrates more on the Eco developmental projects such as construction of multipurpose dams and conservation of biodiversity like national parks and sanctuaries. The acquisition and exploitation of tribal lands and resources has become a common phenomenon in recent decades due to the State and Multi-National Companies (MNCs) sponsored developmental projects such as large scale irrigational projects, dams, reservoirs, mining, industries, sanctuaries, and tourism projects. For instance, tribal groups such as Konda Reddis and Nayakapods of Reddigudem and Lakshmipuram villages respectively are displaced due to the “Kovvada Reservoir” project in West Godavari Agency and Yandai tribals have been dispossessed of their lands due to Tiger Sanctuary at Srisailem without any proper rehabilitation and resettlement (R and R) package. The government of Andhra Pradesh has initiated the Kovvada reservoir project to meet the required water supply for the agricultural lands of the non-tribals and for the industries in the uplands. It is said that this project would promote the agricultural productivity, thereby improving the economy through cultivation. But in reality, the tribals have been forcefully evicted by the immigrant non-tribal settlers and the project officials. The government officials have decided to provide compensation of Rs. 80,000 and Rs. 60,000 per acre for cashew orchids and plain lands respectively. However,

The oustees struggled for about 4 -5 years to collect their land compensation and spent most of the compensation amount towards bribes to Government officials and the extensive travels they made to the Government offices. Rest of the compensation amount was paid to the money lenders to clear off their debts. (Mallavarapu 39)

Finally, as a result, these tribals and poor peasants are marginalised and pushed into the periphery. This in turn results in the large scale migration to the urban areas. Since they lack the required skills, they couldn't find any employment opportunity in the urban centre and at last end up in rag-picking, rickshaw-pulling and even as bonded labour (Mallavarapu 38-39).

Kerala is well-known for its socio-economic developments in recent decades. The government policies aim to achieve quality human development in terms of high standard of living,



good education and proper medical care. However, these developmental projects exclude the tribal or the indigenous people of Kerala. Wayanad district of Kerala has the largest concentration of tribal inhabitants. This mountainous region covers vast plains, large scale cultivable lands and dense forest area. Attappadi region in Palakkad district has the second largest tribal population. The tribal or the indigenous people form the majority of forest dwellers. They completely depend on the forest and forest resources for their life subsistence. Hunting, foraging and cultivation are some of their primary ways of livelihoods. The forest dwellers are contented with their traditional ways of living and have led a peaceful life.

On one side, the self-sufficient lives of the tribals have been disrupted by the non-tribal migrants from Tamil Nadu and Travancore after 1930s. These non-tribal settlers have forcefully evicted the tribals of their home lands and pushed them into the marginalised state of living. Bhaskaran remarks:

The largely self-sufficient, culturally distinct way of life of the tribals fast eroded, as their traditional methods of cultivation- slash and burn-and their crops- *Ragi, Cholan and Thina* – were substituted with more commercially viable methods and crops. (*Mother Forest: The Unfinished Story of C.K. Janu* VI)

On the other side, the government Eco developmental project of wild life sanctuary in Wayanad district has displaced the tribals of their lands, deprived them of their livestock assets and sustaining livelihoods. 1975 and 1976 government statistical reports show 57 percent and 61 percent of tribals are landless respectively. Bhaskaran comments,

This indicated the rapidity with which they were (losing their lands. Even the Kerala Land Reform Act of 1957, which was introduced by the Communists and was termed ‘progressive’, could not come in the way of transfer of tribal lands, as there were enough loopholes for circumvention. (vii-viii)

C. K. Janu’s *Mother Forest: The Unfinished Story of C. K. Janu* unfolds the self-sustaining life of the tribals and their symbiotic relationship with the forest lands by narrating her own childhood experiences in the mother forest. It discloses the adverse effects of the ecodevelopmental projects such as setting up of wild life sanctuaries and conservation of national parks on the tribal people of



Wayanad district. The story not only explores their fears to lose their cultural identity, sustaining livelihood options and their intimate bond with the mother nature, but also their resistance and protest to restore the lost ancestral lands. In short, it exhibits how the tribal and indigenous people of Kerala become the victims of its developmental projects.

The tribal or indigenous people have a symbiotic relationship with the forest they dwell in. C.K. Janu's childhood experience not only unfolds their traditional means of livelihoods such as fishing and foraging, but also reveals their intimate bond with nature. She narrates:

When young all of us children would go the ridges of the fields to pick chappa or to the little stream to catch fish or else to lure out the crabs hiding in the slush of the fields or to graze the Jenmi's cattle or to roam aimlessly in the woods or to pluck wild fruits like karappayam mothangappayam or kanjippayam kanjippayam was plentiful. When eaten it turned our tongues blood-red or we would look for honey in the tall trees or ... bring home pieces of cane in the forests one never knew what hunger was we would dig up wild tubers and eat them once we started digging for the roots we kept digging till we got to them. Sometimes for a whole day. (2)

This passage indicates their self-sufficient and their distinctive way of living. Since the forest they dwell in provides them everything in abundance, they have led a contented and uninterrupted life. To them, "the forest is mother to us more than a mother because she never abandons us" (5).

The tribals build high wooden platforms between the trees to aim at their prey and to safeguard their crops from the wild animals. Although their's is a tough life, they enjoy the beauty associated with it. The tribals work as labourers in the fields of Jenmi (feudal landlords). The fields in which they work as labourers were once belong to the tribals. In fact, they are their ancestral property from which the tribals have been forcefully evicted and pushed into the worst wastelands of the forest. Janu explains how the tribal or indigenous people have become landless labourers as:

The hillsides the mountains the plantations the field and what not in that area belonged to them after our forefathers had toiled so much to clear the woods and burn the undergrowth



and convert the hillsides into fields they had taken them over as their own that's how all our lands become theirs. (*Mother Forest* 15)

Now in the fields of Jenmi, they do back-breaking works such as:

Digging up the soil with spades sowing pulling out the seedlings transplanting them weeding watering reaping carrying the sheaves of corn and such. again picking the left over ears of corn from the harvested field then more work like threshing drying the straw in the sun tying up the hay into sheaves and piling up haystacks. (1)

Men, women and children all work hard in the fields to get meagre wages. After harvest, they have been given grains as wages. Janu recollects those nights of harvest. When they are returning back home with the grains they have received as wages, they could hear the music of chini and thudi being played as a sign of happiness. She remarks that they are not truly happy simply because they have got a very low wage for the work they put in the fields. They are too scared to raise their voice against the feudal lords. Their unquestioning acceptance is revealed through her words, "there never was a tradition of protesting when the wages were low nor in other communities. Our people were also not used to going anywhere beyond the fields or the forests" (16).

The rainy season is the most unpleasant period of their life. It throws light on their marginalized state of living. During the rainy season, they could leave the field "only after planting the whole field". When they get wet while working in the fields, they don't possess a spare clothe to change. They often get nothing to eat as they could not gather food products from the forest during rainy season. Only when it stops raining, could they gather something to fill their stomach. It is also understood that the wage they earn by breaking their backs in the fields is not enough to stave off hunger. Janu reports:

It would be quite dark by the time we reached our hovels even after reaching them we could not be able to sleep immediately. We would be so hungry and cold. It was impossible to kindle the fire in the hearth. We would eat some *chakka* or *thina*. The little one would sleep even without that we wouldn't be able to see each other since we had no lights anyway everyone must look the same when hungry. (*Mother Forest* 14)



It is evident from the words of C.K. Janu that the dispossession of forest lands, which comforts the tribes, deprives them of their basic needs and life sustaining options.

The tribals have been completely deprived of their lands and livelihoods by the migrants from the South, the modernising invaders of the globalized India. They plant coffee and eat chakka and kappa like the tribals do. The jenmis only looted the lands from the indigenous people, whereas the migrant non-tribal settlers not only take over the good cultivable lands from them, but also enslave their men in return for toddy and arrack. It is said that the arrival of the migrants is good as it opens up a space to the tribals to mingle with the civil society. However, in reality, the tribals are completely ruined by these settlers. Janu reports:

Our people had turned into mere wage labourers. Mother Forest had turned into the Departmental Forest. It had barbed wire fences and guards. Our children had begun to be frightened of a forest that could no longer accommodate them. All the land belonged to the migrants... They began to extract profit, instead of yield from the land. They called them commercial crops. Paddy fields began to dwindle. When our lands were encroached upon and the fields became scarce, we had to look for other kind of jobs. There were agitations to get an increase of fifty paise or even one rupee in wages. (30)

These migrants have not only changed their traditional ways of cultivation, but also turned agriculture into a mere commerce. As Shiva remarks:

The more the powerful gained economic and political power from the growing market economy, the more they dispossessed the poor and enclosed their common property. And the more the poor were dispossessed of their means to provide their own sustenance, the more they had to turn to the market to buy what they had formerly produced themselves. (20-21)

Whenever the tribal people clear the woods, burn the undergrowth and converted the earth into cultivable lands, the Jenmis and the migrants acquire the fields by giving arrack or small amount to the tribal men. The irony is that they work in the same fields as landless labourers, grow crops for the landlords at a mere “wage that could not even keep hunger away” (*Mother Forest* 32). As a result, they have started buying everything from the shops. Janu remarks:



Ration cards, electoral rolls, and numbers for the huts came into being. We started buying mulagu, thuvara and payar from the shops. Become indebted to the shopkeepers. More needs meant more money. We now had to buy medicines for fever. Injections and prescription slips came into existence. Our children studied up to the fourth or fifth and began to hate the forests and the earth. We didn't get wages for work done, we led agitations. The jemni and the Party men postponed settlement indefinitely. But if the agitations continued much longer we would die of hunger. We couldn't go to the forests either. (32-33)

Thus, the growing market economy, which has enclosed the common property and dispossessed the tribes of their sustaining resources to accumulate wealth, shifts the status of the tribes from self-sustaining members to ecological refugees.

Apart from the jenmis and migrants, the rotten democracy and the corrupt politicians who should protect the rights of the tribals have violated them and contributed to their impoverishment. As Shiva comments, "In Third World countries the transformation of natural resources into commodities has been largely mediated by the state. Though couched in the language of advancing the collective public interest, the state is often a powerful instrument for the privatization of resources" (30). The political parties do no good to the tribal people and merely use them as vote bank to win the elections. They are largely responsible for the creation of unwed mothers who give birth to babies of party men. Whenever there is some agitation or protest, the parties pretend to take their side, but the final decisions favour the landlords. Janu and her people have started realising that the party men would do nothing for the welfare of the tribal people as they lust after power and money. She reports:

The fact that we could no more collect even fallen twigs from the forest, the fact that tree after tree was cut down and transported in lorries down the mountains, that our huts had walls that could crumble any moment, that we could not thatch our fallen roofs, that we had to squat in front of the Panchayat officers demanding drinking water, that our indigenous medicine and occult customs became calendar pictures printed on newspapers-all this we



knew by being within the Party. We knew that all this happened with the Party's mute support and because of its greed for power. (*Mother Forest* 38)

Their victimization has reached its climax when the migrants and other rich landlords have started encroaching their burial grounds. As a consequence, they have no place left to bury the dead. Nearly 60 people have squatted in front of the police station under Janu's leadership and insisted that they would not leave the place unless the burial grounds return to them. The encroacher gets the support of the party. Whenever the party handles these kinds of issues related to the tribals, it often ends up against them as the party men take the side of money and power. Added to this, it is the time of election in the local co-operative bank. Since the vote of the encroacher is decisive in the election, the party attempts to settle the encroachment issue in his favour. Janu understands that she could do nothing for her people by remaining in the party for it uses the landless labourers as ingredients for the party song and decoration for their speech. She comments:

From great heights, they sometimes announced free rations of a kilo of rice. And declared subsidies that we could not understand in times of starvation. ... Made men and women lazy by telling them that their time was coming. They started creating folk arts academies and research papers saying that our traditions, medicine, our way of dressing and drumming on the *thudi* were all under threat of extinction. (*Mother Forest* 40)

The increasing land acquisition has led to the growth of the number of people who have become landless and homeless labourers. The tribals have lost their lands for various reasons. Many of them have lost their lands just because they couldn't prove their ownership as most of them possess no proper records or documents of the lands. Others have transferred their lands for the debts and the rest for toddy and arrack. The means through which the tribals are evicted from their lands may differ, but the ultimate goal behind them is one and the same that is the eviction of the tribals for the development of the country which merely benefits the elite class.

As a result of the absolute displacement and deprivation of lands and livelihoods, the tribal people, under the guidance of C.K. Janu, encroach the lands in Thirunelli. It is a small hilly region of about eighteen acres which has been taken away from their ancestors long back. Forty-five landless and homeless families including Paniyars, Adiyars and Kurichyars have occupied illegally



and settled in this region. The forest guards and police force beat them up badly to drive them away from the lands. However, they remain in the hilly region as they have no place to go. Since they refuse to leave the place, a lawsuit has been filed against them and the land becomes disputed land.

She reports:

Because this is disputed land we cannot demand drinking water. We cannot get electricity also though a transmission line passes by. And because the houses do not have numbers, we cannot get ration cards either. And we cannot apply for anything. Because Party people don't get our votes, our names are also not there in the voter's lists. (*Mother Forest* 42)

The party men have turned against the encroachers as the encroached land belongs to a rich person in Karnataka who is very close to the party. As a consequence, the party men have created a difficult situation for the tribal people by not providing them with any work. Even the shops downhill refuse to give them the groceries. Although she finds it hard to hold her people together in such a difficult situation, she manages to convince them to face the dreadful situation with hope.

She remarks:

Landed people may not call us for work for some time, but not forever because those with land cannot work on it. Our people have to do all jobs related to earth, land, mud and slush so they started calling us again for work, for clearing the woods, watering the fields, transplanting paddy, manuring coffee and digging up the ground with spades and such. (43)

Realising the fact that she could not improve the status of her people through party work, she has decided to unite her people to voice their miseries and left the party in 1991. She formed the Aadivaasi Vikasana Pravarthaka Samiti (Organisation for Tribal Development Workers) in 1992. The main aim of this organisation is the reclamation of tribal lands. From then onwards, she has led many agitations and protests to restore their lost lands by encroaching upon them.

Later, in 1994, she has gathered nearly 300 landless and homeless families and occupied lands in Appootti near Mananthavaadi. They build huts and stay there. After a while, they are severely beaten up by the forest guards. Many are terribly injured. She has been hospitalized for nearly 20 days. Others have been evicted from the place. However, they continue to encroach upon



lands in Vellamunda, Chiniyeru, and Kundara in Munnar. In all these issues, they have been terribly beaten up and severely tortured by both the leftist and rightist governments with the police force. However, the government with its police force has failed in its attempt to break the will of the tribals. Since they have no other place to go, the tribals stay back and refuse to leave the encroached lands. Janu comments, "These were not just land encroachments. They were life and death struggles for our basic right to live and die where we were born. All our struggles have been struggles to establish the ownership rights of the real owners of this land for the right to live on it" (*Mother Forest* 54-55).

In 2001, along with the landless tribals Janu has led a historical agitation by putting up huts in front of the secretariat for nearly forty days until the government sign the agreement with the tribals on 16th October 2001. In this agreement, the government promises to provide five acres of lands to the landless tribal families living in project areas like Sugandhagiri and Pookode. In other areas, the landless tribals or the tribals who possess less than one acre should be provided with agricultural lands. The distribution of the lands would begin on 1st January 2002. For a period of five years, the members of the tribal families would be provided with job opportunities. However, the government remains passive in fulfilling the promises made to the tribals. Infuriated by the government's negligent attitude, under the leadership of Janu, the tribals have encroached upon the forest lands of Muthanga in Wayanad district and settled there. On 19th Feb 2003, the police firing to evacuate the tribals has resulted in the death of a policeman and a tribal. Janu has been arrested and imprisoned on this struggle. After visiting the Muthanga Sanctuary, Arundhati Roy wrote a letter to the Kerala Chief Minister A.K. Antony, in which she comments:

The Muthanga atrocity will go down in Kerala's history as a government's attempt to decimate an extraordinary and historical struggle for justice by the poorest, most oppressed community in Kerala. It will go down in history because, unlike most 'struggles' in Kerala, it is not a petty, cynical fight between political parties jockeying for power. It is the real fight of the truly powerless against the powerful. It is the stuff of which myths are made. (*Mother Forest* 63)



On one side, the government officials, party men, rich landlords and migrants use all possible mean ways to break the symbiotic relationship between the tribals and their mother forest by forcefully evicting the indigenous people from their natural inhabitation. On the other side, “they wrote article after article lamenting the state of the environment” (49). Roy ridicules the unfair treatment of the indigenous people by the government as:

India doesn't live in her villages. India dies in her villages. India gets kicked around in her villages. India lives in her cities. India's villages live only to serve her cities. Her villagers are her citizens' vassals and for that reason must be controlled and kept alive, but only just. (70-71)

The tribals have had a unique system of living which is close to nature. They burn the undergrowth and convert the forest lands into cultivable lands. They have the practice of preserving food for future consumption. They have a unique way of predicting time and season from the chirping of birds and falling of leaves. Although their system of life does not conform to the needs of the civil society, it is complete in itself. The corrupt politician and the greedy civil society which lust after power and wealth have designed many developmental projects for the tribals that merely benefit the elite class. Janu vehemently comments:

... civil society and parties looking for power had to cook up projects apparently for our people, but actually to fulfil the needs of civil society, siphoning off all that money and transforming our people into good-for-nothings. So they transplant us to where there is no space even to stand up straight. Without drinking water or a place to relieve themselves, the image of a group of unclean people was slowly being created. (*Mother Forest* 47-48)

As discussed earlier, globalization and neoliberal policies play a crucial role in the massive displacement by development. World Bank is often willing to fund these kinds of developmental projects which displace millions from their homelands with “The merest crumbs of information” (Roy 80). In other words, it funds the developmental projects without demanding more information about the resettlement and rehabilitation (R and R) of the project affected persons. Hiding behind the phrases such as aiding hands of developing countries, the neo-colonial powers exploit the resources of the developing nations. India often repays more than what it received from the World



Bank for its developmental projects. According to 1998 World Bank report, India paid 478 million dollars more than it received (qtd. in Roy 77).

Thus, Janu through her autobiography discloses the destructed lives of the tribal or the indigenous people. It explores not only their intimacy with nature, but also the traumatic condition encountered by them due to land alienation. It exhibits the indifferent and negligent attitude of government towards the tribals. Hence, it is evident that the developmental projects funded by the global powers which aim to produce unprecedented growth, build nation or preserve nature merely destroy and degrade the ecosystem of the developing nations, thereby depriving the tribals or the indigenous people of their homelands, familiar environment and life sustaining livelihood options.

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Revisiting Victorian Era: A Feminist panorama of the Age

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Abstract: Victorian feminists maintained that women need to be educated in order to improve society. For women's emancipation it was emphasized that women need to be freed from home and require exposure to public life, so that they could 'do God's work in the world'. The paper gives a general idea of feminism and the position of women both as an ideology and a movement in Victorian age. The study also gives a comprehensive description of the contribution made by various women writers of that age to the Victorian literary corpus and the way paved by them for the later feminist writers. Besides this the various contemporary issues are the focal point of this study like the meekness, submissiveness and docility of women during Victorian era, the different kinds of struggles that women of that age faced and how they tried to surmount those obstacles.

Key Words: Victorian, Emancipation, Feminism, Literary corpus.

Introduction:

Violence against women is a ubiquitous and universal phenomenon that persists in all countries of the world, and the perpetrators of that violence are often known to their victims. Domestic violence, in particular, continues to be frighteningly common and accepted as 'normal' within many societies. Men and women symbolically are the two sides of the same coin. Starting from the field of domestic responsibilities, socio-political, moral, economic, intellectual and spiritual aspect women have a significant role to play. Women of the present age would argue that they still have a long way to go to attain a high status and gender justice. Feminist campaigns are generally considered to be one of the main forces behind major historical societal changes for women's rights. These feminist campaigns imply public awareness seeking feminism and its relevance.



‘Feminism’ is a term that is interpreted in a variety of ways and these reflect the history of Feminist thought. This thought often occurs in the waves. The first wave is associated with the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft’s (1759-1797) *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). The influence of 19th century liberal political philosophy in twin is concerned with feminism which earns equal political and economic opportunities for women. Hence women’s situation improved. It led to women’s suffrage in 1920’s and liberal feminists also made efforts regarding property rights for women, more freedom and education and these paved way for their professional career. The Second Wave of feminism starts in 1949 with the publication of Simone de Beauvoir’s (1908-1986) *The Second Sex* (1949). This movement focused on the political and legal sources of women’s equality. And the Second wave of feminists believes that political and legal equality is not enough to make women feel more comfortable. According to them it is sexiest oppression which is ingrained in every sphere of human life whether social, economic, political life and a variety of personal relationships. Moreover second wave of feminists were critical about the first ones for ignoring economic reforms. They were of the opinion that feminism should lay emphasis on economic equality for women rather than just economic survival. The Third Wave of feminism began in the late 1980’s by feminists who looked forward to Women’s diversity which was more essential than anything else. For example the white women believed that their experiences, interests and concerns were not looked after by the second wave of feminism partly because they represented middle class white women who were close to the common women and their experience of oppression was simply ignored. The feminists relating to color challenged the division into sexes and genders for they approved of feminism in all its diversity and multiplicity of feminist goals.

Feminism is also called ‘Aphraism’ named after Aphra Behn (1640-1689), a 17th century feminist, who was quite active in her aims and objectives. Feminism disapproves of male created ideologies regarding social equality of women because they are sexually colonized, historically neglected and biologically subordinated. Feminism also Challenges the age old belief that women are weak, whose place is in the Kitchen. It looks forward to the equality of the sexes and a role for women in society which gives them such equality. From Christine de Pisan (1364-1430) to Mary



Wollstonecraft, from Simone de Beauvoir to Jane Austen (1775-1817) and beyond, women demanded their rights in a male-dominated world. The term 'Feminism' was first used by the French dramatist Alexander Dumas (1824-1895), the Younger, in 1872 to make prominent the emerging movement for women's rights. It gradually became a world-wide cultural movement to ensure complete equality to women in order to confer on them moral, religious, social, political, educational, legal, economic and other rights. Feminist thought has a humanist bearing. To Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), feminism is the antonym of fascism. She proposes a society reflecting women's ethics that is positivistic, holistic, anti-materialistic and life-affirming. It is the basis for a new public morality for formation of a 'left-handed' world. The suppression of women's rights by men is condemned by women especially in the early years of the 20th century and therefore through feminist writing an exploration of the minds of women and their problems in a traditionally male dominated society is reflected. "The word 'Feminism'" says Herbert Marder in her *Feminism and Art: A study of Virginia Woolf* (1968), "must be understood in its broadest sense— as referring to Mrs. Woolf's intense awareness of her identity as a woman, her interest in feminine problems"(2). And her awareness has a bearing over the modern female writer's problems all over the world.

Simon de Beauvoir in "Introduction" from *The Second Sex* thinks that the relation between man and woman is always a complex one:

In actuality the relation of the two Sexes is not quite like that of two electrical poles, for man represents both the positive and the neutral, as is indicated by the common use of man to designate human beings in general; whereas woman represents only the negative, defined by limiting criteria, without reciprocity. (28)

Hence it is man who defines the human, not woman who is considered as an autonomous being and is given a relative position. Woman is defined physically and intellectually as the 'weaker' sex, in all ways subordinate to male authority. Julian Benda (1867-1956) in his *Rapport d' Uriel* (1946) writes:



The body of man makes sense in itself quite apart from that of woman, whereas the latter seems wanting in significance by itself . . . Man can think of himself without woman. And she is simply what man decrees; thus she is called 'the sex' by which is meant that she appears essentiality to the male as a sexual being. For him she is sex-absolute sex, no less. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject, he is the Absolute . . . she is the Other. (qtd. in Selden 534)

Thus one can understand the increased marginalization of women at the hands of men.

The building up of society mostly depends on the involvement of women in decision making. Women empowerment is one of the important tools in the upliftment of economic, social and political status of women in society. It helps to make them confident to claim their rights like live their life with dignity, make their own decisions, and get their voices heard and much more. Women empowerment is a means to increase the participation of women in the national development process and make the nation proud of their outstanding performances in every sphere including medical science, social service, engineering etc. Thus Women have to be empowered in all spheres of life. Gender inequality is a major barrier in the development of humanity. Inequalities between men and women, discrimination, patriarchy etc are some of the factors which lead to exploitation and suppression of women and are the main cause of the downfall of society. G. Sai Sravanthi is of the opinion:

Breaking of glass by women is possible only by means of breaking the stereotypes, preconceived notions and by promoting unbiased, indiscriminative family, society and organization, which paves a path for women development and which subsequently, leads to a country's development. (167)

In the Victorian Age the 'Woman Question' was relevant for both male and female writers and Queen Victoria's views reflect different aspects of feminism. She favored the education of women, and permitted the opening of colleges but did not approve of the concept of votes for women which she called 'mad folly'. Her comments on women and marriage are worthwhile. She



enjoyed married life until the death of Princess Albert in 1861. She knew the sacrifices involved in marriage. In 1858 she expressed her views on the occasion of the marriage of her daughter:

There is great happiness . . . in devoting oneself to another who is worthy of one's affection: still, men are very selfish and the women's devotion is always one of submission which makes our poor sex so very unenviable. This you will feel hereafter—I know; though it cannot be otherwise as God has willed it so. (qtd. in Christ and Robson 1581)

The women in Victorian era experienced boredom but in the Mid-Victorian period, one quarter of England's female population got Jobs. But they got low wages. And many women earned their living by indulging in prostitution. Many more women were employed as domestics, seamstresses, factory workers, farm laborers or prostitutes and had to face many problems. The women belonging to upper and middle class homes, experienced idleness and yet they were treasured as a symbol of status. The position of Victorian domestic women was miserable. She could neither own property nor make a will; neither keeps her own savings nor claims any of her husband's. After marriage she lost her identity and had no power over her children and no right for divorce. The transfer of work from the house to the factory increased working hours with small pay and heavy drudgery. It was men who dominated in every sphere of life while women made little contribution. Man's position was nuclear, since he was the head of the family. The women depended either on parents or husbands or their own children. This apparently made them look peaceful but they were enslaved by men. They were forced to abide age-old traditions and customs like clearing up the mess with her bare hands, after each meal eating in the same dirty plate her husband had left, getting married and bearing children, for a woman could not live by herself. George Eliot (1819-1880) in 1870 had summed up the position of women in a letter to Mrs. Lytton:

We women are always in danger of living too exclusively in the affections; and though our affections are perhaps the best gifts we have, we ought also to have our share of the more independent life— some joy in things for their own sake. It is piteous to see the helplessness of some sweet women when their affections are disappointed— because all their teaching has



been, that they can only delight in study of any kind for the sake of a personal love. They have never contemplated an independent delight in ideas as an experience which they could confess without being laughed at. Yet surely women need this sort of defense against passionate affliction even more than men. (qtd. in Thomson 66)

Although Victorian era may have seen a tremendous industrial development and may have been an age of achievement and progress; it also was a period of poverty and anxiety. Thus it improved the condition of middle and lower class people but at the same time it was a period of unemployment, poverty and the working conditions for women and children were terrible as they had to deal with highly detrimental jobs. The condition of working women was miserable on account of their low wages. They worked hard and yet earned very little. They were overworked by contractors who employed new workers in place of those who became blind or died suddenly. They had no financial support. This spoilt the good reputation of the Victorian age. Women were employed in pin making, in screw-making, in the manufacture of steel pins, in button-making, in glass-polishing, in various processes of pottery manufacture and in match-making— a very dangerous trade, as the phosphorus badly affected the health of the workers. In 1832, a cholera epidemic swept through Britain, killing thousands of people. Fever, cholera, diphtheria and tuberculosis spread at an alarming rate. Large women were also employed in the textile-mills on low wages. Women worked for fourteen to sixteen hours and got less than ten shillings a week. Sometimes they worked at night to earn some extra amount. Their working conditions were inhuman. Women went back to work within a fortnight of the birth of a baby, who was left with other small children. They had no time for cooking. The condition of women working in the coal-mines was equally miserable. They carried loads of coal on their backs, pulling loading wagons with coal. A working woman had a belt round her waist and a chain passing between her legs, she moved on hands and feet holding on to a rope. In Mrs. Gaskell's (1810-1865) novel *Mary Barton* (1848), the major characters being mill-workers complain thus:

. . . It's prince Albert as ought to be asked how he'd like his missis to be from home when he comes in, tired and worn, and wanting someone to cheer him; and may be, her to come in



by-and-bye, just as tired and down in th' mouth, and how he'd like for her never to be at home to see to th' cleaning of his house, or to keep a bright fire in his grate. Let alone his meals being all hugger-mugger and comfortless. I'd be bound, prince as he is, if his missis served him so, he'd be off to a gin-palace or summut o' that Kind. So why can't he make a law again poorfolks' wives working in factories? (140)

No sports in leisure hours were made available for girls during the Victorian age. However most of the girls liked riding as Queen Victoria herself was a good horsewoman and during her early and middle years rode in Windsor Park or at Balmoral.

A governess had security during the Victorian age. If one had many daughters, employing a governess for them was cheaper than sending them to boarding schools. The image of the Victorian governess is reflected very well in *Jane Eyre*: an intelligent, sensible and sensitive woman who became a victim of frustration due to poverty. It was a real picture of life but also women who were less intelligent also desired to become governesses though they might have become or taken up domestic posts. The novelists often wrote about the complex social position held by the governesses. The pathetic condition of governesses emotionally moved the readers. Thirty or forty guineas a year was an average salary for a governess. The character of the governess first appeared in the literature of the Victorian Age in *The Governess* (1840) by Lady Blessington (1789-1849)– a novel written by an authoress who reflected the miserable lives of governesses. It was in the elite class that the children were left in charge of nurses and governesses, whereas in the middle-class home the mother looked after all domestic duties including those relating to the education of children. The girls during their childhood were not allowed to cultivate their domestic habits in their own way. Simon de Beauvoir remarks, "I looked and it was a revelation: this world was a masculine world, my childhood had been nourished by myths forged by men and I hadn't reacted to them in at all the same way I should have done if I had been a boy" (qtd. in Moi 87).

A number of women of the Victorian age earned their living by working as prostitutes. Prostitution is also one of the main themes of Victorian Novels for example the figures of *Mary Burtons'* Aunt Esther, Nancy in *Oliver Twist*(1837), Alice Marwood in *Dombey and Son*(1848), the



fate of Martha Endelland Little Em'ly in *David Copperfield* (1850) etc. Charles Dickens (1812-1870) tried to take up the cause of prostitutes, supporting the plan made by Angela Burdett Coult (1814-1906) in 1846 for a *Home for Homeless women*. The aim was to train them into domesticated women, so that they could act as suitable wives for the colonial workers.

In the Victorian age there was a question about women's education and their freedom to earn their living. Society did not consider that women required formal education and it was the right reserved for men. As a result, it was rare to find women in skilled jobs that required higher or intermediate education. Women then were generally expected to be housekeepers or house wives and believed to be 'the angel in the house'. In the early Victorian period the women had real protection when they were married. It ensured their future existence. Marriage was a blessing but it also had its bleak side. A woman's children, her property and earnings were all in the custody of her husband by law. It was a period when women had various frustrations. Hence wives began to question authority, both at home and outside. Spinsters decided that they must use their talent to acquire education and thus get a chance to take up different professions. Women were increasing their knowledge and using their intelligence outside domestic confinement. The married woman no doubt had a prominent position in society. She was the mistress of a household and she could give orders to servants and tradesmen and could take decision for herself instead of obeying her parents. The young married woman was the owner of an established Victorian home. Florence Nightingale (1820-1910) was an exception who refused an offer of marriage and preferred to observe the conditions in hospitals. The majority of young women of Victorian age hoped to marry either a man of their own or their parent's choice. This was the fate of the girls of middle class. There must have been many young Victorian women who followed *Punch's* advice in this regard which says:

Between ourselves, my dear, almost every young woman is either married or intends to be. It is what we have to look to, poor things! Now, in order to get married, my love, you must learn to manage yourself; and after you get married, you must learn to manage your husband; and both together is what I call the whole duty of woman. (qtd. in Dunbar 19)



The working-class girl had the same status and marriage usually brought little change in her. If she married a factory-hand, she continued to work in order to add more to her husband's low wages. Hence she spent twelve to sixteen hours in a mill or other factory and thus neglected her home. She hardly knew anything about cooking or running a house, since she had been engaged in labor since childhood.

The women's Movement in the 19th century began with Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, which brought bad name to its author in her lifetime, but which helped women and raised their status in future. *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* by Mary Wollstonecraft occupies a central position in the history of feminist theory and to date it continues to be an important text for understanding feminist thought and activism. Mary Wollstonecraft opposed restrictions imposed on women's freedom for self-expression and self-development. She wrote against the exclusion of women from the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. In her book she demanded equal education for women to give them the opportunity to contribute to society. Besides the right of married woman to own property and to share the custody of the children in case of separation, she also wanted equal opportunities for women to enter professions and work side by side with their male counter parts. She wished divorce to be made less difficult for women and to make men legally responsible for their illegitimate children. Wollstonecraft insists that unless there is more equality in society, there will never be morality and it is impossible to expect virtue from women until they achieve some sort of independence from men. Mary Wollstonecraft remarks in her essay "Of the Pernicious Effects which Arise from the Unnatural Distinctions Established in Society" as follows:

Would men but generously snap our chains, and be content with rational fellowship instead of slavish obedience, they would find us more observant daughters, more affectionate sisters, more faithful Wives, more reasonable mothers—in a word, better citizens. We should then love them with true affection, because we should learn to respect ourselves; and the peace of mind of a worthy man would not be interrupted by the idle vanity of his wife, nor



the babes sent to nestle in a strange bosom, having never found a home in their mother's.
(154)

Mary Wollstonecraft argued that women should be allowed to enter the world of medicine and politics, women's interest in dressing up and looking pretty is also relevant and they must be given freedom in matters of sex relationship like men. She believed that the history of female education was a virtual conspiracy to render women weaker and less rational than men as she says in her essay "The Prevailing Opinion of a Sexual Character Discussed", ". . . women are not allowed to have sufficient strength of mind to acquire what really deserves the name of virtue" (18). Despite her sexual indiscretions, which included giving birth to an illegitimate child, Mary Wollstonecraft remained a seminal influence on feminist thinking throughout the nineteenth century.

In 1843 Marion Kirkland Reid (1817-1920) published *A Plea for Women* (1843), a book which had a large sale. It contained very valid arguments regarding the emancipation of woman as an individual and education of women was emphasized which had been ignored. The book was bitterly criticized by the public. Many questions were asked about the book. One of the newspapers questioned, of what use is education to the weaker sex? There were no job opportunities given to women. The best option for women was to teach young ladies, religion and drawing. The right to vote and representation in parliament was favored by Marion Kirkland Reid for that was needed to change the laws passed against women. She rejected men's fear of female domination and many other objections like women losing their gentleness and modesty if exposed to public life. In March 1848 Queen's College in Harley Street was opened with an inaugural lecture by F.D Maurice (1805-1872), who reflected on its aims. Maurice himself taught Theology, Charles Kingsley (1819-1875) English literature and Sterndale Bennet (1816-1875) taught music. It was the first real school for women which produced excellent students. The year 1849 was important in the history of women's education during the Victorian age for the 'Ladies' College was established in Bedford Square presently known as Bedford College. It was the first college for women in the University of London. It was founded through the efforts of Elizabeth Jesser Reid (1789-1866). She was a social reformer. She supported the anti-slavery movement and everything relating to philanthropic



character that she noticed. This college aimed at giving liberal education at a moderate rate. At least two of the champions of women's political rights were men: John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), whose famous *The Subjection of Women* (1869) was published in the sixties and William Thompson (1775-1833) who had written a book in 1825 called *Appeal of one Half of the Human Race, Women, against the Pretensions of the Other half, Men*. They believed that no progress is possible until women were given equal opportunities regarding education and equal political rights with men. They earnestly believed that women could work as doctors, managers of hospitals, workhouses, prisons and charitable institutions, and could also go into farming or business. Among women the desire for education increased to the extent that they realized that knowledge is the only way to earn one's living. In 1878, London became the first university to admit women to its degrees (excluding medicine), and by 1897 the university at Manchester also permitted women to study and get degrees in all subjects.

There were a number of magazines with emphasis on religion like *The Christian Lady's Magazine* (1839), edited by Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna, (1790-1846) one of the most enthusiastic feminists. She also wrote numerous articles urging women to seek information about national interest, and tried to move public by reflecting on the miserable state of women and children in the factories. Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna was not only a writer, who wrote about the country and its people but she was also an activist. Being patriotic she tried to enlighten English readers about a country for which she felt great affection. Eliza Cook's (1818-1889) *Journal* (1849), published in monthly installments supported every movement for social and political reform and every new inquiry into science and philosophy. It is said to have achieved a good circulation. The editorials and articles dealt with the contemporary problems which stimulated the reformers of the day regarding the state of housing, the pathetic condition of industries, children's factory labor, ragged schools, public health and hygiene. There were book reviews and accounts of foreign travel and customs, but the main object of the *Journal* was to awaken a Victorian woman and make her independent and self-reliant.



From the beginning of the Nineteenth century, novel was a good medium for the portrayal of women. Hence female writers like Mrs. Gaskell, Charlotte Bronte and George Eliot were the major authors in this regard, who, idealized women on all occasions. They did not create ordinary women confined to their homes and society but showed resentment regarding conventions that subdued them. In the placid dovecotes of Victorian Womanhood they were like eagles. Despite the fact that writing books was a respectable profession for women, yet they could not compete the male authors and therefore the three Bronte Sisters adopted masculine names in order to receive the same recognition regarding their literary works as the male authors. When the family life of the Brontes was described in Elizabeth Gaskell's acclaimed biography *The Life of Charlotte Bronte* (1857), it became known to some that the only male Bronte sibling, the beloved Branwell, must have played an important role in the lives of his sisters, and in particular in the composition of Emily's masterpiece *Wuthering Heights* (1847). The Novelists during this period dare not speak openly about the man-woman relationship. And yet female writers made a good deal of money from their work to earn a living. Miss Mitford (1787-1855) supported a feckless father for many years, Felcia Hemans (1793-1835) educated five sons on her earnings, and Francis Trollope (1779-1863) saved her family from misery by beginning to write at the age of fifty and continued to do so for a long time. There was another female writer named Catherine Frances Gore (1799-1861), who enjoyed popularity. She published her first novel in 1824, when she was in her Twenties. She wrote about seventy novels and many volumes of plays and poems. In her works she ridiculed the world of fashions and thus amused both the cynics and the middle-class readers, who had never thought of it. Gore's 1861 obituary in *The Times* concluded that Gore was the best novel writer of her class and the wittiest woman of her age. Charlotte Mary Yonge (1823-1901) was another known authoress of that age. She wrote stories for a magazine that published works based on religious themes. She died at the age of seventy six and was the author of more than 100 books. A reviewer remarked, "Miss Yonge's work can, with perfect propriety, be left open on the drawing-room table" (qtd. in Dunbar 121). The Victorian Novelists wished to please that great middle class which was the predominating force in England. David Cecil (1902-1986) expresses his views thus:



The great Victorian novels are all pictures. Sometimes they are fanciful and romantic, connected with reality only by a frail thread: more often they, too, stick close to the facts of actual existence. But these facts are never merely reproduced; they are always fired and colored by a new and electric individuality. The act of creation is always performed. A Street in London described by Dickens is very like a street in London; but it is still more like a street in Dickens. For Dickens has used the real world to create his own world, to add a country to the geography of the imagination. And so have Trollope and Thackeray and Charlotte Bronte and the rest of them. To read a paragraph of any of their books is to feel blowing into one's mental lungs unmistakably and invigoratingly a new and living air, the air of Dickensland, Thackerayland, Bronteland. For these authors possess in a supreme degree the quality of creative imagination. (20)

Dinah Maria Mulock (1826-1887) in 1857 published her well-known novel, *John Halifax, Gentleman* (1856). This work is followed by *A Woman's Thoughts about Women* (1858) and also by other feminist, novels. Her works often appear under the name Dinah Maria Craik. Her works reflect women's ability to transform their own lives, enjoy professional success, financial independence, as well as a blissful marriage. Florence Nightingale, known as 'The Lady with the Lamp' became famous for organizing a contingent of nurses to look after the sick and wounded soldiers during the Crimean War, an event that gave her an opportunity to change the condition of hospitals for the treatment of patients. Nightingale's dream came true after many years of struggle and she remained unmarried for completing her mission. Her family members opposed her ambitions for they wanted her to stay at home instead of studying mathematics with a private tutor and didn't allow her to become a nurse for nurses were generally drawn from the ranks of the poor and unskilled women. In 1852 she was so fed up with her family and social life that she thought to end her life and then she wrote *Cassandra* (1879), a 'family manuscript'. It reflects her frustration and then she entered into a professional world to achieve her ends.

Mona Caird (1854-1932) one of the famous feminist writers explored the position of women in Victorian society. She wrote several novels and many essays. *The Daughters of Danaus* (1894)



has a heroine whose desire to pursue a musical career was disliked by her family members. Caird's article *Marriage*, Which appeared in the *Westminster Review* in 1888, inspired a lot of discussion in the Journals of the 1890's. Her essays on the subject of marriage were later collected and published as *The Morality of Marriage, and Other Essays on the Status and Destiny of Woman* (1897). For her marriage was a 'vexatious failure', and the man who marries finds that his liberty has gone, and the woman exchanges one set of restrictions for another.

Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell was another Victorian woman writer. She was the author of six successful novels, over three dozen novellas and short stories – usually published in the thriving periodical press of mid-nineteenth-century Britain – and one of the most celebrated biographies of the century, *The Life of Charlotte Bronte* (1857). Her books described the world of hard labor reflecting its bitterness. She described the life lived around her. Through her books she minutely observed characters. Her first book *Mary Barton* reflected on the insecurity of mill-hands, dependent on the whims of their masters and the state of trade.

George Eliot like Browning (1812-1889) was soaked in religion and closely observed life and sought perfection. Though her female characters are intellectual giants yet are unconsciously dependent on men. The problems relating to love, marriage and education are dealt by George Eliot but the female characters are often passive. They do not properly use their potential. Her death in 1880 marked the emergence of an interesting late Victorian literary paradox. Eliot expresses no objection to marriage at an institutional level and for her marriage was to be respected in social and cultural terms as well as having value at a personal level for human beings. A line of eminent female novelists, beginning with Jane Austen and continuing with the Brontes, Mrs. Gaskell and George Eliot, was succeeded in the 1880s and 1890s by a group of no less distinguished male authors just when the feminist movement was increasing in strength and influence.

Charlotte Bronte (1816-1855) deeply influenced her contemporaries. It took George Eliot many years to establish her reputation, but Charlotte Bronte attracted her readers with her first book. She wrote to her friend, "I always through my whole life liked to penetrate to the real truth"



(qtd. in Dunbar 129). And added further that, “I like seeing the goddess in her temple and handling the veil, and daring the dread glance” (129). The hero or more often the heroine of Charlotte Bronte is domineering and is presented in her own way. Charlotte Bronte’s imagination reflects on certain aspects of man’s inner life as Charles Dickens or William Thackeray (1811-1863) presents certain aspects of their external life. Thackeray was the first English writer to make the novel a vehicle of conscious criticism of life. Charlotte made it a vehicle of personal revelation. She is subjective novelist. *Jane Eyre* (1847), *Villette* (1853), *The Professor* (1857), the best parts of *Shirley* (1849) are very moving for these are based on self-revelation. The world she creates is her own inner life. Her novels reflect vitality. Out of her own experiences, she creates a vision of life.

Like Charlotte Bronte, Emily Bronte (1818-1848) and Anne Bronte (1820-1849) had a feminist vision. In Emily Bronte’s single novel entitled *Wuthering Heights*, the female characters have the power to curb the perverted nature and tame it. They are physically and mentally alert but do not indulge in any falsehood. They are both feminine and masculine in their assertion and their firm hold on love does not allow men to humiliate them. Anne Bronte also a feminist, urges women to demand their rights and privileges. She emphasizes the need of love and marriage for women. The group of writers writing in the 1840’s knew that it was a recognizable profession for women and Charlotte and her sisters who were trapped in men’s houses made use of these experiences in their novels. Charlotte Bronte’s novels reveal her bitterness towards men. She feels that women do not enjoy a secure social position and she expresses her resentment. When Charlotte Bronte wrote to the poet laureate Robert Southey (1774-1843) to seek his advice about her decision to become a writer he warned her thus, “Literature can’t be the business of a woman’s life, and it ought not to be” (qtd. in Christ and Robson 995). Charlotte Bronte put this letter, with another one from Southey, in an envelope, with the inscription, “Southey’s advice to be kept forever. My twenty first birthday” (995).

The feminist writers of Victorian age were concerned with the atrocities women underwent. And yet male writers too were sympathetic in their attitude to women. Thackeray has special regard



for women on account of his painful experience of living with a mentally deranged wife who could not survive long. He urges women to adopt a courageous attitude towards life and condemns those who deprive themselves of enjoying privileges given to them by God. Thomas Hardy's (1840-1928) works deal with problems of marriage, gender, sex, motherhood, love, chastity and divorce which presents a very bleak picture of life. His heroines are ambitious, energetic and powerful and yet the unjust social norms do not allow them to lead a better life. Hardy tries to protect women like an adventurer in his imaginative world of fiction. Thomas Hardy is an eye witness to the history of England. He depicts the conflicts between the individuals and society and is concerned about the problems of the Victorians and the representation of women who took an active part in Victorian works as oppressed member in society. Charles Dickens presented the fallen women influenced by Victorian ideology and forced to endure exploitation and oppression in their quest for survival in an industrial society. He also wrote about the social problems of young boys of the poor and working class and the children in cities where poor people had no chance to prosper. His novels depict true picture of the Victorian society.

To conclude during the Victorian era the feminist Victorian writers females in particular and males in general tried their utmost to reflect on the social, political and economic problems of women and also aimed to re-examine the representation of women in men's text. They tried to dismantle the earlier representation of women who were regarded as submissive and docile. They concluded that the wretched condition of Victorian women was mainly due to the patriarchal society and the real progress is impossible without them for they are the backbone of society. They laid emphasis on the fact that woman has just as much right to use her imagination as men and thus paved the way for Victorian female writers to display their talents. This inspired the feminist writers of the modern age.



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Socio- Political Discourse and Existential Crisis in Manoj Mitra's *The Tale of Hekim-shaheb*

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Abstract: In the post-independent era, India has occupied a significant place in the world of globalization with rapid changes in socio- political, socio-economic and cultural field. Though we claim to advance in technology and modern education, but still there are some major issues that hinder the progress of India to the highest rank in the world like the conflict of power or powerless, casteism, gender discrimination and existential crisis. Manoj Mitra underscores all these contemporary issues in his historical play *The Tale of Hekim-saheb*. He artistically shows the conflict of two powerful Zamindars who leave no stone unturned to become more powerful and rich. Power makes them so blind that they don't give any importance to their 'taluk's' (subject) lives and are concerned only with collecting their taxes. Wali gives priority to his entertainment in majlis instead of curing the diseases of his people. This paper is an attempt to analyse the ideology of the owner class against the worker one which is evident in the play, where Dariyaganj and Palashpur's poor people lead their lives in abject poverty under the rule of their talukdar. They think of their talukdar's dominance upon them as their destined fate. In that society, most of the people suffer from existential problem and try hard to regain their lost identity among their own people. The situation of women is worse than men since they suffer due to gender discrimination. Gangomoni loses her inborn identity by the male dominant society. She is called by her husband's name. Thus, the play is a subtle portrayal of existential issues, gender discrimination and socio-political problems.

Keywords: Socio- Political, Power, Casteism, Gender discrimination, Ideology and Identity.



Contemporary Indian drama in English translation has achieved worldwide popularity for its innovative thematic concerns and technical virtuositities. In the development of Indian drama, theatre plays an important role. It also acts as a powerful tool of communication and political socialization which is totally opposite of traditional theatre that serves only to entertain and amuse people. Since the 1980s, we see a realistic trend in the field of Indian drama which no longer limits itself to merely entertainment. We witness a plethora of stalwart Indian dramatists like Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar, Mohan Rakesh, Badal Sirkar, Mahesh Dattani, Utpal Dutt, Mahasweta Devi etc. who wrote sensible dramas in English which gained international recognition. Following their lead, Manoj Mitra a prominent Bengali dramatist too made his entry in the field of Indian drama with his unique literary forte, thus, attracting a large group of theatre-going people. He emerged as a dramatist-cum- actor in the theatre occupying a prominent place and bestriding both 'the people's theatre' and 'the new theatre'. Most of his plays are historical, centred on the themes like power, violence, revolution, liberation, castism and existential crisis. In his plays, there are no straight altercations between the natives and the British, the manner in which Utpal Dutt's political plays are. He became famous for his important plays such as *The Palace of Shadows*, *Devi Sharpamasta*, *The Tale of Hekim-shaheb*, *Honey from a Broken Hive* and *Banchharam's Orchard*. Most of his plays are categorised as 'historical plays' where 'time' plays the role of the central character.

Manoj Mitra deals with the issues of socio-political discourse, power relations, resistance and repression. India got independence in 1947 from the British Government but still, there are liege and Zamindar who exploit the poor villagers by exercising their power and ideology in an undue manner. He does not portray the present contemporary issues directly but he depicts it by relating to history. Taking recourse to history, he tries to show the picture of the present owner class who govern the power circles and try their best to become more powerful and rich at the expense of oppressing lower class. Existential crisis is another problem which he presents in his play through the characters like Hekim Shaheb and Gangamoni. In *The Tale of Hekim-shaheb*, he depicts the pictures of two affluent Zamindars who are fighting to gain power. Wali belongs to Dariyagunj and



Pashupati comes from Palashpur. They are authorised to govern their respective countries but they use it as a way of only collecting taxes from the poor villagers. In Dariyagunj, Hekim stands as a symbol of humanity and hope for the poor villagers between two countries where he does not discriminate in providing his help and medicine to the needy. Dirty politics comes to light when Hekim comes to Wali with the purpose of raktagulab for making new medicine for his taluk who are suffering from unknown diseases. He replies to Hekim's question negatively as he kidnaps baiji for his glamour party where she needs raktagulab to attract others towards herself in the majlish. So he orders to provide her as many roses as she needs.

He exercises his power over the poor villagers and gives undue importance to his mirth and merriment with Baiji who comes to his country as a spy of Pashupati. He does not bother about his own taluk's poor condition and is indifferent to the fact whether they live or die but the only thing that forces him to think about their lives is his taxes. The writer, through the example of Wali, portrays the realistic picture of contemporary political leaders. Wali suggests Hakim to prepare medicine with another rose instead of raktagulab and promises to keep it a secret. His advice for Hakim reflects his selfish and mercenary attitude.

In the contemporary society, there are frequent incidents of communal violence sparked by the political leaders for the sake of their vote-bank. They do not care a fig as to how many people lose their lives in the riots. Similarly, Wali, who earns taxes from the poor villagers, does not hesitate to put their lives in danger for the sake of Baiji who will glorify his majlis. He directs Hakim to concentrate on his work and take care of seven villages of his taluk over which he has given authority to him. Now, it becomes his duty to look after them because he does not want to lose anyone of them. He again instructs Hekim to save the lives of the poor villagers, an instance showing Wali's lack of care and concern for the precious lives of his taluk and his selfish motive of losing his taxes in the wake of their death. "Wali. Son, cure them first. Concentrate on your work. I've placed the healthcare responsibilities of seven villages of my taluk in your hands. Now it's up to you to attend to the patients and see to it that we don't lose the taxes" (Mitra- 57).



In the present political era, there are a lot of incidents present in the annals of India where political leaders play their tramp card to incite the citizens. In a country where communal violence are on the rise among the people on the basis of religious extremism, no one from the sector of the political world, comes to resolve the issues; instead, they make derogatory remarks against the present government and try to become famous in view of the upcoming election. On the other hand, the ruling party hesitates to take any action to resolve the matter because if they allow the police to use their power to curb the violence, it is likely that they will lose a vast majority of vote bank. The government does not dare to take action because both the groups have given them their valuable votes to form the government. So if they begin a crackdown on them it may be possible that they will lose their support in the upcoming election. Thus, in the government's eyes, the most important thing is their love for chair and not the lives of the citizens as evident in the play through the Zamindars of Wali and Pashupati who are driven by their greed for unjust taxes imposed upon the poor people but not with the lives and needs of their taluk. Though the dramatist does not mention the contemporary politics directly but gives allusions towards it through the images of Wali and Pashupati who, in the play, are very much similar to modern contemporary leaders. He expressed in an interview to Samir Bandyopadhyay:

Galpa Hekimshaheb too was not a historical play, but had to be taken back into history, for the simple reason that I could not afford to make the statements that I sought to make about the contemporary reality, in plain, direct terms. It's a secret that I'm sharing with you. It's a candid confession I'm making (Mitra- 263).

During the conversation between Wali and Hekim, there is a Maulvi who instructs Wali to take care of his taluk which shows a note of resistance in his statement against Wali. In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault opines that men should know that power is oppression, because power does not only generate repression and censorship but also helps to develop new behaviour in the society. He was of the opinion that "where there is power, there is resistance," (Foucault-95). Similarly, in the present play, while Wali and Pashupati possess the power by ruling the poor villagers, it somehow helps to generate resistance from the part of Maulvi, Hekim and the poor



taluk. Maulvi advises Wali to keep the roads and stables clean. Wali is asked to exercise proper management to get rid of the flies and mosquitoes and provide his people at least two square meals and also supply proper drinking water. Following this line of action, he sees that half of the diseases will be cured.

On the other hand, in Palashpur, Pashupati uses his power like Wali does, but he is very tense for his taluk who suffers due to lack of medicine because he has no doctor like Hakim Saheb. In Palashpur, hundreds of people die incurring him big loss with regard to taxes. He tells his attendants about the order of English lord to the Zamindars to take care of their subjects' education and health, maintain law and order, and construct good roads which is their prime responsibility. The English lord wanted their tax anyhow which was a symbol of their power and dominance over them. Thus, Pashupati becomes violent and orders his taluk to bring him the revenue anyhow. Here, we observe the exploitation by powerful people who hold the higher rank in the society. So a note of resistance is raised once again by Hekim Saheb. In Palashpur, Hekim shows concern to serve the diseases of the poor and instructs them to build a water tank and stop paying taxes. This idea of Hekim becomes the seed that helps to germinate resistance among them. Pashupati takes it negatively and starts flogging Hekim and orders him to leave the country. He protests against him by saying that they cannot manage to pay him taxes and build a water tank as well. If he leaves them alone, they may, probably, die.

Through the characters of Wali and Pashupati, Manoj Mitra tries to represent the pathetic condition of modern India in this historical play where there are multiple villages that remain bereft of the facilities given by government. Even during the election, the leaders from all the parties assures them to fulfil all their demands like road construction, proper water supply, health facilities, security, and electricity etc. but after being elected as their representatives, they forget them and do not show their faces, let alone fulfil their promises.

The term 'ideology' has a profound bearing in socio- economic discourse especially in Marxism. The author tries to sketch the society in his play *The Tale of Hekim-shaheb* where he



underscores how upper class society exercises their ideology in the society to control the working class. If we refer to Marxism to understand the concept of ideology, it will help us to apprehend it clearly. “Human consciousness is constructed by an ideology- that is, the beliefs, values, and ways of thinking and feeling through which they explain, what they take to be reality. An ideology is, in complex ways, the product of the position and interest of a particular class. In any historical era, the dominant ideology embodies, and serves to legitimize and perpetuate, the interests of the dominant economic and social class” (Abraham-203-204).

In the play, Dariyaganj and Palashpur’s poor villagers spend their whole lives under the rule of the two haughty Zamindars who with their own repressive worldview force them to submit to dominate the working class. Nobody thinks about the cause of the diseases that spread in Dariyaganj and Palashpur. Poor people perceive themselves as workers and are controlled by the Zamindar’s superstructure. They do not think that there are no water tanks, roads, health services and the tools of dispelling flies and mosquitoes in the village. Unconsciously, they accept it as their fate decreed by God which may be referred to as “false consciousness”, a term given by Karl Marx and Engels in his work *Das Capital* (1867). They do not protest against Wali and Pashupati who increase taxes, notwithstanding their crop being wasted in the drought or the rain. Thus Wali and Pashupati become richer and the villagers become poorer. In the ongoing exploitation, the taluk forget their own interests and desires and submit themselves to the will of the two Zamindars. Antonio Gramsci observes ideology as “a kind of deception whereby the majority of people forget about or abandon their own interests and desires and accept the dominant values and beliefs as their own” (Bressler-198).

In the modern era of Indian politics, we observe that there are a lot of parties who wish to rule the citizens by imposing their own ideology. Whenever a party takes over the government from the other one, the first thing that we notice is that they make a lot of changes in the functioning of the government. So we can refer to it as the government’s own ‘ideology’ which it uses to direct the citizens of the country. Manoj Mitra indirectly describes the ideology of modern Indian politics



through Wali and Pashupati. Like Dariyaganj and Palashpur, there is a large network of villages in India where people are ruled by the government's ideology but they are not conscious about it. They spend their lives like poor taluk and unconsciously, accept their poor condition as their fate. They do not even say word against them and think it is their right to lead them and their duty to obey their commands blindly.

Amid this rat race of the ideological dominance by the Zamindars, there comes into being the concept of 'resistance theory'. Hekim comes to rescue the villagers from their pitiable situation. He spreads awareness among the people about the unknown diseases which take away their lives every year. He instructs them to construct a tank and stop paying taxes. He motivates the taluk to resist against the unjust policies of Wali. Wali questions Hekim the reason of Munna's death. He does not find sufficient proof against him and orders Hortuki to free Hakim which creates a surge of happiness among his taluk. He asks Maulvi regarding the cause of their intense happiness. He knows that his taluk become happy for the release of Hekim. The popularity of Hekim generates in him a sense of fear and doubt. Once again, he asks; "Wali. Had he not been freed, would they have abused me?" (Mitra- 83).

Anyway, he is afraid of Hekim's popularity among his Taluk. Maulvi answers to his question that they know Hekim is innocent. You cannot be able to punish him without reason. This statement hurts his ego. He becomes furious and asks them; "Wali. What? I cannot punish? When did it come to this? (Addressing Hortuki) What have you reduced my taluk to? I cannot punish my own subjects? Eh Hekim, come here, come close to me" (Mitra-83).

He starts beating Hekim with his jabs and sticks that creates commotion among the poor villagers. He cannot understand why my taluk become so furious when I punish one of my subjects. The commotion of the villagers supports Foucault's repressive theory that has been mentioned earlier in which he comments that power breeds resistance. Wali's taluk, till now, were subverted by his own ideology but Hekim enlightens their inner hearts. As a consequence, they protest against Hekim's punishment. Wali gets agitated once again when Hekim raises his hand to the motion to



remain them calm. He beats him once again because he wants them to stop shouting. He shows his power and dominance over his taluk by beating Hekim but, after all, he becomes conscious of his loss of control over them and thinks Hekim to be the reason behind it who has become so important for them. He assuages his anger by beating Hekim and tells him that despite of being his taluk, they are now seemed to be controlled by him. In the beginning, Hekim does not raise any resistance against him but he loses his control and orders him to beat him as much as he wants. He advises him that he should leave them alone since they are poor and innocent people and devoid of proper food and medicine.

“Hekim. Beat me up as much as you want to. But leave those people alone. They are poor and weak. They don’t have food... they don’t have medicine” (Mitra-84). Existential crisis is also a major problem in our society where a person is, somehow, forced to lose his/her inborn identity. Often a person leaves his/her inborn place and takes an abode at another place where he or she loses his or her former identity. Women are born with their own stable identity but with their development in the society, their identity change on each stage of their life. At the stage of her childhood, she bears her father’s surname and the society knows her by her father’s name. Similarly, when she gets married, her identity once again changes and she is known by her husband’s name. Kate Millett, in her *Sexual Politics* in 1969 begins a new wave of feminism where she mentions that “a female is born, but a woman is created” (Bressler-173). We observe a fine example of transited identity in the present play where Gangamoni feels inferior in the society as being the woman who loses her present identity which is an obvious sign of existential problem. Throughout the play, most of the time, she is called Bhondul’s wife instead of her original name. In the village, the name Bhondul signifies terror for the people. Nevertheless, villagers call Gangamoni by her husband’s name. She is given her husband’s name not for his bad deeds but in the custom of male dominant society, women suffer from their transit identity in which their inborn identity is swallowed by the former. It is not only the problem in the play but even in the modern society where globalization has spread far and wide, women are losing their identity and find their existence at stake in the patriarchal society where the male uses her to serve his own vested



interests. It is not only the problem of general women but we observe a lot of incidents where women writers in literature bore the male identity to publish their works such as George Eliot, Mrs Gaskell and Mrs Oliphant. In spite of being women, they were forced to use masculine names that shatter their inborn identity. Elaine Showalter argued; "In the Feminine phase, 1840-1880, woman writers mostly imitated the male writer's modes. This meant, further, an adoption of the patriarchal aesthetic, social values and even masculine names, (George Eliot is the best example of this)" (Nayar- 95).

Even Hekim, who himself feels identity crisis in Palashpur and is the only epitome of knowledge and erudition between Dariyanganj and Palashpur, calls her Bhondul's wife in place of Gangamoni. He does not discriminate against dispensing medicines to the people of the two countries, but does injustice towards Gangamoni by giving her husband's name. When injustice is done in the society regarding any other issue, everybody tries to protest against it but in the case of women's identity, even the good person like Hekim does not come in the favour of women. The author draws the picture of patriarchal society where they dominate the women by their own ideology. Even her own husband calls her with different identity. Bhondul comes to Hekim as a spy of Wali to persuade Hekim to come to Palashpur with him. He tells him that he has quit his corrupt life and wants to live peacefully. Hekim agrees to his proposal but instantly labels him an imposter. She protests against her husband but is cursed as a bitch by him. He also throws her to the ground which shows the prevalence of patriarchal dominance. Bhondul's curses words like 'bitch' against Gangamoni reminds the viewpoint of Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gilbert that: "submissive female- as- angel or the dangerous female- as- monster" (Nayar- 96).

"Bhondul. Let go, you bitch!" (Mitra-91). Hekim goes to Palashpur with the purpose of providing medicine to Mohor but he resides there permanently. He busies himself in curing Palashpur's poor villagers. But Pashupati beats and throws him outside of his country by accusing him and spreading rancour among people against him. Finally, he comes to his own homeland Dariyanganj where Chhayam hesitates to accept him as their country man. He also suggests him to go away from where



he came. Thus, Hekim stands in a situation where he is not able to find his original identity and feels existential problem because, on the one side, Pashupati drives him out of his country, on the other hand; his own countrymen hesitate to accept him. Chhayam remarks that Pashupati has made him a ghost. Thus, his inborn identity as Hekim has been destroyed.

“Chhayam. Pashpati has reduced you to a ghost of yourself? Why should we accept you now? Why?”(Mitra- 108). Gangamoni deconstructs the centre of power of male dominant society by killing her husband. The act of killing her husband by her supports the viewpoint of Derrida who advocates the decentralization of power. According to him, nothing is permanent or fixed in the society. As the life of human beings are in flux, so male power cannot exist eternally. Thus, at the end of the play, a stiff resistance comes from Gangamoni against the suppression and exploitation that proves that power is not fixed or static but dynamic in the society. Rebel against the power changes the situation with time that helps the oppressed women to mould their destiny, character, identity and behaviour. Here, the writer in his portrayal of the character of Gangamoni tries to deconstruct the power in search of freedom against oppression and existential crisis from the patriarchal society. The character of Gangamoni shows some similarity to Bharati Mukherjee's characters like Jasmine and Dimple because they also commit murder to get rid of the oppression from the male patriarchy and deconstruct the prevailing power in the society. However, their purpose of murder is different from her like Dimple in *Wife* (1976), kills her husband to rescue herself of mental disturbance whereas Jasmine kills the boatman to take revenge for her lost virginity. Their aim of rebelling against the power is also very similar to that of Gangamoni.

Casteism is another important issue in India which compels the people to become hostile to each other. Manoj Mitra tries to sketch it in his play. Even After seventy years of independence, modern India has not come out of its grasp which is an alarming toll for Indian democracy. Different caste groups do not show respect towards one another and their lack of cooperation shatters the unity and integrity of the country. Class differences have been practiced for vested interests while some believe that caste system is created by the divinely- ordained system.



Hindu scripture like Vedas holds the notion that human being is composed of four hierarchical sects generally designated to be Varna System. Earlier, it was based on profession that is the scholastic work of Brahmins, the military work of Kshatriya, the commercial work of Vaishya and the work of Shudra to serve all other sects but subsequently these social echelons put on the rigorous form of caste system. The Shudras were not given their due right. They were not allowed to enter the temples and educational institutions, and ultimately were tagged as untouchables (Regin Silvest and Jemi-137).

Therefore, Brahmins and the high caste Hindus consider themselves belonging to the upper class like Britishers who too were proud of being white and thought it was their duty to teach manners to the eastern people. Similarly the upper caste Hindus and Brahmins started to control the lower caste people. But the irony is that lower caste people accept the humiliation and suppression as their destined fate just like Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* where Bakha is persuaded by his father not to protest against the high caste Hindus and accept the humiliation and suppression as his destined fate.

In *The Tale of Hekim-shaheb*, Pashupati requests Hortuki to stay and asks him how he can leave his place so late without taking any food. He persuades him that he will not provide him the food prepared by the people of lower castes- his servant Jugi and Poddars. He seems to project the idea that he belongs to upper class and will not defile his own caste by serving the food prepared by the above-mentioned untouchables. The comment that comes from Pashupati clearly manifests the prevailing caste system. If we go through Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*, we observe a striking similarity with this play. Here, the cultural difference in religion forces the grandmother to acknowledge that her uncle once considered a Muslim man's shadow capable of defiling his food. So, she thinks that her uncle's staying in Muslim family is the result of her uncle's own sins.



“The cultural difference is perceived in religion as well that is represented by grandmother when she describes how the shadow of a Muslim spoils the food of her uncle. Now he resides in Muslim’s house which she thinks it as the price of her uncle’s sins”(Regin Silvest and Jemi- 68).

If we compare the two works, it clearly shows that Manoj Mitra writes it in the historical perspective. The time and setting of the play are older than that of Amitav Ghosh who has set it after the partition. However, the mentality of human beings towards caste system has not changed.

Thus, Manoj Mitra, from his keen observation in the society, has been successful in his mission to draw the picture of post-independent India’s burning issues through his famous play *The Tale of Hekim-saheb*. He indirectly, through historical context, portrays the prevailing social issues like dominance of power, plight of the oppressed class, gender discrimination, existential crisis and castism. As he never criticises on the role of contemporary Indian politics in the present play, he confirms in an interview that the main purpose of writing the play is to showcase the major concerns of the society but he cannot do it directly. From the characters of Wali and Pashupati, he attempts to draw the image of the dirty politics of India which is going on. Some opportunistic leaders become the symbol of terror for the society due to their insatiable thirst for power like Wali and Pashupati who endeavour to become more powerful. They do not care a fig for their taluk and keep themselves busy in collecting their taxes anyhow like the corrupt Indian politicians who use their dirty games to win the election. Thus, the whole citizens of the country become the victim of their narrow politics.

In the prevailing hypocrisy of power, Manoj Mitra tries to find out the antidote for the power in the socio-economic circles in the society in the character of Hekim who comes forward for the oppressed people as a ray of hope. He, unconsciously, puts a fresh breath among the deadly poor people and tries to bring them from their slavish lives making them conscious about their freedom and liberty. The writer does not give any direct solution to the prevailing social issues through his play but it is implicitly understood through the character of Hekim that there is hope for the society by reviving their freedom through eradicating the evil designs of politicians. Amid the



conflict of power and powerless, there is another major issue in the society like Castism and gender discrimination. These problems will be eradicated from the society only when people try to understand the importance of freedom for each and every individual. Wali and Pashupati never give due importance to their taluk and never try to understand their problems. Wali does not give permission to Hekim to take raktagulab to prepare medicine for the poor people. He does not care that unknown disease may also attack him. So, it is a reminder for Indian politicians, that under the shadow of corruption, no society can reach the pinnacle of progress and development.

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Paradigm Shift in Oriental Stereotype of Muslim Woman: American Orientalism, *Black Sunday* and Beyond

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Abstract: Muslim woman as an Orient has gone through a drastic change from its beginning to the present for Western scholarship. The Oriental woman was initially perceived and conceived, and portrayed in literature as highly sexualized seductive woman, enchantress, sorceress etc. But over the time stereotypes transformed from highly romanticized to exaggeratedly realistic, but the essence of this representation remained unchanged, the Orientalist. This paper aims at tracing phenomenon of transformation of Oriental representation of Muslim woman in Thomas Harris's novel *Black Sunday* published in 1975. The novel portrayed a Muslim woman for the first time as a violent terrorist. Whereas the predominant image of Oriental Muslim woman up to this particular moment was exotic. The novel changed the course of stereotyping the Muslim woman; she no longer remained a sexual object. Therefore, this paper will analyze the type of image that existed there before the *Black Sunday* and what type of change it brought in stereotype of Muslim woman.

Key words: Muslim women, Orient, sorceress, transformation, stereotype.

Introduction

Women are found in a multitude of different circumstances and their identities tempered by religious beliefs, class backgrounds, the social context in which they find themselves and personal experiences...identities do not have a fixed essence but are rather always made and remade power relations are an important part of identities... (Tina Sherwell 59-60, qtd in Moore 1).



When one goes through the representation of Muslim women in the literature one finds a huge arsenal of images flicking under the arena of Orientalism. The representation of Muslim woman ranges from the harem girl in the eighteenth century travelogues and French paintings to the dreaded terrorist in Thomas Harris's novel *Black Sunday* (1975) in the twentieth century. Oriental women in general and Muslim women in particular were identified with all that is unknown, mysterious, exotic, luring and sensational; the intrinsic element of the Oriental women from European point of view. The representation of Muslim woman has gone through a drastic change from the colonial period to the post World War II. The dominant image of Muslim woman during the colonial era was sexual and most of the literature represents her as a harem girl; both the images are highly sexual meant for male appeal. With the end of the colonialism many things either ended or transformed and it too effected the representation of the Muslim woman. This paper aims at investigating how the image of Muslim woman changed from a belly dancer and harem girl to a deadly terrorist.

The stereotype of the deadly terrorist Muslim woman emerged in America both in the novels and Hollywood. So the representation of the Muslims woman initiated, romanticized, propagated by the Europeans was handed over to Americans. In his book, *American Orientalism* (2008), Douglas Little has concentrated on the Orientalist stereotypes of Arab and Muslim, both men and women, in American popular culture. Chicago World Fair (1892) was the first instances when Muslim women were introduced in American culture through the character of a belly dancer. Organizers of the fair brought belly dancers from the Middle East and they performed before the American audience, and American womanhood was defined against the sexual symbols of belly dancer. Little takes hints from that very beginning and analyzes the imaging of Muslims in America post World War II. He concentrates on the connection between the stereotypes and natural resources available in Middle East and the American dependency on them. Little has also evaluated the increasing need of America of the petroleum that also determines the clash between the two vastly different cultures. In *American Orientalism*, from Little's point of view oil resources are a major factor behind American understanding of Islamic culture.



Movies have presented very sensational picture of the Muslim woman both in the veil and outside veil. The interesting thing to notice whether the veil is on or off the Otherness of Muslim women is stagnant. *Reel Bad Arabs* (2001), Prof. Jack Shaheen has analyzed Hollywood movies; he has laboriously watched as many as 1200 movies to write this book. The portrayals of Muslim men and women, the author says that he was stunned to discover that the image from 1890 to 1990 remain unchanged, or got worse. The author has painstakingly analyzed the roles, dialogues and the paraphernalia that has been assigned to these seemingly Muslim men, women and Arab people. Shaheen himself remarked on his investigation that ‘there seems to be a Saddam Hussain/Osama bin Ladin industry in Hollywood, the U. S. military and the news media.’

A huge body of scholarship is dominated by a “subtle and persistent Eurocentric prejudice against Arabo-Islamic peoples and their culture” argues Edward Said (18). He also explains that a long tradition of romanticized images of Asia and the Middle East in Western culture had served as an implicit justification for European and the American colonial and imperial ambitions. The cultural the dressing of the Eastern women was not seen as an independent culture by colonizer but a sign of primitiveness. To investigate the American understanding of Muslim culture in general and Muslim woman in particular colonizer’s understanding of Muslim woman is foundation.

Representation of Muslim Women

The colonial fascination with the Muslim women was either a veiled one or a semi-naked belly dancer, she was never a normal woman. Throughout the 19th century, veil functioned as a fascination for the European travelers to Middle East, instead of the fact that there were many orders of nuns who veiled. The veiled woman was painted as lifting the veil and showing her nude body. Conversely, colonial education claimed to liberate women, as a result Muslim women caught between the two cries of the East and the West, the former claims to protect her and the later claims to liberate her. But Muslim woman was never allowed to speak out for themselves. They literally explain the condition and confusion that Muslim women felt throughout the history of representation and image making. The conspicuous cultural gap, the considerable social nexus, the ill economic condition, the over burden of family and so on were indisputably a disadvantage for Muslim woman. But the stereotype she was fitted in farther marginalized her.



Rachel Bailey Jones argues that “by positioning the representation of women in other cultures within academic discourse, the Orientalist scholars created myths and stereotypes of these women that has been accepted as true and are very difficult to deconstruct” (29). These mythical stereotypes of Oriental woman suited the tradition of Othering, marginalization and created Occidental woman as distinct and superior. The Western womanhood has only been defined in comparison with Oriental woman. The image that the Oriental woman had gained through a long colonial discourse got established in intellectual circles remain a solid one. The submissive and subordinate role endowed to woman in general but Muslim woman was considered most suppressed and exploited. “The representation of Muslim women as backward, victimized, silenced and eventually invisible...undergirds the construction of other identity” (Sarkar 24).

“The media makes clear that the representation and image of Muslim women remain present and function as potent signifiers of discourse about Islam’s place in the Modern world” (Jardim xvi). The harem girl or the belly dancer image was not an isolated one but the two were studied in relation to a religion that advocates barbarism and primitiveness from the Western point of view. Americans too nurtured the same opinion that Islam sanctions the condition woman are kept in the Muslim societies rather than a strong patriarchal setup, “fascination with the tales of the *Arabian Nights* did much to disseminate these views amongst the European” (Bullock and Jafri 39). East-West relations have long been framed by constructions of Oriental despotism, encapsulated by the ‘maltreatment’ of women and Americans also believe that Muslims have problematic attitudes to women. But still Muslim woman has been largely vilified in America.

Timothy Marr’s *The Cultural Roots of American Islamicism* (2006) provides with great insights into the roots of the representations of and attitudes toward Islam and Muslims. This text extends and deepens knowledge on various topics—American Orientalism, early American history, and Islam in America. Students of American history automatically think of western European influences on the social and political structures of early America, but Marr invites us to revisit early America and explore another significant influence on those structures—cultural imaginings of Islam and Muslim cultures. These imaginings were used along with others in oppositional ways in early nation building.



Black Sunday and Beyond

The novel *Black Sunday* by Thomas Harris was published in 1975 and for the first time a Muslim woman was portrayed as a dreaded terrorist who is motivated to kill as many Americans as possible. The novel demonstrates a new image of Oriental woman who has shunned the veil and subordination, and has become an utmost manipulator and killer. Dahlia Ilyad, a Palestinian Muslim woman “her appearance had changed during her year in United States” (2), has planned to blow up the stadium during the Super Bowl in New Orleans and kill as many as eighty thousand Americans along with their President. When the novel opens we find her busy in discussing the terrorist plot with her comrades, she talks about the technical difficulties in killing eighty thousand audiences at once. Harris has portrayed her as a ruthless terrorist, barbaric and murderous who is full of hatred for Americans. The motivation of Ilyad, Harris says, is the atrocities that Israel has committed on Palestinians, and Ilyad considers Americans directly responsible for it.

She is aggressively eager to kill Americans and uses any tactic to achieve her goal. She enlists the help of Michael Lander, an American who has fought in Vietnam War, to carry out terrorist attack on stadium. The basic Orientalist traits of violent nature have been obvious in Ilyad but she is exotic too. Michael Lander has been controlled through sexual attraction. Michael after spending many years in jail remained impotent until he met Dahlia. And Dahlia says: “He says he was impotent from the time of his release in the North Vietnam until two months ago.” But from two months he is no more impotent, gained sexual potency just by meeting Dahlia such is the sexual attraction of the Orient woman. Another thing that is to be noticed that Michael was suffering from trauma before he met Dahlia and she calms his agitated mind, pacifies his need and lets him gain the confidence.

Simpson says that from “Orientalist perspective, if we examine all the Arab characters in *Black Sunday*, we find a rogue’s gallery of villains, each one representing a particular facet of the American fear of the Arab other” (Simpson 81). *Black Sunday* portrayed a deadly woman, the difference now between the Near East and say Americans, is not cultural one but the fear creates the Other now. Dahlia is a fearful terrorist who is motivated for an evil endeavour of killing American innocents. “Killing the 80,000 people in the Super Bowl in the one move, with plastic explosives



and steel riffle darts, that is good approach to an approximation of a real disaster,” Roemer McPhee argues and goes on to add that “the thriller *Black Sunday* was far ahead of its time.” The Arab in the novel has been made utmost evil, killing people in most cruel way is their only intention and they invest all their abilities in planning it and executing their plan.

Dahlia and Najeer in the novel have been described as vengeful persons probably worst than the Nazis themselves. It was far before the 9/11 that Arabs were shown as blowing planes out of the sky, holding innocent for ransom and want the destruction of America. Overall, a close probing analysis of America’s Orientalist fears exposes how the “evil” Arab of American popular fiction and film is actually an illusion that reveals more about American’s Orientalism. Prof Sut Jhally explains that “at the heart of how this new American Orientalism operates is a threatening and demonized figure of Islamic terrorist that is emphasized by journalists and Hollywood” (7). The analysis of the novels, films and news articles in post-9/11 America about the Muslims with the aim of examining how Muslims are stereotyped and depicted to the whole world public after 9/11, results in the surprising revelation that Muslims have been evil doers for Americans much before the terrorist attacks.

“Striking where it hurts Americans most” is the intention of Dahlia, she want to strike in such a way that Americans should be most hurt and their ego broken. Dahlia has been portrayed as a woman of violence. Her plans are to kill thousands of Americans along with their president. She does not care about anything but she wants to execute her plane in a successful way. The Arab characters in the novel are hardly humans and Dahlia is a devil woman. She has been deprived of any womanly quality. She is shown really to be two things; a strong headed terrorist and a sexual symbol. Harris has most degraded the Arab characters and Muslim woman mostly. Dahlia, Harris makes her to choose a soft target, tries to kill people who are there in most emotional way watching the football match. Harris is trying to make concept of terrorism a full circle by making them kill ordinary people in their most undefensive state.

Said demonstrates in *Covering Islam* (1996) how a centuries-old, academically produced image of the Islamic world has operated to foster Western colonialism. And he further shows how such negative imagery, repeated in media news, drama, and advertising, operates to justify U.S.



hegemonic claims on Arab lands. Timothy Marr asserts that “the powerful historical templates that preceded and prefigured the mass immigration of Muslims still shape in some ways the contours of how Islam is perceived and received within the United States” (Marr 7). The perception of Islam influences the representation of Islam and this scenario was further complicated by the 9/11 terrorist attacks which shocked the whole world. The stereotypes about the Muslims prevent world community from thinking that Muslims were equally saddened and shocked by these attacks.

Conclusion

Oriental women in general have been represented as an Other but Muslim woman as an Orient was embedded in more sticking image of sexuality, exoticism, violence and barbarism. Colonial stereotype of Muslim woman was either a veiled one or a semi-naked belly dancer or a full naked harem woman. Thomas Harris’s *Black Sunday* transformed this sexual stereotype of Muslims woman and converted her into a violent and barbaric terrorist. But the essence of the representation remained unchanged that is Orientalist and Othering. Harris opened up the way for a new stereotype which then gained currency in fiction as well as Hollywood and their followed a huge number of novels and films which depicted Muslim woman as terrorist whose sole motivation is to kill innocent people. This representation of Muslim woman has largely remained unquestioned by large number of audience. Eventually this stereotype seems almost natural representation of Muslim woman.

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‘Peace Force’: A Dichotomy in the Film *Madras Café*

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Abstract: This paper attempts on the film’s aspect of Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) which is sent by the Indian government in the year 1989 to Sri Lanka for building peace between the Tamil and the Sinhalese the two ethnic communities of the island and also how politics further politicizes the difference between the two races. The Military troop in the movie is named ‘Peace Force’ this is a dichotomy “peace” and “force”. How can a force bring peace? The Indian government tries to intervene, but is unsuccessful. The LTF (Liberation Tigers Front) which has an acute resemblance to the Liberation of Tamil Tigers Eelam (LTTE) in the film back fire’s the Peace Force. The LTF has an ideology through which they want a separate state for the Tamils. But Peace Force wanted them to surrender their arms which they could not accomplish.

Key words: Peace, force, LTTE, Tamil, Sinhalese and politics.

Introduction

Films are fictional, but they do have significant resemblance to the world we live in. *Madras café* (2012) is one such film which brings forth the scenario of Sri Lanka during the Civil War (1983-2009). In art we find reality which canonizes the world of art/literature. Speaking of architecture, or paintings from the past, bring forth the idea of their age. Similarly, films that we watch are somehow associated with our experiences and everyday life. Walter Benjamin’s essay



The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Representation qualifies to sustain the idea that every art is a product of its time and every work of art is inimitable and cannot be separated from the tradition. It is deeply entrenched and therefore the tradition remains alive and capricious (Benjamin 283). Since it is affected by time, the economy and politics of the period enhance the work of art. The movie *Madras Café* swathe the span of time from 1989 to 1991 which conveniently draws attention to the political scenario of the two South Asian countries; India and Sri Lanka. The instability of the government in Sri Lanka and India's attempt to uphold peace that was exceptionally problematic for India. It is the first Bollywood film based on the Sri Lankan Civil War. The movie also puts to the forefront the politics of India and also the failure of the IPKF that led to the resign of the Prime Minister. Earlier Bollywood had produced movies on state violence and terrorism, such as *Maachis* (1996), *Fiza* (2000) and *Mission Kashmir* (2000) but *Madras Café* is the only movie that went across border other than Pakistan. The ideology behind the State's dominance over one community in Sri Lanka is an aspect of power politics which is explained through the movie.

Fairholm in his book "Organizational Power Politics" discusses about the various forms of power: force, authority, manipulation, threat/promise, influence and persuasion (16). Observations made in everyday life lead to self-realization that power is present in all spheres. During Capitalization the bourgeois enjoyed the surplus of power and the proletariats were exploited. The Proletariats could not function without the Capitalists and vice-versa. The theory of Althusser on Ideology brightens the idea of power. The two states; Ideological State Apparatus and the Repressive state apparatus very well define the faces of power. Hence it concludes that power is always an important part of any society. As this paper tries to bring forth the politics, grandeur and an illustration of power in the island country Sri Lanka it also visibly detects the failure of power. India intervened during the Civil War in Sri Lanka by sending the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) which failed and carried with it the baggage of disappointment and the loss of their former Indian Prime Minister.



The twenty six years long Civil War in Sri Lanka is not the outcome of the small riots that took place during the early 80's, but it is the outcome of pre-independence fallouts between the two ethnic communities, the Sinhalese and the Tamils. It now seems as an age long war that processed and reproduced violence of its highest degree. Politics has been the most powerful weapon that created the catastrophe. 'Land and language' were the two prominent reasons for the war. "The Ceylon government followed a policy of using Sinhala and Tamil as its official languages until the passage of the Official Language Act No. 33 of 1956. This Act declared Sinhala to be the only official language" (Syed 209). The Tamils associated themselves to Sri Lanka as their homeland, though they are the descendants of South Indian Tamils, but still there are contradictions regarding their immigration. Tamil's association to Sri Lanka also has a history parallel to that of the Sinhalese, still the year long debate continues about the early settlers of the land.

Background Nature of the war:

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam was formed by Tamils to fetch a piece of land for their Tamil brothers and sisters. Vellupalli Prabhakaran (leader of the LTTE) demanded a separate state for the Tamils in the northeast part of the island nation. Jaffna region, which was the original habitat of the Tamils was perhaps the demand of Tamils as an independent State. The Jaffna region was extensively over the news because it was the base of the LTTE and also because of the last combat between the Tamil Tigers and Sri Lankan Army during the Eelam War IV in 2006 (Mehta 2) during the War.

The President of Sri Lanka Mr. J.R. Jayewardene (1977-1989 office) signed a pact with the Indian government in 1987. The Sri Lankan Army was taken back from the north and India sent its 'Indian Peace Keeping Force' (IPKF). With the coming of IPKF the first phase of the Eelam war came to rest. But before this unrest the 'Language Act of 1958' that declared Sinhala as the 'Official Language' of the country brought another flame to the forefront.



Indian Peace Keeping Force Jawans in Sri Lanka in 1990, the year they withdrew from the island nation



Image from the movie the 'Peace Force' soldiers brutally killed by the LTF

It was a flare to burn the 'land of Buddha'. Buddha the symbol of peace, in his land there was no peace only blood and remorse. It was Bandranaike's government the Sri Lankan Freedom Party (SLFP) that announced the 'Only Sinhala Act'. Another reason for war was also discrimination in education. The Tamils were favoured during the British rule and were given an English education which landed them with jobs and development. More and more Tamil populace drew towards English education. Post-independence the Sinhalese government brought an Education policy. In 1971 Standardization policy was introduced according to which government could restrict the number of Tamil entries into the universities. "Under the new policy, Tamils were required to achieve higher marks than their Sinhalese peers in order to enter certain courses" (Weiss 66). These are one of the major reasons for the catastrophe.



Mr. Rajiv Gandhi and Mr. J.R. Jayewardene signing the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord in 1987

LTTE, Sri Lankan army and the IPKF

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam was the outcome of several transformations of Tamil revolutionary groups in Universities which eventually lead to the formation of the biggest guerilla force in South Asia. It was actually an outburst against the ethnic dominance and prejudices that Sinhalese poured over the Tamils. After the 'standardization' policy was introduced into the Sri



Lankan education system the Sinhalese started to outnumber the Tamils in universities. To fight against this biasness a Tamil youth wing was formed; Tamil Manavar Peravai (Tamil Students League) by a student named Satiyaseelan. Vellupalli Prabhakaran was a member of this youth wing when he was eighteen. Later in 1976 this youth insurgent group after deformations and reformations became Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and Prabhakaran became its commander. The LTTE fought with the traditional army that is the Sri Lankan army. The Sri Lankan Army was earlier known as Ceylon Army, which was established in 1949. They fought with the LTTE for almost two decades and won the war in 2009. It was Rajapaksa's United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) that put an end to the long Civil War with the Army. Even the intervention of IPKF was unable to bring peace to the war stricken country. The IPKF was formed in 1987; it consisted of the Indian Army, Air Force and Navy. They conducted overt and covert operations against the guerilla force (LTTE). But they failed to bring normalcy in the island nation instead they lost the trust of Tamil minorities in Lanka. The result of this failure was that in 1990 IPKF was called back by the new government as the Prime Minister of India Mr. Rajeev Gandhi had resigned.

Film and its relevance to reality

The movie *Madras Café* starring John Abraham as Major Vikram, Nargis Fakhri as Jaya Sahni, Rashi Khanna as Ruby, Prakash Belawadi as Balakrishnan, Ajay Rathnam as Anna Bhaskaran and Sanjay Gurbaxani as former prime minister, directed by Shoojit Sircar is a movie about the Civil War in Sri Lanka between the Tamils and the Sinhalese. Moreover, it was a war between the government and the separatist insurgent groups like LTTE, JVP and other Tamil rebel groups. The movie offers us to know, that during the early 1990's and mid 1987 the Indian government intervened in Sri Lanka and tried to settle the uprising conflict between the two ethnic communities. The film begins with some rebels with arms shooting people in a bus, and a little girl trying to run away, is shot dead. Next Major Vikram is at Kasauli narrating about what happened four years ago, to a priest inside a church. The Indian government intervened in Sri Lanka when Anna Bhaskaran the LTF (Liberation of Tamil's Front) leader had forced a war on the island nation. But India failed, and as a result former prime minister of India resigned from office. He was later



assassinated by the LTF in Tamil Nadu. Also because, Indian PM was a threat, not only to the LTF but to the west as well (as shown in the movie) and LTF were friends to the west who helped them monetarily only to get control over the sea route. After resigning, the former prime minister's election agenda was to settle the Tamil issue in the island and the opinion polls results of the election were in his favours as well. To some extent the movie resembles to the political activities that took place during the 1980's and 1990's in India and Sri Lanka. There was an "Indian Peace Keeping Force" that intervened in Sri Lanka in order to restore the government and disarm the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) between 1987 and 1990 but failed. The 'Peace Force' in the movie resembles the IPKF, LTF resembles LTTE the assassination of former PM of India, was in reality the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi who was killed in a suicide bomb blast in Tamil Nadu on May 21st, 1991, Sriperumbudur because it was during Rajiv Gandhi's office that India signed a peace treaty with Sri Lanka. It was the LTTE that killed the PM whereas in the movie, it was the LTF. Similarly, Anna Prabhakaran the LTF chief has an obvious resemblance to Vellupalli Prabhakaran, LTTE leader.

Major Vikram goes to Sri Lanka for a covert operation in order to break the LTF in two so that they could easily take over the LTF. It was the inclined idea of power and India failed to exercise their politics in the correct manner. Even in Sri Lanka the power in the north was with LTF and the rest of the country was politically suffering because LTF had the support of the west. What can be observed in the attribute of Major Vikram is patriotic. He is ready to lay down his life for his country. He is not traumatized even when his wife Ruby is slain by Sri Lankans; he resumes to office and continues to submit himself for the assigned task. Often there is a misperception whether there is any difference between patriotism and nationalism. Whereas Druckman evidently explains the difference "Patriotism seems to lead to strong attachments and loyalty to one's own group without the corresponding hostility toward other groups while nationalism encourages an orientation involving liking for one's Own group and disliking of certain other groups" (63-64). The Sinhalese and the Tamils in Sri Lanka are nationalists. Nationalism is a distant term used and reused in several versions of patriotism that has brought about discussions in literature. From the third world countries to the developed nation all have advanced to a state where nation and nationalism is the only precedence.



A Tamil movie *Kannathil Muthamithal* (A Peck on the Cheek) (2002) directed by Mani Ratnam revolves around a family settled in Tamil Nadu, Chennai. The eldest child Amuda (P. S. Keerthana) was adopted when she was a baby. Her parents (real ones) were Sri Lankan Tamils. The story begins with Amuda's real parents getting married Dileepan (J. D. Chakravarthy) and Shyama (Nandita Das) who later join the Tiger forces. With the revelation that Amuda is adopted she demands to meet her real parents. She makes an exodus with her parents to meet the real parents. And on the excursion comes across bombing and killings. She later meets her mother and returns back to India contended. Since her mother is a Tiger she cannot keep Amuda along with her. This film is unlike *Madras Café*. It's a journey of the Sri Lankan Tamil parents' nationalistic fervour towards their Eelam (homeland) whereas also the journey of the Indian parents and their tremendous love for the Sri Lankan Tamil baby. Mani Ratnam has kept the ethnic conflict in the background, whereas foregrounded family and relationships for a Tamil refugee child. The Sinhalese doctor in Sri Lanka is also an example of solidarity and unity who helps Indira and Amuda to find her parents. This film revolves around the life of the Tigers. It also puts forward the aspect of nationalism before motherhood. Shyama gives up the baby for the Eelam. Shyama in the movie depicts a strong staunch nationalist. Whereas Vikram an army man is an obvious nationalist here, Vikram is called an obvious nationalist because army men are the protectors of the motherland and everybody believes that such people will always protect the country despite all odds. The movie leaves its reader to find out whether Shyama went back to find his husband or avenge the army or join the LTTE.

The Politics of Power

India sent a 'Peace Force' to normalize the situation in Sri Lanka and the movie exentuates the idea of sending the IPFK. To bring attention to the dramatized name of the 'force', there was no peace, instead only killing. Major Vikram on the course loses his wife and also the former Prime Minister. There were constrains and the LTTE was at some point, perhaps more efficient than the Sri Lankan Army and the IPKF. The movie revolves around the politics of power. Theorizing power will lead to Althusser's concept of Ideology which states that the Repressive State Apparatus (army, police,



government and the Ideological State Apparatus (church, institutions) holds on the power system through hegemony. “Gramsci had no wish to argue with Marx's nostrum that every state is a dictatorship. ... It may be that every state is ultimately a dictatorship, and will bare its teeth when confronted by a serious challenger, whether from the outside or from within, but it is not true that dictatorship is the sole form of political rule. There is another form, and it is “hegemony.” (Bates 351-352). In the case of Sri Lanka the Sinhalese dominated government institutionalized acts which provided proof of their hegemony. The beliefs that Sinhalese are the singular proprietor of the land and precedence must always rely with the Sinhalese was their agenda. In the film though LTF is shown as barbarian it does not mean that the government were less corporal. The missing/disappearances which the movie fails to mention is also one part of the truth about the Civil War which remains unheard. Here State (Sri Lanka) is an archetype of hegemony. In simple terms hegemony is domination of any kind and State is an institution through which it is practiced. As the Major lacked power/authority over Bala the RAW Chief of Madras base, he could not take direct action towards him. The RAW official in the film tried to negotiate with the LTTE, but it turned out to be otiose. Even the state is an ideal paradigm of political dominance because Major's power seized to exist while Bala representing ideology through the Tigers dominates him. Power politics play a dominant role to pursue hegemony over the civilians.

Significance of the LTTE in Sri Lankan politics was not much because the Tamils hardly made up to the parliament. It was in 2004 parliamentary elections that LTTE supported the Tamil National Alliance, which secured 90% of votes in the electoral district of Jaffna, in the Northern Province. The film does not support any side. It only brings the picture of the Sri Lankan Civil War and politics. Bala was trapped, and he was trapped by the Tamil insurgents through ‘honeytrap’. Bala disclosed to LTF all the relevant information about the activities and plans of the Indian government or rather about Research Analysis Wing's covert operation for which Major Vikram was sent to Sri Lanka. There were various types of political atrocities by different groups, whether it was India's force, the LTF or the Sri Lankan government. Major Vikram was kidnapped by the LTF which was political. Only because of Bala's apprehensive behaviour they let Vikram out. It was decided in advance that the arms deal, which the Indian government wanted to give to Shri



(Shri was once a partner of Prabhakaran but now he is into politics with his party TPA) will be given to LTF. Near the dock, Vikram and his men faced bullets by the LTF. But Shri was contacted by the Indian government officials for political reasons. The officials wanted Shri to stand in the elections against Anna, so that they could pin down each other.

During the war, India had a mammoth responsibility; they decided to successfully conduct the provincial elections. The circumstances and the power that the Sri Lankan government possessed now no longer happen to favour them. Instead the LTF had decided not to negotiate. Bhaskaran was a ferocious man with conviction and fortitude he was the messiah to the Tamils. Hence it was extremely difficult for either government to continue. India thought of a military solution and sent their 'peace keeping force'. But the force was called back in 1990. There were tremendous political uprisings. And Bhaskaran became a hero for Tamils and terrorists for rest of the world. Bhaskaran was a man of power. LTF no longer had any rules they just made the government realize that they were brutal, fearless and most devastating enemy they ever saw. They killed the civilians if they tried to obstruct them while carrying out their actions. Besides these attacks, suicide bomb attacks were most prominent. The subject and the State were going through a rigorous tussle which formulated the ground for power politics and vice versa. Althusser's idea of a State, is repressive. We have to adhere to the concept of the repressive apparatus in order to view subject as power but not vice-versa. "The subject is either divided inside himself or divided from others" (Althusser 777-778). In the case of the movie the subject is Major Vikram and Bala who are either divided by the situation or it is their own choice to distance themselves from others. The Tamil situation is also similar, for they are the subjects who are divided from others. If all the Sri Lankans are Subjects then they are divided inside themselves. This divide and conflicts prolonged and transformed into War. Every governance relies on the fortune of power and politics, therefore there is an existing ideology. This ideology according to Althusser has "material existence". This material existence of ideology relies on the ideological apparatus which itself relies on religion, ethical, political etc.

"The concept of human security (which was very much pushed forward by then Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy), in contrast to the traditional notion of "national security,"



proposed that if human beings are suffering in large numbers and are in desperate and catastrophic situation, we should not stop international concern only at the borders of national sovereignty” (Naidu 17). India unable to control the ongoing of the interstate war in Sri Lanka affected its own governance. The media probed into IPKF matter and later the resignation of the Indian prime minister magnified the critical political situation even in India. Like Lloyd the other leaders too must commemorate ‘human security’ before considering anything to be a national duty. In the case of Sri Lanka and what the movie shows the idea of human security depends on the nature of politics. The northeast region or the Jaffana region where the Tamils and Tigers were predominant the Repressive State Apparatus practices “while the human subject is placed in relations of production and of signification, he is equally placed in power relations which are very complex” (Althusser 778). The type of governance, we find in India and Sri Lanka is very much different from that of Europe if we consider Foucault’s views, then modern state should not be considered as an entity above individuals instead there should be a complete integration of individuals which will set forth new formats and structures (Foucault 783). The movie indulges in contemplating new structures that is taking down the LTF and forming new electives. The failure of IPKF is also the failure of the Apollo like power structure that crumbled and shattered the dreams of both India and Sri Lanka. Major Vikram held the gyre, but the politics of power resulted in loosening it.

Conclusion

Outside the celluloid, there was a full stop to all the chaos and bloodshed when Rajapaksa the Prime Minister replied to the Tigers through bullets in the latter years of the War. The defeat of the LTTE is credited to Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who was the Defense Secretary during 2009. He formulated the defeat of the LTTE. His success was questioned by Human Rights departments all over the world because of the heavy casualties. These two men (Gotbaya and Prabhakaran) took over whole of Sri Lanka into, the most devastating genocide that the world ever saw. It was a rampage and the government was in frenzy. “The conflict at successive Sri Lankan governments had tried for decades to keep shrouded in a blanket of propaganda and censorship was witnessed, in part at least, by one man who was unusually well qualified to understand the force of war” (Weiss 97). Even the role of the Sri Lankan army was commendable, but with loads of civil casualties. And



India was only able to hold the Tigers for some time, but the outcome was devastating as well. *Madras Café* shows how the 'Peace Force' was a failure and it resulted in the assassination of the former Indian prime Minister. Even after this loss 'peace' could not be restored and 'force' was perhaps not the right way to bring 'peace'. And even after his death the Civil War continued for nineteen years. The movie fails to give a proper conclusion to the 'Peace Accord' or IPKF. The reason could be political. The movie could have become more controversial (it became in some parts of India). "In Chennai (the capital of Tamil Nadu), the Naam Thamizhar (We Tamils) activist group sought a ban on the film citing its alleged negative portrayal of the LTTE. It also demonstrated outside venues screening the trailer of *Madras Café*'s Tamil version on 5 August 2013" (Fernando 15). "In Tamil Nadu, where thousands of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees continue to remain in camps, the Eelamist cause has been actively taken up for decades by key political parties, including the ruling All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) and its principal opposition, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK). Both parties have been vocal in their criticism of the Sri Lankan government and what they perceive as the marginalization of the Sri Lankan Tamil population following the defeat of the LTTE" (Fernando 16). It further dealt with the politics of the two countries and was critically acclaimed for its story, direction and acting.

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A bittersweet longing for the past: Familial metaphor in A.K. Ramanujan's poetry

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Abstract: Ramanujan's poetry places a great emphasis on family themes. He spent greater part of his life in America, but he never lost sight of his familial roots in India. The joys and perils of living in a joint family in India are fittingly described in his poems. He remembers his family members from childhood till adulthood, which includes his wife and kids too. There is a range of emotions that runs through his poetry which is sometimes sarcastic, sometimes resentful, but always longing for the old times. The present paper discusses some of his poems that contain 'family' as the central focus.

Keywords: Ramanujan, family, nostalgia, emotions.

Ramanujan is a poet of metropolitan sensibility, but his poems are collected in personal emotion. His poetry is filled with references of his family members – mother, father, grandmother, wife, sister, aunt and so on. According to Parthasarathy, "The family is, for Ramanujan, one of the central metaphors with which he thinks." Ramanujan remembers his family with a bittersweet feeling. He tends to remain detached while narrating his childhood experiences and his relations with his family members. He doesn't celebrate or romanticize family; rather he depicts it as an institution which has its flaws and imperfections. He loves his family and loathes it too. He is the witness of constant struggles, conflicts, and violence that brews in his family. Many devices such as irony, caricature and sarcasm are deployed by him to mock his family relations and lay bare their pretty struggles and unnecessary insecurities.



Ramanujan has his moments of abhorrence while recounting his family, but all these memories are tied to his familial past without any “haunting sense of loss” (K. Raghvendra Rao, “Reverse Romanticism, 64). His family poems are not alike, rather they depict his mixed feelings towards its members and the family as a whole. The complexity of his feelings makes his family a “matter of pride and denigration (Kumar 197) in the same breath. He reconstructs the family and slowly deconstructs it too. Thus in “Obituary”, the father is the patriarchal head of the family but after he dies, he becomes the source of detestation as:

he left us
a changed mother
and more than
one annual ritual

(TCP 111)

Not only does he discover in him the hereditary traits of his entire family, he also ponders over the similarity of his traits with his unborn great great grandson's. The poet draws the “lineage of his self in terms of various eccentricities he inherits from the dead and the unborn in his extended family (Kumar 71). In “Extended Family”, poet persona says that grandfather endowed him with the habit of bathing “before the village cow” and his father endowed him with the habit of slapping soap on his back while bathing.

Sometimes finding such resemblances overwhelms the poet persona as he says, “I resemble everyone/ but myself” (Self Portrait, TCP 123). The self in Ramanujan constantly beleaguers under the burden of its inescapable foregrounding the family tree (Kumar, 107). The hereditary traits are not celebrated in the construction of the self. Much of these traits are the source of physical disorders or instabilities, thus they are loathed. The genetic code of the family in no way endows him with flattering and beneficial traits. The poet persona perceives himself to be stuck in the evil sphere of the unpleasant traits that he has inherited from the members of his family. In “Saturdays”, he somehow holds his mother responsible for the pain in his fingers:



The two fingers you learned to pop
on your sixth birthday
crook and ache now,
like mother's on her sixtieth
(TCP 150)

The toothache of the poet persona reminds him of his mother just before her death:

The large tooth in my left jaw
aches; it's mother again
complaining of the large tooth
in her left jaw
the week before she died
(TCP 259)

In "Ecology", the poet persona holds contempt for the Champak trees because they give "one line of cousins/ a dower of migraines in season". Diseases like epilepsies are transferred from grandfather to the poet persona's uncle:

Epilepsies go to an uncle
to fill him with hymns and twitches
(“Drafts”, TCP 158)

The peculiarities and the diseases that he inherits “lend a distinct familial stamp on the individual self of the poet persona, even though they may be utterly undesirable” (Kumar 68).

The poet persona is indignant regarding his identity because it is always strangled by his father. He vehemently desires his own identity but some realizations leave him utterly displeased with his father:

I resemble everyone
but myself, and sometimes see



in shop windows
despite the well - known laws
of optics,
the portrait of a stranger,
date unknown,
often signed in a corner
by my father.

(“Self Portrait”, TCP 23)

In “Obituary”, the poet persona considers his father worthless individual while he talks about his demise and its aftermath. The absence of any emotion while he remembers his father explicitly depicts his long term attachment with him. The tone is bitterly ironic when he mentions that how his father, who was a Professor of Mathematics, got only “two lines” of obituary in a local newspaper, and that too, in its “inside column”, which mostly gets unnoticed (“Obituary”, TCP 111-112).

Contrary to the valuable property and legacy that fathers normally bequeath to their children, the poet persona’s father:

left dust
on a table of papers,
left debts and daughters,
a bedwetting grandson
named by the toss of coin after him

(“Obituary”, TCP 111-112)

The “sardonic sarcasm” (Shinde 109) is evident in the portrayal of the father in the above lines. Such portrayal of the father is also shown in the way his funeral is described:

Being the burning type
he burned properly



at the cremation

(“Obituary”)

The use of phrase “burning type” suggests the anger stuffed inside the poet persona’s mind, which doesn’t let him utter even a few words of praise or eulogize him a little at his father’s demise. His resentment towards his father increases because his death affected the dearest person to him (poet persona) – his mother:

And he left us
a changed mother
and more than
one annual ritual

(“Obituary”, TCP 111-112)

The poet persona’s relationship with his wife is of disharmony and discord. He doesn’t believe in the sacred institution of marriage according to the Hindu belief. One of the reasons of his emotional estrangement from his wife is the differences in their cultural background. The poet persona feels that both of them have negligible knowledge about each other’s past and culture, and it directly hinders any trace of emotional ties between them:

Really what keeps us apart
at the end of years
is unshared childhood

(“Love poem for a wife 1”, TCP 65)

The poet persona and his wife try to familiarize themselves with each other’s childhood through family anecdotes, but he still feels the essential strangeness lingering in between them. to him, the passionate and affable relationship between his wife and her brother seems to stem out of the common childhood they have shared. He feels that he is a mere “blank cut out” in her life. The poet persona “is so thoroughly disgusted with the hypocrisy of adult marriage (Kumar 81) that he wouldn’t disapprove to “continue the incests/ of childhood into marriage” (TCP 67). Thus, he



suggests and approves the obsolete Egyptian practice of marriage without any hesitation. His hatred for adult marriage and its forced nature takes him to the extent of even approving the ancient Hindu practice of child marriage:

Betroth us before birth,
forestalling separate horoscopes
and mother's first periods,
and wed us in the oral cradle
and carry marriage back into
the namelessness of childhoods

(TCP 67)

Such retrogressive ideas coming out of a well educated man as Ramanujan explicitly present his disbelief in the practice of forced adult marriage. One of the reasons Ramanujan considers wife as an outsider is his genealogical construct. In the poem "Extended Family", right from "grandfather" to unborn "great great-grand-son", everyone endows a particular legacy to the formation of the poet persona, "the conspicuously missing link space is wife" (Kumar 81).

The cultural dissimilarities and the "unshared childhood" constantly remind him of the distance between him and his wife. Similar to the Love poems 1 and 2, "Love poem for a Wife and her Trees" is also about "the exploration of the differences between the couple" (King, Three Indian Poets 111). He again mentions the pain of unshared childhood when he compares his wife to an exotic plant which "inhibits my space/ but migrates/to Panamas of another/childhood" (TCP 182).

The relationship that Ramanujan shares with his mother is one of warmth. It defies the view that he is emotionally barren, as it seems while analyzing his relationship with other family members. The poet persona seems to have developed a strong attachment to his mother due to the pull of the umbilical cord. "The cord is a kind of hanger that engenders in him a sense of belongingness and attachment right from the embryonic stage onwards" (Kumar 74):



A fetus in an acrobat's womb,
ignorant yet of barbed wire
and dotted lines
hanger - on in terror of the fall
while the mother - world turns somersaults
whirling on the single bar

(“Alien”, TCP 149)

The poet persona depicts a moving image of his mother in “Of Mothers, among other things” (TCP 61), where she has lost all the radiance of her youth due to her deep indulgence in the domestic life. This lends a genuine flavor of Indianness in the depiction of mother-who is an epitome of patience and sacrifice. She never complains of any uneasiness while taking care of her family:

her hands are a wet eagle's
two black pink - crinkled feet,
one talon crippled in a garden-
trap set for a mouse. Her sarees
do not cling: they hang, loose
feather of a onetime wing.

(“Of Mother, among other things”, TCP 61)

Her devotion to domesticity and running the dull household chores has left her no time to pamper herself. As a result she has grown so weak and thin that her “sarees/do not cling: the hang” (TCP 61). Ghosh says that Ramanujan presents the ‘archetypal image of mother as a symbol of patience, endurance and self sacrifice.’

Despite having a strong emotional attachment and a deep reverence for his mother, the poet persona doesn't idolize her as flawless and unerring. She is depicted as a normal human being who is prone to making mistakes, and believes in superstitions. In “Ecology”, he rages over the presence of Champak trees in her home whose “yellow pollen” give his mother “her first blinding



migraine/of the season” (TCP 124). Though the tree causes immense suffering to the mother every year, she doesn’t let it cut down due to her religious beliefs. To a person of metropolitan sensibility like Ramanujan, his mother’s innocent adherence to traditional customs and rituals seems absurd. Thus he playfully ridicules her when she asks him to take “oil bath/ every Tuesday” (“Farewell”, TCP 77) while bidding him farewell.

There are no exclusive poems for a sister but she is mentioned in few of them. From what one analyzes, the relationship of the poet persona with his sister reeks of incest. There is no such feeling of brotherly warmth and the innocent love towards her. In “Snakes”, he looks at his sister’s braid and says:

Sister ties her braids
with a knot of tassel.
But the weave of her knee - long braid has scales
their gleaming held by a score of clean new pins
I look till I see her again

(TCP 5)

“The braids remind the persona of glossy snakes that crowd his unconscious as archetypal images of deadly sensuality and surreptitiously sexual motives. In women centric folk tales, snakes are often lovers or husbands” (Kumar 86). This reminds us of the favourable attitude of the poet persona towards the Egyptian practice of marriage inside the family and also the retrogressive Hindu practice of child marriage in “Love Poem for a Wife 1”.

In “Looking for a Cousin on a Swing”, the relationship between the poet persona and his female cousin is again incestuous:



When she was four or five
she sat on a village swing
and her cousin, six or seven,
sat himself against her;
with every lunge of the swing
she felt him
in the lunging pits
of her feeling

(TCP 19)

The poet persona shares a warm relationship with his grandmother whom he fondly calls “granny”. Like the universal relationship between a grandmother and grandson where the grandmother is the reservoir of ancient tales and interesting stories, the poet persona shares the same bond with his “granny”. His grandmother is so adept at narrating stories of princes and princesses, that he urges her to tell him the story of ‘The Sleeping Beauty’, once again.

Granny,
tell me again in the dark
about the wandering prince,
and his steed, with a neem leaf mark
upon his brow, will prance
again to splash his noonday image
in the sleep of these pools

(TCP 17)

The way Ramanujan reminisces about his grandmother depicts “a prominent streak of sentimentalism in his otherwise detached sensibility” (Ghosh 80). While we see such sentimental



feelings of Ramanujan towards his grandmother, they are negated by his cold attitude towards an incident of violence against her:

Said my granny, rolling her elephant leg
like a log in a ruined mill;
'One two three four five
five princes in a forest
each one different like the fingers on a hand,
and we always looked to find on her pan
just one finger left of five: a real thumb,
no longer usual, casual or opposable after her husband's
knifing temper one Sunday morning half a century ago
(“The Opposable Thumb”, TCP 6)

The unemotional and off handed tone while remembering his grandmother's huge loss indicates that how lightly he weighs his relationships with his close ones. Not once does he shudder at the thought of his grandmother bearing an unbearable pain, as normal grandsons would do.

The poet persona is afraid of being a father, because being a parent means fulfilling a lot of responsibilities and bearing continuous burdens. Therefore he thinks that he should not give birth to children, because this world is a continuous struggle to survive:

Poverty is not easy to bear
the body is not easy to wear
so beware, I say to my children
unborn, lest they choose to be born.
(“Excerpts from a Father's Wisdom”, TCP 42)



The poet persona tends to over think when he fears that his daughter will inherit jaundice in the form of legacy that their ancestors have bequeathed to them. This fear comes out of his own experiences wherein he has inherited some to most unwanted and minutest details from his ancestors. Thus he fears that his father sitting “with the sunflower at the windows/deep in the yellow of a revolving chair” and “daffodils that flaps all morning in grandma’s hands” (TCP 14) will eventually lead his “unborn” daughter to have “yellows in the whites of her eyes”.

Being the father of a grownup daughter also scares him because of the perpetual concern for her safety in an unsafe environment. The violence and unspeakable crimes against girls make the poet persona shudder at the thought of his daughter being out of the home alone:

Sudden knives and urchin laughter
in the redlight alley
add now
the men in line
behind my daughter

(“Entries for a Catalogue of Fears”, TCP 86)

The poet persona’s attitude towards his aunts is full of disgust and aversion. This seems due to an incident that he witnessed in childhood where he saw the aunts robbing their mother of the precious jewels and gold immediately after her death:

her two
daughter, one dark and fair,
unknown each to the other
alternatively picked their mother’s body clean
before it was cold
or the eyes were shut



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of diamond ear rings,
bangles, anklets, the pin
in her hair,
the toe rings from her wedding
the previous century,
all except the gold
in her teeth

(“History”, TCP 108)

The extent to which the aunts got to fulfill their avarice is utterly shameful. The poet persona thus despises the immoral and unprincipled act which also leads him to believe that families are not perfect.

The above poems reflect the unbearable stamp of family on Ramanujan’s psyche. He remembers his family with utter nostalgia though he is not proud of every familial anecdote. The reminiscences of his past life find adequate expression in his family poems.

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. Glimmer of hope in Willa Cather's My Antonia

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Abstract: Willa Cather is one of the prominent Western woman writers. She was born on December 7th 1873, where her family had farmed the land for generations. My Antonia is the fourth novel written by Willa Cather. In this novel she captures poignantly the life of Czech immigrants most notably the title character Antonia Shimerda who in real life was a close friend of Cather. Much of Cather's writing dealt with variations on themes of transplantation, adaptation and survival of how men and women would tackle these challenges. It was the study of the Europeans, Scandinavians, Germans and Bohemians who had emigrated to farm at Nebraska. After living in Pittsburgh and New York for seventeen years, Willa Cather discovered Nebraska as a prime subject for fiction and her memories of her youth there, came flooding back. It is the story of immigrants who tamed the wild land, the protagonist being Antonia Shimerda, a strong-willed and capable woman. The novel depicts Antonia as a strong pioneering woman who overcame hardships by establishing a place for herself and her family. After going through a period of barrenness, restlessness and frustration she emerged out of it and achieved fruitfulness, contentment and a sense of peace. She resisted the violence and destruction associated with her brothers' masculine approach to establish order. She insisted on awaiting the fruition of the land. She was always able to control her emotions and proceed with the business of every day life. When she suffered through disappointments and losses, her character always remained constant and predictable. The novel began in autumn, the season of memory and of death and of rebirth. Antonia became symbolic of the cyclic nature of life. Though a battered woman, she turned her crisis into triumph with her indefatigable spirit. But she had her weakness, the greatest of which was her strength too.



Keywords: Cather, pioneering, tame, immigrants, crisis.

Antonia is the protagonist of Cather who survived crisis in her life. The story of **My Antonia** is based on Anna Pavelka whom Cather knew as a child. Much of Cather's writings dealt with variations on themes of transplantation, adaptation and survival of how men and women would tackle these challenges. It was the study of the Europeans, Scandinavians, Germans and Bohemians who had emigrated to farm at Nebraska. **My Antonia** shows fertility of both soil and human beings. Cather's characters go West to find and accept a role in the social order and to attempt to achieve one's fullest human potentiality.

The novel spans thirty one years. It opened in the fall of 1885 when Jim Burden was ten years old. He came from Virginia to Nebraska and met Antonia Shimerda who was fourteen and had emigrated with her family from Bohemia. The book closed with their reunion in the fall of 1916 when Antonia was established in Nebraska as the mother of a large family. Jim Burden the narrator arrived at his grand parents' farm in Nebraska, on the death of his parents. The Shimerdas from Bohemia also arrived at the same time to settle in the neighbouring farm. They could not speak English to ask for advice or even make their pressing wants known. They had four children. Their nineteen year old son Ambrosch, though hard working, was insensitive and cunning. Their next son was mentally retarded. The third child Antonia with her brown hair and golden brown eyes had a personality rich enough to make up for all the deficiencies in other members of the family. Antonia had a younger sister Yulka whose role was negligible.

The settlers initially had the feeling of spacelessness. The lands had empty darkness, mystery and monotony. They felt so lost and strange as they had moved to an entirely different universe. Infact they felt homeless. The Shimerdas bought land from Krajick and tried to make a home which was nothing but a cave like dugout in the side of a hill. Infact they had overpaid. They were exploited in every way and they did not know how to get rid of Krajick who was the first evil thing they had come across in the wild land.



Mrs.Shimerda had no talent. She was not a good house maker. Her house was in chaos. She did nothing to boost the morale of her gentle mild mannered husband, who felt home sick for his native Bohemia. Mr.Shimerda felt happy on visiting the Burdens where everything was regulated in a civilized manner. The friendship between the two families developed. The Burdens gave the Shimerdas neighbourly advice every now and then. Grandfather's hired men were the cowboy Otto and the field hand Jake. One day, trouble developed between the two families over the badly used piece of farming equipment the Shimerdas had borrowed. Jake , the field hand of the Burdens knocked down Ambrosch and it was due to grand father's intervention that the feud between the two families was finally resolved.

Antonia's artistic father who had been a skilled violinist took his own life unable to adjust himself to the harsh realities of the new land. Like John Bergson in **O'Pioneers** he was a man who had imagination enough to be pioneer but not the strength . Except his death every single important event in his life had been determined for him by others. He did not want to come to America but came because of his ambitious wife. He was not a man of action. He felt totally lost in the frontier. Unable to use force against the external world, he finally raised his hand against himself.Mr.Shimerda lay dead in the barn for four days and the pioneers had to chop his body loose from the pool of frozen blood. As the priest refused to conduct the service for a person who committed suicide, the Burden grandfather had to say the prayers and give a decent burial for Mr.Shimerda.Mr.Shimerda had always hoped to see his daughter Antonia get a good American education but after his death, her life changed completely .She had to become a farm hand and work along with her brothers . Dissatisfied with life in the farm , she rebelled against her brothers and mother. Much against their wishes she came to town to work as the Harling's hired girl. There she again met Jim Burden who had migrated much before her. Antonia had the best time of her life with Jim and the five Harling children, when the older people were away. Antonia became popular with her employers that they allowed her to continue her education along with the other children . In a way, her father's dream for her came partly true.But the idyllic happiness could not last long. Into her garden of Eden came the serpent in the form of a young man. This young man who escorted



Antonia home from the dance tried to kiss her. When she protested, he used strong armed tactics but she slapped him. On hearing this, Mr.Harling issued an ultimatum that either she has to stay away from Saturday dances or else find a new place. Antonia's free spirit rebelled against such unjust treatment. Her revolt against the Harlings was only one extension of the rebellion, she had begun against her own family. It was the rebellion in favour of the good thing of life. Her years of drudgery on a remote farm with an unpleasant mother and brother for company had begotten in her this fierce desire to enjoy the sweetness of life.

Most of the immigrant girls were young and physically attractive and hence they took part in the revelry with great nerve and vigour. Antonia, Lena Lingard, Tiny Soderball and other Bohemian, Norwegian and Swedish immigrant girls who worked as servants in the houses of the so called "better-families" though they were snubbed by the town girls, used to visit Mrs Gardner's hotel on Saturdays without fail. These girls were deprived of school and were forced to do menial jobs, sending their wages to help their families back in the farm. Yet,they threw themselves whole heartedly into the town dances and into any pleasure and excitement their world could afford.

Lena is another young girl like Antonia who migrated to the city. She was one of the Swedish farm girls whose aim was to become a dressmaker. At Lincoln, Jim Ordinsky and old Colonel Raleigh were in love with Lena. Lena made no demands on her lovers except to be loving. When they had to leave she sent them away without regrets. Jim and the brothers of the town girls, respectable young men flirted with the hired girls and walked in the fields with them after dark. But when the time came for marriage, they married within their own class. Tiny Soderball made a fortune in the Klondike gold rush and eventually settled in San Francisco but she never married nor had a family. She had numerous exciting adventures in the Klondike but the thrill of them had gone. She admitted frankly that nothing interested her than making money .Lena also did well financially and lived near Tiny in San Francisco. Though she had not married either, she was considered a success by the people of Black Hawk because she profited at dress making. Though both of them



achieved material success in the world, neither of them were really fulfilled or made happy by it. Both remained solitary and rootless till the end.

While the other immigrant girls went after material success, the rebellious Antonia went through varied experiences including desertion and faced many crises in her life. Bent upon enjoying life, Antonia often used to visit the dancing pavilion set up by the Italian, Mr Vanni near by. On hearing the music, Antonia would hurry with her work at the Harlings dropping and breaking the dishes in her excitement. If she did not have time to change her dress she merely flung off her apron and went out of the kitchen door. Due to her behaviour, She had to leave the Harlings and move in to the household of Wick Cutter. The dances did not stop, when the Vanni's dismantled the tent and moved away. The same people who attended it flocked to the Fireman's hall on Saturday. Jim also tried to attend it crawling from his grand father's window on Saturday nights.

Jim went for a picnic by the river side with Antonia, Lena and two other immigrant girls. They spent an idyllic day celebrating the joy of country living and boasted of the things they were going to get for their families. They sat under a little oak and talked of their childhood memories. Antonia also in a reminiscent mood talked about her father's youthful adventure, his sexual exploits, his artistic impulses and his death.

While Jim and Lena were drawn closer to each other Antonia fell in love with a railroad conductor Larry and she went off to Denver to marry him. As he had lost his job he could not marry her. Antonia found herself deserted and pregnant when he ran away to Mexico. So Antonia was forced by the circumstance to go back to her brother's farm. She was not cowed down easily by her predicament. In spite of her unwed status, she was determined to give birth to the baby and bring it up on her own. Her resistance showed itself in her determination to work in the farm and start her life anew. Jim was going home from Harvard in the summer vacation learnt of Antonia's fate and the birth of her baby, from Mrs. Steavens who rents the Burden's old farm. He went to see her and found her in the fields. She looked thinner and worn out. She felt that she would have been



miserable in the city. The Nebraska fields where she and Jim had run about as children were now the means of her salvation.

Now she had rooted herself in the American soil. This process had been hastened by her misfortune. At last in Antonia, new world and old world, nature and nurture had met. Antonia made two attempts at marriage and the founding of a family. The first was unsuccessful but the second succeeded. Antonia had married Cuzak a Bohemian and had a large family. She had settled down in domesticity with a brood of healthy boys. She was no longer an eager girl but a sober woman buffeted by misfortunes. But the same spirit glowed in her. Though her life had been half wrecked, she had put it back together. In most ways hers was an American family, though they spoke Czech within the family. It is clear that love bound them together and they were very happy in one another's affection, though there was slight suggestion of tension between Cuzak, the city bred man and Antonia the country girl. To Cuzak, Antonia was a woman with a warm heart who made life good for him.

The human fertility of the Cuzak homestead matched with the fertility of the soil. The years of back breaking labour spent on tending the crops had at last yielded the rich fruit. Every tree had to be watered by hand after a hard day's labour in the fields. The result was a yearly apple crop that far surpassed than any of the neighbours. At the centre of all those fertility was the symbol of civilization. Antonia triumphed over the adversity of nature. She had wrestled with life and imposed an order to it by converting a part of it into a fruitful farm with the garden as its centre. The critic Randell comments as :

The mortal who struggles with the adverse powers of nature and conquers them becomes the type of all successful human endeavor and passes over into the realm of myth. She lent herself to immemorial human attitude which we recognize by instinct as universal and truth. (Randell 143).



The novel began and ended in autumn, the season of memory and of death and of rebirth. Antonia became symbolic of the cyclic nature of life. She retained the 'fire of life' and 'inner glow' (M.A. 336) that assured renewal of life. Though a battered woman she turned her crisis into triumph with her indefatigable spirit. But she had her weakness, the greatness of which was her strength too. She was too emotional. When she liked doing a thing she had no control over herself. She loved to go to the dances. Since they interfered with her work her mistress tried to persuade her to give up. But adamantly she refused to comply with her wishes. Later because of her warm emotions she was deceived and abandoned by her lover. Saddled with an illegitimate daughter she worked steadily in the farm facing criticism. Any other girl under similar circumstances would have hidden the child. Antonia however loved the child too much for that. She had the child's picture enlarged and hung on the wall with the gilded frame. Antonia vowed to protect her daughter from the masculine forces. She retained her youthful vigour, love for life and land although hardships aged her quickly. Antonia was an outstanding representative of American pioneer women.

Antonia was involved in an intense project of self development she was shaped by the positive as well as the negative pull of the family, her Bohemian tradition and the community of Black Hawk. Antonia shaped a new American dream that did not rely on material success yet, celebrated the wealth of opportunity in America for each individual to achieve personal goals. Despite the difficulties she faced, she apparently had found what was needed for the fulfillment. We see in Antonia similar traits – fiery imagination, the will never to say 'die', steely determination, resilience, dedication to soil and involvement with people. Critic Harvey put these qualities in a nutshell "Cather in these early novels move past such 'despair and disillusion' by focussing on heroines who creatively shape and courageously realize their own unique dreams" (Harvey 60).

While Cather pictures the female protagonist as a strong figure, the male character Jim, though he is the narrator of the story is sketched vaguely. He becomes shadowy and falls into insignificance by the side of the heroic Antonia. She had found a way to possess the past by living it, although this did not impose limitations. whereas Jim could claim the past only marginally. He could make nothing out of his present also. Hence his future appeared to be bleak. Antonia and



Jim's different perspectives of the past, made their lives what it is today - a success or a failure. The novel reveals the common usage of the past as a romance and refuge from the present. Critic Bloom aptly puts it : Much as we would like to ignore the past for they bring painful confrontations, we must see what they would show us about ourselves-how we betray our past when we forget it disquieting realities, how we begin to redeem it when we remember (Bloom 97). Though Jim figures prominently in Antonia's life like the conventional, hero, he did not fall in love with her or marry her. A young man who feels that a young woman is the most important thing in his life would be expected to fall in love with her. Jim was curious of Antonia, interested in her, charmed by her but he did not fall in love with her. In the later years when he visited her at the farm, he feels that he ought to have married her. Only now he realized that he had been unconsciously in love with her from his younger days. Jim had keenly watched Antonia's every move. Though absent every now and then he kept in touch with her. He always gleaned information from others about Antonia, as he was genuinely interested in her welfare. But at that time he was romantically inclined towards Lena. He had never realized that his affection for Antonia has gone too deep into his heart. His realization had come too late. So all that he could do now is to admire her from at a distance and wish her happiness whole heartedly. But it is a sad fact that Jim who was fascinated by Antonia as only a man could be, had to remain a detached observer and appreciate rather than take part in her life.

Thus the novel was of the immigrant woman who struggled to establish farm and a new way of life on the plains. The novel focussed on the strong pioneering woman who overcame hardship by establishing a place for herself and her family Through Antonia, Cather celebrates the pioneering values: determination, love for the land, human rather than materialistic concern. Antonia faced crisis brought on by circumstances and her own temperament and behaviour. She underwent tension and conflict After going through a period of barrenness, restlessness and frustration she emerged out of it and achieved fruitfulness, contentment and a sense of peace. She shared an optimistic spirit and saw a glimmer of hope through the dark tunnel of her life. With a perseverance and a sense of purpose she went after it and brought brightness into her life.



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. Deconstructing and Going Further: Tagore's "The Home-Coming"

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Abstract: Deconstruction is an excellent reading strategy. But recently critics and theorists have felt that it is lacking in certain aspects because of which it turns out to be greater in theory than in practice. As a result, the deconstructionist does offer several tentative ways of reading a text in an impressive manner but is being charged with leaving some part of literary appreciation unattended. This paper therefore uses Deconstruction to read Tagore's short story, "The Home-Coming" and it shows how easy it is to misunderstand its basic ideas and premises. The paper then goes beyond Deconstruction to read Tagore's story. It makes use of the views of some recent critics such as Richard Eldridge, Bernard Harrison and Paul Ricoeur before it touches upon theories such as Intertextuality and the Anxiety of Influence. The net result is that the reader is taken beyond Deconstruction, into the arenas of the pressures under which authors write fiction.

Key Words: Rabindranath Tagore, "The Home Coming", Deconstruction, Intertextuality, The Anxiety of Influence, Paul Ricoeur, Richard Eldridge, Bernard Harrison.

Deconstruction is a great reading strategy and it offers what was quite unknown to the reading of texts earlier. But as some contemporary critics and theorists have noted, it has also affected the appreciation of literature. As a result, there are those such as Richard Eldridge, Bernard Harrison and Paul Ricoeur and others who have tried to go beyond what deconstruction offers. Paul Ricoeur is one of those critic-philosophers because of whose efforts literature will continue to have renewed meaning because his work has an underlying unity that stresses ethics. What is remarkable about him is his respect for rather than a slavish adherence to Deconstruction and other Poststructuralist theories. He is even critical of Derrida because for Derrida "all metaphor is dead metaphor, and since all language is essentially metaphorical, all language is 'dead'" for Derrida



(Simms 128). For Ricoeur, literature has “life” very much at its centre, just as was the case with earlier traditional critics such as Matthew Arnold and F. R. Leavis. Deconstruction is a tool that can go on renewing textual meaning and helping in taking out more and more peels of connotation from the same text, which is good, but that kind of reading also has its problems. Peeling apples endlessly without using them as food can be frustrating. The paths of these recent critic-philosophers and Deconstruction therefore seem to have some common ground but they part ways after a point. They suggest that textual and discourse analysis must go hand in hand. Paul Ricoeur sought in academic discourse what he hoped for in society – co-operation; a bridging the gap between certain theories and disciplines. This paper tries to do that by going beyond Deconstruction while making use of its strategies to analyse a short story written by Tagore.

Deconstruction can turn out to be a very rewarding way of reading a text because it can continue taking the reader to the points, or processes, where a text is getting constructed. It can lead the mind to the absences in a text and the contradiction(s) contained within it which can undo the very basic premises of the text and therefore, ironically, reveal the very reasons that drew an author to construct it. Authors, in moments of creation, are many different things at the same time. For instance, they are obsessed with an idea or ideas, they are thinking of how readers would respond and what objections they would have to the ideas contained in the text, besides they are gripped by whether they are ending up writing too much like some earlier author(s) and would therefore be considered derivative. Then, they can write with a self-consciousness of their nationality, culture, colonial or post-colonial status, and the like. They can be conscious of the representation(s) they project in the text they produce.

Deconstructionist strategies can help in seeing which of these psychological pressures or forces are at work while the text is being created and lie in a hidden form within it. But in order to study a literary story one needs to take into account certain theories of narrative, of culture, of existence and of ethics. Rabindranath Tagore’s short story, “The Home-Coming”, seems to work well with a deconstructionist reading supplemented with other non-formalistic considerations. This



paper attempts to put together Deconstruction, on the one hand, and other ways of looking at texts, on the other, in reading “The Home-Coming”. Though a SHORT story indeed, it contains several traits that make it an apt text for the kind of approach advocated by Richard Eldridge in *Literature, Life and Modernity* (2008) as well as Bernard Harrison in *What Is Fiction For? Literary Humanism Restored* (2014).

This paper is divided into two parts. The first is a deconstruction of the story and the second a reconstruction with the help of other theoretical approaches. In order to deconstruct this story, the first significant thing is to go beyond the enjoyment of the story; the delight it provides. The story is very gripping indeed and the way Tagore handles the changing mindsets and attitudes of his child-hero, Phatik, are so moving and imposing that one is initially lost just in that. In that frame of mind it is difficult, or nearly impossible, to deconstruct the story. Hence Step (1) would mean recovering from the force of Tagore’s fiction and then trying to map the method and mind behind the show, or art of the story. What are the various tricks involved in the art that make the story so gripping? Hence to begin with it, it is necessary to remember that first and foremost, Deconstruction is a reading strategy that slows down the reading process. This slowing down happens in the successive readings after the first; readings in which one notes the absences, the contradictions, the binary opposites that are perceivable in the text, the “play” as well as the “center” in and of the text respectively, the devices like metaphors used and the role they are made to play in the text. What the deconstructionist needs to do is to pay attention to the fact that certain inputs have been made in the text, consciously or unconsciously, to grip the reader. The content could have been sacrificed, or kept in a state of postponement, at points, for the formal or artistic effects. To consider merely what the text seems to say could be a disaster, when the content is necessitating the form. Thus what might be done is to provide an alternate way of looking at the story, one which has no permanent status but has resulted from stopping to read the lines slower, noting the various images/ideas/words/devices along with their opposites or binary oppositions to see which way the text moves.



Tagore, like some other literary authors, seems to be a structuralist without knowing it. What he has done in “The Home-Coming” is to put some signifieds in a way that they emerge in the form of binary opposites in the basic design of the story. These opposites are not just words but can be images, ideas, tropes or other literary devices. If the story is to have a meaning, that meaning is of a highly temporary nature because it arises out of an inlaying of these oppositions into the text and remains no longer than the moment in which these oppositions co-exist in the mind. The structure of the story is designed by these oppositions. Derrida has stated clearly that the stronger binary violently pulls the weaker towards itself and the weaker is merged with and lost in it. The process of the generation of the meaning is perhaps for that reason always fluid as there is a tug-of-war continuously on between the binary opposites. The binary opposites begin with the title of the story itself. The story may be called “The Home-Coming” but in fact there is no home-coming in the story. The idea of home-coming is much more powerful than the idea of not coming home. Therefore the former settles into the mind in spite of the fact that the text contains an absence of home-coming. If at all there is home-coming, it will take place much after Phatik has recovered and if his mother permits him to return with her, allowing him to ruin his schooling at Calcutta in the process. The last few lines of the story merely hint at a possible home-going for Phatik, which can by no means be considered a definite happening in the story. There is a contradiction here: the reader if he reads quickly in the grip of an emotional empathy for Phatik gets a first impression that Phatik will return home with his mother when the text actually does not state whether he does any such thing. Phatik is merely in a state of delirium and imagines that he has escaped his cruel aunt and reached home during the holidays. Here are the last lines of the story, in which Phatik’s uncle, Bishamber, has taken the boy’s mother to visit her ailing son in the hospital:

Bishamber tried to calm her agitation, but she flung herself on the bed, and cried:

“Phatik, my darling, my darling.”

Phatik stopped his restless movements for a moment. His hands ceased beating up and down. He said: “Eh?”

The mother cried again: “Phatik, my darling, my darling.”



Phatik very slowly turned his head and, without seeing anybody, said: “Mother, the holidays have come.” (31)

It must be noted that nowhere in the text is it mentioned that Phatik will return home before the holidays begin. The boy’s aunt does suggest to her husband that he should be sent home but he is never actually sent. This is what the aunt says: “What a heap of trouble this boy has given us! Hadn’t you better send him home?” (30) Phatik has tried to escape home but he is dragged back by the police and not allowed to leave Calcutta. Hence the title of the story is a signifier that does not match with what has happened in the end. It is, however, a title that leads to a misunderstanding regarding the story.

In deconstructing “The Home-Coming” it is first necessary to point out the contradictions within its text and then see the other meaning that arises temporarily from the contradictions. After taking note of the contradiction in the title itself it is necessary to proceed to the other contradictions. The major contradiction of this story lies in the characters as projected initially by the text. The characters of the brothers, Phatik and Makhan, begin in a way that prepares the reader’s mind to misread what they are finally made out to be.

Phatik is introduced, in the very first sentence of the story, as a “ringleader”, capable of having his way with the other boys in the village. In suggesting that the boy is capable of leading his gang in pushing away the log from where it lies, and thus annoying its owner, the text is making a claim which it is hardly able to live up to. The claim falls flat in a moment when the younger brother, Makhan, decides to sit on the log and ruin the elder brother’s plans to have fun at the cost of the log’s owner. Yet Phatik is introduced as a “ringleader” (24), with “regal dignity” (24). What is absent from this description of the boy is that he is actually absolutely by himself and wretched, with no one but his miseries as companions. The word-centric interpretation involves a “play” that needs to be taken into consideration. Only a few sentences later, Phatik is shown as one whose “courage failed him at the crisis.” Within a few days after the opening of the story, Phatik cannot dream of being a leader or a regal figure in any sense of the terms. He is to become its binary opposite. Deconstructing the text makes it possible to wipe out descriptions of the boy with which



we encounter him in the beginning and bring in different oppositional measures of perceiving him. Then again, there is an attempt to raise the status of the protagonist; there is mention of Phatik's "fertile brain" (24). "His fertile brain, however, rapidly seized upon a new manoeuvre which would discomfit his brother and afford his followers an added amusement" (24). He then gave a "command" to roll the log on. This is in keeping with the earlier ideas of leadership and regal behavior. Thus the text constantly constructs Phatik's image and then deconstructs it with a contradictory image. The "fertile brain" that we hear about is later belied by the discovery that he is a student who cannot cope with his studies in Calcutta. His image as a commander is soon challenged with its opposite. Phatik is said to be a little frightened even while the other boys are delighted:

All the other boys shouted themselves hoarse with delight. But Phatik was a little frightened. He knew what was coming. . . . He [Makhan] rushed at Phatik and scratched his face and beat him and kicked him . . . (49)

This sends a weakened Phatik to the river bank to sit alone and perhaps ponder on his real strength. But just when the reader begins to see the ringleader as a follower rather than leader, we are once again brought back to the leader, the bully and the aggressiveness in Phatik:

When Phatik entered the house, his mother saw him and called out angrily:

"So you have been hitting Makhan again?"

Phatik answered indignantly: "No, I haven't! Who told you that I had?"

His mother shouted: "Don't tell lies! You have."

Phatik said sullenly: "I tell you, I haven't. You ask Makhan!" But Makhan thought it best to stick to his previous statement. He said: 'Yes, mother, Phatik did hit me.'

Phatik's patience was already exhausted. He could not bear this injustice. He rushed at Makhan, and rained on him a shower of blows: 'Take that,' he cried, 'and that, and that, for telling lies.' (25-26)



His mother took Makhan's side in a moment, and pulled Phatik away, returning his blows with equal vigour. When Phatik pushed her aside, she shouted out: 'What! You little villain! Would you hit your own mother?' (26)

An awareness of the tenets of Deconstruction makes the reader better grasp the reversal in Phatik's behaviour. If he is to be seen as a leader in the opening of the story, that image of him must revert to its binary opposite. Once that reversion has taken place, it must quickly change to its opposite again, bringing him back to the original position of the stronger of the two brothers. After these quick reversals the reader learns (thanks to Deconstruction) that there is no stability in a final image of Phatik's being. He is one thing in one moment and quite its opposite in the next. In the next three lines, once again Phatik's image is changed to that of a "sheepish" boy. At one moment one aspect of his being is more pronounced and that pulls the weaker out of existence till the weaker becomes stronger and emerges visibly. This kind of a response to the story decenters the stable pillars of meaning on which the story seems to stand.

Almost along with Phatik, we are introduced to his younger brother, Makhan, who is the antagonist, or even the villain, of the piece. For no rhyme or reason Makhan acts in opposition to the protagonist trying to be a killjoy for him and his friends. However, to understand Makhan, with the help of the significations provided by the initial part of the text, is futile. Just as happened in the case of Phatik, Makhan too does not emerge to be what he seems in the beginning. The contradictory kind of images through which we later get to know him makes him somewhat different. If Phatik is described initially as dynamic or seemingly so, Makhan is shown as one who seems to be a boy of few words and more action. He does rather than say much. Here is how he is presented quite like his brother who is one moment in command and in the next a victim:

But just as the fun was about to begin, Makhan, Phatik's younger brother, sauntered up and sat down on the log in front of them all without a word. . . . He appeared like a young philosopher meditating on the futility of games. . . . He [Phatik] gave the command to role the log and Makhan over together. Makhan heard the order and made it a point to stick on. .



. . At the word “go” the log went; and with it went Makhan’s philosophy, glory and all. . . .
And sure enough, Makhan rose from Mother Earth blind as Fate and screaming like the
Furies. He rushed at Phatik and scratched his face and beat him and kicked him, and then
went crying home. (24-25)

What the narrative in this story is substantially doing is to present us with one side of the children’s character while keeping the other absent and then coming up with the other weaker part of their beings, contradicting the previous versions of what was presented but hardly able to defeat the first impressions. The initial impressions are more powerful and therefore stick to the mind a little more solidly than what follows. The traces are there, as if apparently absent but actually always already present in the characters of the brothers. Then there is a similarity between the brothers which is cleverly kept hidden by Tagore, again as an absence in the narrative. Both of them are no saints; they are mischievous. Each wants to give some kind of displeasure to the other and finds some kind of fun in the other’s annoyance. Even as they appear to be dissimilar, the brothers are in fact quite similar. Though the text is silent on the issue of genetic transmission of human traits, a slower reading and understanding of the text could suggest that the two brothers are ultimately like their mother; she shares with her sons in not being quite fair in what she does. She has not been just to Phatik. She alleges that Phatik is a liar, when Makhan complains against him, without trying to investigate the matter at all. She even beats up Phatik:

When Phatik entered the house, his mother saw him and called out angrily: ‘So you have been hitting Makhan again?’

Phatik answered indignantly: ‘No, I haven’t! Who told you that I had?’

His mother shouted: ‘Don’t tell lies! You have.’ . . .

Phatik’s patience was already exhausted. He could not bear this injustice. He rushed at Makhan, and rained on him a shower of blows: ‘Take that,’ he cried, ‘and that, and that, for telling lies.’



His mother took Makhan's side in a moment, and pulled Phatik away, returning his blows with equal vigour. . . . she shouted out: 'What! you little villain! Would you hit your own mother?' (25-26)

After deconstructing "The Home-Coming" one has done textual analysis of a certain nature with regard to this text. But what this article strives to do is to go beyond textual analysis, into the realms of the text's discourse and intertextuality. The combination of the textual and the discursive is what sane minds like Paul Ricoeur and other significant critics have voted for. The rest of the article will deal with the discourse contained in this short story. Going beyond the strategized readings is necessary because otherwise we will remain within the maze of the language employed by Tagore. It is necessary to do this because, as Harrison has suggested, Derrida simply demonstrated that:

. . . language trumps intention, so that a speaker cannot by putting his signature to a text, establish any right to rule out as inadmissible, as inconsonant with his intentions, all but a chosen subset of readings, since in the end how we understand what we read depends not on private intentions of the writer, but on the potentialities inherent in the public language in which he has chosen to write. (511)

It therefore becomes necessary to go beyond the play in the language of Tagore's story into other considerations which can be vital in coming to terms with significant ways of reading the story. Perhaps going towards some psychological factors would be worthwhile. Taking the help of Harold Bloom's theory of the anxieties authors suffer seems to be necessary for this story's analysis. It is more than probable that Tagore was anxious about not writing too much like Rudyard Kipling when he wrote "The Home-Coming". Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (as mentioned in Mehta 199) and others have suggested that when writing *Gora* (1908), Tagore was thinking of *Kim* (1901) and this paper suggests that Tagore's writing of other narrative texts like "The Home-Coming" could have the ghosts of some of Kipling's other writings. Kipling's *Jungle Book* (1894) is the story of a child brought up by animals in the purer, de-socialized world of the forest. Tagore's "The



Home-Coming” could be seen as a reversal of Kipling, as a story about a boy sent from a village or natural setting to the urban town of Calcutta where he cannot thrive in the socially advanced but unnatural situation. If Deconstruction reveals certain contradictions in the text along with certain absences, it is possible to go beyond and see how the author was writing in a frame of mind that made him write the story with a particular colonial master in the background and thus give birth to a child-hero like Phatik who like Kipling’s Mowgli would develop more healthfully in his rural and natural setting, where he has been trying to implement the laws of the jungle, using brute force to get what he desires and collapsing when he is forced into the urban world and the schooling of Calcutta. In this, Phatik is portrayed almost like an animal that would not be able to take the burden of living in a big city. Merely deconstructing the text would impoverish the text’s appreciation.

In addition to the above, it would be appreciating the text more completely if we considered Representation as a criterion that is present in the text. Homi K. Bhabha has suggested that in authors of the Third World, inequities in the modes of representation play a large part. A village boy such as Phatik can well be a victim of a hybrid feeling living in Calcutta, even though he is still in his own country. The third space (which involves what Bhabha calls “hybridity”) of the life in the village has been possibly vital in Tagore’s writing this story. Bhabha’s views of “third space” are to be found in an interview (Huddart 126). Besides, Richard Eldridge, whose work could help in reading this text, better believes:

Modernity is understood through the duality Kant investigated in his third Critique, between concepts of nature and concepts of freedom—between an outward natural world of law (the sensible) and a world of human values and ideals (the intelligible). For Eldridge this duality establishes a tension which brings about anxiety, crisis, and a sense of hopelessness. (Searle 1244)

For Tagore to have thought independently, as one who loved the villages of Bengal as much he did the urban settings, is quite natural to present Phatik almost as a symbol of nature. He was one of the few Indians of his time who understood the soul of rural India even as he appreciated the



richness of Western civilization. Phatik could well be Tagore's idea of the soul of rural India that needed to be protected from the encroaching West and from urbanization.

Deconstruction is undoubtedly a great aid in reading a text like Tagore's "The Home-Coming" because it helps us to see that the language of the story cannot be taken at its face value. But there are other weighty reasons for taking into consideration other contemporary modes of reading in order not to miss the discursive aspects of the master author's text as well as its intertextuality. This paper without denying the relevance of Deconstruction as a contemporary reading strategy pleads for the relevance of some other theoretical modes that should not be abandoned in the reading of great texts.

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A comparative reading of Jules Verne's *The Begum's Fortune* (1879) and Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain's *Sultana's Dream* (1905)

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Abstract: This paper is a comparative study of Jules Verne's *The Begum's Fortune* (1879) and Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain's *Sultana's Dream* (1905) from the points of view of utopia, gender, modern warfare, racial conflict, and ecocriticism. I have chosen these two novels to make a comparison between their approaches which are often similar. While the former novel incorporates both a utopia and a dystopia, the latter novel portrays a feminist utopia. Both the novels when read together strike chords which are relevant to our postmodern world.

Key Words: Utopia, gender, modern warfare, racial conflict, and ecocriticism.

I have taken Jules Verne's *The Begum's Fortune* (1879) and Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain's *Sultana's Dream* (1905) as my area of discussion in this paper. I want to discuss and compare the portrayal of utopia, gender, modern warfare, racial conflict, ecocritical elements in the two novels which are separated by country and language.

Jules Verne's *The Begum's Fortune* (1879)

Jules Verne's *The Begum's Fortune* (1879) shows how the wealth of an Indian begum who was the widow of an Indian prince is handed down to a French and a German heir. The wealth is so much that they can even plan to build cities contending with each other and harbouring destructive modern weapons.

Jules Verne (1828-1905) is a French novelist mainly known for his novels like *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (1864), *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1870), and *Around the*



World in Eighty Days (1873). His novels are extremely popular among all ages and have been translated into many languages. He is also known as the father of science fiction as his novels contain scientific experiments, mathematical knowledge and futuristic elements. In connection with the intermingling of science and literature in the nineteenth century, Timothy Unwin states “The novelist and the scientist now join forces in a common quest. It is small wonder that so many of Verne’s heroes are engineers and scientists endowed with the imagination and talent of creative artists. Often, indeed, they take over from the novelist or narrator himself and ‘retell’ the story of progress, underlining that new symbiosis of art and technology” (Unwin 13).

Few events from his life helped to shape his imagination. The ‘Encyclopædia of World Biography’ notes that at the age of eleven he wanted to escape on a ship as a cabin boy but was caught at the right time by his father who made him promise that he will travel only in his imagination. (Encyclopædia of World Biography) Arthur B. Evans situates Verne’s love of literature – “Verne’s father, intending that Jules follow in his footsteps as an attorney, sent him to Paris to study law. But the young Verne fell in love with literature, especially theatre” (Evans). Though he completed his course in law he chose the literary profession over his father’s sprawling law business. Timothy Unwin notes the common link between the novelist and the futurist – “But as any committed reader of Verne knows, there is often an uncritical blurring of the boundaries between the actual texts of the *Voyages extraordinaires* and Jules Verne the iconic figure who in the modern cultural consciousness, has come to symbolise travel, technology, invention and ‘the future’ (Unwin 2).

At that time he met a geographer Jacques Arago who toured the globe extensively in spite of being blind. The exchange of ideas between these two men led to Verne’s passion in travel writing. Unwin notes that – “Although there are obvious gaps in Jules Verne’s charting of the oceans and continents, there is a credible attempt at systematic geographical coverage. As the geographical kaleidoscope turns, story after story is situated in a different region until a substantial part of the globe is accounted for. Geography, rather than history or even science, was in fact the discipline



that seems to have most interested Verne, the one that underpins his quest for total coverage” (Unwin 27). Verne also researched in science and recent discoveries. But towards the end of his life he became a little pessimistic and his novels also reflect this change.

Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain's *Sultana's Dream* (1905)

Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain's *Sultana's Dream* (1905) is cast in the dream mode where Sultana views everything in her dream. Rokeya (1880-1932) finds an ideal town where there is no sorrow and only happiness for women. Women have overcome gender oppression and derision and deliverance from any kind of crime for which only men are held responsible. It is a feminist utopia where women do all the work and they have eliminated all their problems for a better life. Barnita Bagchi notes how the author was personally involved in women's issues – “In 1916, Rokeya founded the Bengal branch of the Anjuman-i-Khawatin-i-Islam, under whose aegis Muslim women would take up a whole range of activities geared towards social welfare. Prominent among these were the setting of vocational training centres for women from financially deprived backgrounds, providing aid for widows in distress, helping young girls from underprivileged backgrounds to settle down by getting them married off and persuading educated women to teach in slums and train their residents for different kinds of income-generating work” (Hossain x). She is an Indian writer and activist of the early twenty first century and her writings contain feminist overtones. She is a Bengali writer but she wrote *Sultana's Dream* in English.

Utopia

Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516 in Latin and later translated into English) is a socio-political satire. It gives a picture of a fictional island society with its own version of social, political and religious organisations. There are commonly two interpretations of the term utopia. The first one is that it has been taken from Greek ‘-ou’ meaning ‘not’ and ‘topos’ meaning place. Therefore the first interpretation is that it means ‘no place’ or ‘nowhere’. The second interpretation is that it is derived from ‘-eu’ meaning ‘good’ and ‘topos’ meaning ‘place’. Thus it may also imply ‘good place’. The



concept of a good place can be compared to ecocriticism as Cheryl Glotfelty defines – “What then is ecocriticism? 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-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies” (Gerrard 3).

In Book 1 which is named ‘Dialogue of Counsel’ More meets a traveller who is more of a counsellor named Raphael Hythlodæus who expresses his opinion regarding the current political system in Europe which he thinks is not favourable to maintaining peace. He counsels that the kings in Europe quarrel among themselves and war among themselves which leads to lot of expenditure. He also comments that the physical punishment meted to robbers are so severe that it might induce them to murder the people they have robbed to eliminate witnesses. He thinks that some modifications should be made in political outlook to eliminate the wars and be humane towards the criminals. Above all the king should be more of a philosopher. Raphael’s voyages reflect Amerigo Vespucci’s real adventures around the world (More).

He describes in Book 2 about the position and location of Utopia and how it consists of cities ruled by elected prince. There are also provisions for the impeachment of the prince if he is found to be a tyrant or a traitor. They also have a solution for overpopulation or underpopulation. People from the mainland can visit them and stay if the population is low but they will have to leave if the area is overpopulated. This problem is a major topic of the twentieth century and Raphael offers solution for the same (More).

There is an even distribution of employment among the people. All the people inclusive of any gender is given training in every kind of art – whether masonry, education, weaving, cooking etcetera. People proficient in studies are chosen from their childhood days and engaged in studies while the others are allowed to study in their spare time. There is no concept of private property in utopia but the common property is stored in a warehouse from where people are to take only what



they need. Both the gender has to equally work and their work time is only six hours as all work together. Another thing of mention is that there is no fine dressmaker as everyone wears simple clothes. People do not live in the same house but rotate the houses amongst themselves. Each household has to take turn in feeding the entire community. Even though the food is equal for everyone, the children and the old are given the best food (More).

The concept of slavery is very much present in this society. Every household has two slaves who are actually the prisoners bound with heavy gold chains and use golden chamber pots. This is arranged to make them develop distaste for this metal which people also cannot steal because of their easy visibility. The gold chains are common property of the land which is used for foreign trade and for the welfare of the land (More).

The welfare state has free hospitals, permits divorce and euthanasia, priests do not have to practise celibacy, pre-marital consummation is punished by lifelong celibacy and adultery is punished by slavery (More).

The land practises religious tolerance. Various types of religions exist in the commonwealth ranging from moon-worship, sun-worship, planet-worship, ancestor worship and even atheists. But the atheists are under suspicion and gradually they are made over into the religious fold through convincing them. More shows that slowly Christianity is being accepted into the utopian society. Female priests are the widows. A mild satire is directed at Catholic religion and More hints at other reforms (More).

Regarding gender equality the utopian society is comparatively liberal than the contemporary times. Here both the husband and wife are subjected to each other but every month the wife has to confess her sin to her husband. Even though the land emphasizes on equal work, the wives are primarily put to maintain the household. The professions which are most despised here are gambling, art of makeup, hunting and astrology. The people do not like any kind of war as they



hate to shed blood. But they maintain an army and render help to other country in their need (More).

The utopian society has a high standard of morality as wine-houses and taverns or any kind of private gatherings are completely prohibited (More).

Utopic elements in *The Begum's Fortune* (1879)

In this novel Verne portrays the ills of development and progress.

French physician, Dr. Sarrasin and German scientist Prof. Schultze are the two inheritors of fortune belonging to the begum of the title. The begum Gokool had derived her fortune from her previous husband who was a prince (Rajah Luckmissur) in India and after she becomes a widow, she remarries a French soldier Jean Jacques Langevol in 1819 (Verne 10). The French husband's heirs are these two main characters who are complete opposite to each other.

The French physician, Dr. Sarrasin is very gentle and of benevolent nature. He is described as follows – “He was a man of fifty, or thereabouts; his features were refined; clear lively eyes shone through his steel spectacles, and the expression of his countenance, although grave, was genial. He was one of those people, looking at whom one says at the first glance, ‘There is an honest man!’” (Verne 1) He suddenly succeeds to the title of ‘Rajah Bryah Jowahir Mothooranath’ (Verne 27).

He dedicates his wealth to the progress of science and humanity – “I consider myself simply as a steward, entrusted with this wealth for the use and benefit of science ...This treasure belongs, not to me but to humanity to progress!” (Verne 37-38) He points out to the assembly of fellow scientists that “...among the many causes of the sickness, misery and death which surround us, is one to which I think it reasonable to attach great importance ; and that is the deplorable sanitary conditions under which the greater part of mankind exists” (Verne 39). He is concerned about the insanitary condition of Europe and plans to construct a utopian city eliminating this problem. He



proposes to call it Frankville instead of Sarrasina as suggested by others. He presents his plan – "Why should we not, by uniting the powers of our minds, produce the plan of a model city, based upon strictly scientific principles? Why should we not afterwards devote our capital to the erection of such a city, and then present it to the world as a practical illustration of what all cities ought to be?" (Verne 40) He suggests that "...this city of health and happiness we will call universal attention by descriptions, translated into all the languages of the earth; we will invite visitors from every nation; we will offer it as a home and refuge for honest families forced to emigrate from over-populated countries" (Verne 40). Marcel or Max later comments "The happy city Frankville was prospering, its beneficent institutions favouring each and all, and giving a new horizon of hope to a disheartened people" (Verne 103-104). The French town is built by the migrant Chinese soldiers who are not allowed inside the city once it is built. The chief features of the utopian town are as follows –

1. There is an environment friendly plan for each house built with its chimney directed outside the city to emit the smoke.
2. "Each house to stand alone in a plot of ground planted with trees, grass, and flowers, and to be inhabited by a single family." (Verne 148)
3. "The plan of the rooms is left to individual taste. But two dangerous elements of illness, regular nests of miasma and laboratories of poison, are to be strictly excluded carpets and painted papers." (Verne 149)
4. "Each bedroom is distinct from the dressing-room. It cannot be too much recommended that the former apartment, where a third of a man's life is passed, should be the largest, the most airy, and at the same time the most simple." (Verne 150) Quilts, curtains or draperies should be washable.
5. "Public gardens are numerous, and ornamented with fine copies of the masterpieces of sculpture, until the artists of Frankville shall have produced original pieces worthy to replace them." (Verne 151) This is an ecocritical concern.
6. "Every industry and trade is free." (Verne 151)



7. “Anyone wishing to have the right of living in Frankville must give good references, be fit to follow a useful or liberal profession in industry, science, or the arts, and must engage to keep the laws of the town. An idle life would not be tolerated there.” (Verne 151)
8. “There are already a large number of public edifices. The most important are the Cathedral, chapels, museums, libraries, schools, and gymnasiums, fitted up with the luxury and hygienic skill worthy of a great city.” (Verne 151)
9. “It is needless to say that from the age of four years all children are obliged to follow physical and intellectual exercises, calculated to develop the brain and muscles. They are also accustomed to such strict cleanliness, that they consider a spot on their simple clothes quite a disgrace.... Individual and collective cleanliness is the great idea of the founders of Frankville.” (Verne 152)
10. “Hospitals are few in number, for the system of house nursing is general, and they are reserved for homeless strangers and exceptional cases. The idea of making the hospital larger than any other building, and of putting seven or eight hundred patients under one roof, so as to make a centre of infection, would not enter the head of the founders of this model city.” (Verne 153)
11. “Another ingenious institution is that of a body of experienced nurses, specially trained for the purpose, and always at the disposal of the public. These women, being carefully chosen, are most valuable and devoted aids to the doctors.” (Verne 153)
12. “There being no taxes, the political independence of this isolated little territory, its novelty, and the pleasant climate, all contributed to induce emigration.” (Verne 155)
13. “...all the deaths actually registered were due to specific and hereditary affections. Accidental illnesses have been at once infinitely rarer, and less dangerous, than in any other great centre. As to epidemics, properly so called, nothing has been seen or heard of them.” (Verne 155)

The German scientist Prof. Schultze is reminiscent of Hitler (refer to his autobiography *Mein Kampf*) who is completely malevolent as suggested from his features – “Professor Schultz had



a large mouth, garnished with a double row of formidable teeth which would never drop their prey”(Verne 44). He plans destruction of other races (especially French) through his dystopian city – “...works in which it was proved that the German race was to absorb all others it was quite clear that he was particularly designed by the great creative and destructive force of nature to annihilate the pigmies who were struggling against it”(Verne 60). He wants “...destruction of all nations who refused to blend themselves with the German people and be united with the Vaterland.”(Verne 60) He receives the wealth through his French grandmother but he has an innate hatred towards the French race. He believes that the French race will be inevitably overpowered by the German race. He is writing a paper titled "Why do all French people suffer, to one degree or another, from hereditary degeneration?" which he is going to published in the German journal ‘Physiological Annals’ although his main area is chemistry. He plans to build his own utopian city which will produce destructive weapons in order to destroy the other utopia –“He casts guns of all shapes and of all calibres, smooth and rifled bores, for Russia, Turkey, Roumania, Japan, for Italy and for China, but particularly for Germany”(Verne 65-66). Through modern warfare he wants to initiate a racial conflict.

The French city is more populated than the German one but is more environment friendly while the German city is less populated but more polluted with no concern for the environment. Overpopulation as a cause for apocalypse is voiced by Greg Gerrard who notes – “This is because each generation of humans can beget a still larger next generation, whereas increases in agricultural production by cultivation of new ground can be achieved only incrementally: a contrast between a geometric, or exponential progression, and an arithmetic one” (Gerrard 94). The German city or steel city mines steel which is used to produce deadlier weapons. There is a detailed description of the steel city or Stahlstadt which is built in concentric circles – “Dreary roads, black with cinders and coke, wind round the sides of the mountains. Heaps of variegated scoria, which the scanty herbage fails to cover, glance and glare like the eyes of a basilisk. Here and there yawns the shaft of a deserted mine, a dark gulf, the mouth grown over with briers. The air is heavy with smoke, and hangs like a pall over the ground. Not a bird nor an insect is to be found, and a butterfly has not



been seen within the memory of man”(Verne 64). Death predominates here where a thirteen year boy named Carl Bauer dies due to carbonic acid gas poisoning inside the mine. His death inspires Schultz to make a missile emitting carbonic gas which will cause immediate death of a whole city reminiscent of modern weapons. At the core or middle of the city is Prof. Schultze’s chamber where he punishes or promotes the labourers according to his wish.

The antagonist of Prof. Schultze is a young man from Alsace named Marcel Bruckmann (takes pseudonym Johann Schwartz). His family name is German but at heart he is French. His German dialect wins the favour of Prof. Schultze who makes him his confidant and reveals his plan of destroying the French town. Marcel describes how the professor overlooks everything – “He knew that the centre of the spider's web, figurative of Stahlstadt, was the Bull Tower, a kind of cyclopean structure, overlooking all the neighbouring buildings”(Verne 102). Inside that tower the German scientist was working to destroy the other civilizations – “The general opinion was that Professor Schultz was working at the completion of a terrible engine of war of unprecedented power, and destined to assure universal dominion to Germany” (Verne 103). Marcel now could manipulate the Herr – “The truth was that Max had, at the first glance, see through the character of his formidable patron, and perceiving that blind and insatiable vanity was its leading feature, he regulated his conduct by humouring the egotism which he despised” (Verne 109). The patron divulges his secret. He justifies his mission like a Machiavellian prince – “Right Good Evil are purely relative, and quite conventional words. Nothing is positive but the grand laws of nature. The law of competition has the same claim as that of gravitation” (Verne 124). But the professor will not allow him to live with this secret – “You will die; but suffering will be spared you. You will not wake up some morning” (Verne 126-127). Marcel escapes and saves others.

Utopic elements in *Sultana’s Dream* (1905)

Like Jules Verne, Rokeya Hossain dreams of a utopia but which is feminist. The utopic elements in this novel are projected through Sultana’s dream. Sultana views the Ladyland (which is completely favourable to women) in a dream and she begins – “One evening I was lounging in an



easy chair in my bedroom and thinking lazily of the condition of Indian womanhood”(Hossain 3). She thinks that it is night but actually it turns out to be day (Hossain 3) She is surprised when she cannot understand the language of the people and is tensed when she hears that she is shy and timid like men. She confesses that “as being a purdahnishin woman I am not accustomed to walking about unveiled” (Hossain 4). But she is assured that this land symbolises epitome of morality – “You need not be afraid of coming across a man here. This is Ladyland, free from sin and harm. Virtue herself reigns here” (Hossain 4).

This is very environment friendly as she mistakes the green grass as green cushion. Her friend whom she calls Sister Sara tells – “Your Calcutta could become a nicer garden than this if only your countrymen wanted to make it so” (Hossain 4). Sultana replies “They would think it useless to give so much attention to horticulture, while they have so many other things to do” (Hossain 4). The description of sister Sara’s house is also environment friendly – “It was situated in a beautiful heart-shaped garden. It was a bungalow with a corrugated iron roof and nicer than any of our rich buildings” (Hossain 6). This is an ecocritical concern.

It is a society where men are kept indoors and they do the cooking and all the allied works while the women work outside. The Sister points out the problem relating to men – “Yes, it is not safe so long as there are men about the streets, nor is it so when a wild animal enters a marketplace.” And “Suppose, some lunatics escape from the asylum and begin to do all sorts of mischief to men, horses and other creatures; in that case what will your countrymen do?” (Hossain 5) Sultana laments “We have no hand or voice in the management of our social affairs. In India man is lord and master. He has taken to himself all powers and privileges and shut up the women in the zenana” (Hossain 5). This concerns the gender issue where a lot of discrimination takes place.

Sister Sara argues that women have long neglected their capacity to deliver for betterment of their gender – “A lion is stronger than a man, but it does not enable him to dominate the human race. You have neglected the duty you owe to yourselves and you have lost your natural rights by shutting your eyes to your own interests” (Hossain 5).



Though the men are assigned the duty of the kitchen, the women do not trust them with needle work as according to them men do not have as much patience as women. Sister Sara is a keen enthusiast in science but she is so systematic in her work that she does not spend more than two hours in the laboratory. She relates how men waste their time of work in smoking – “They dawdle away their time in smoking. Some smoke two or three choroots during the office time. They talk much about their work, but do little. Suppose one cheroot takes half an hour to burn off, and a man smokes twelve choroots daily; then you see, he wastes six hours every day in sheer smoking” (Hossain 7).

The kitchen is totally environment friendly – “The kitchen was situated in a beautiful vegetable garden. Every creeper, every tomato plant was itself an ornament. I found no smoke, nor any chimney either in the kitchen – it was clean and bright; the windows were decorated with flower gardens. There was no sign of coal or fire” (Hossain 7). Solar heat is used for cooking which is a modern scientific innovation. This pertains to the ecocritical consciousness.

They are also very conscious about public health like Dr. Sarrasine – “We talked on various subjects, and I learned that they were not subject to any kind of epidemic disease, nor did they suffer from mosquito bites as we do. I was very much astonished to hear that in Ladyland no one died in youth except by rare accident” (Hossain 7).

They are ruled by a queen who has inherited the throne but their land is in reality ruled by the Prime Minister. A description of the progressive minded Queen is given who favours scientific education among girls. She has stopped early marriage and opened girls’ school (Hossain 7). There is a water balloon which controls rain water and it is described below – “In the capital, where our Queen lives, there are two universities. One of these invented a wonderful balloon, to which they managed to keep afloat above the cloud and, they could draw as much water from the atmosphere as they pleased. As the water was incessantly being drawn by the university people no cloud gathered and the ingenious Lady Principal stopped rain and storms thereby” (Hossain 8). The water balloon also helps in agriculture and gardening. They use water to keep cool in summer and use the



heat in winter –“They invented an instrument by which they could collect as much sun-heat as they wanted. And they kept the heat stored up to be distributed among others as required” (Hossain 8).

They have controlled men and overpowered them by brain. Once their country was attacked by enemy soldiers. Their men were defeated in the first round. Then the queen ordered the injured men to go indoors and ordered the women of the university to direct the stored sunlight at the enemy who were burnt down along with their weapons. In this way the women protected the country and also took over the control of their country. Their mode of transport is air-car (Hossain 13).

Ecocriticism directs the people of the world to preserve their world through a utopic representation of an ideal world. This consciousness is explored by both the writers under study. Greg Gerrard situates this as follows – “For at least 3,000 years, a fluctuating proportion of the world’s population has believed that the end of the world is imminent. Scholars dispute its origins, but it seems likely that the distinctive construction of apocalyptic narratives that inflects much environmentalism today began around 1200 BCE, in the thought of the Iranian prophet Zoroaster, or Zarathustra. Notions of the world’s gradual decline were widespread in ancient civilisations, but Zoroaster bequeathed to Jewish, Christian and later secular models of history a sense of urgency about the demise of the world” (Gerrard 85). Both Jules Verne and Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain propagate progressive ideas through their utopias. I have exhaustively pointed out references from the concerned texts to establish my point. Their social concerns with an ideal society make them futuristic in their approach.

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Voices Heard, Voices Unheard: Poems of Robin S. Ngangom and Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih

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Abstract: Robin. S. Ngangom and Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih are prominent Northeastern writers who present the clear insight of the ground reality of their native place. Robin's poems make us visualize the extreme conflict going on between different ethnic groups, the suffering of the common masses and the helplessness of the poet to stop the existing violence. Kynpham's poem shows the affair between lovers of two different ethnic groups even in the midst of the heightened ethnic conflicts. Their love acts as a symbol of humanity crossing the boundaries of their ethnicity or regionalism. The present paper attempts to study the select poems of Robin and kynpham and assess the ethnic conflict in the region, its relations with the mainstream, heightened tensions, suffering of the common masses and the idealistic portrayal of the prevalent situations.

Keywords: Ethnic conflict, reconstruction, sublimity, custom, disorder.

Northeast India is often referred to as the chicken neck part of the country. The sensitiveness of the region is marked by the presence of the international boundaries covering China, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar and Bangladesh. The main matter of concern is the internal conflict between mainstream India and its periphery regions and the heightened tensions among the different ethnic groups within the region, which adversely affects the peace of the common citizen. Ethnic groups according to Max Weber are "groups of humans who have a subjective belief in shared origins, a belief which is founded on a similarity of habits, customs or both, or on collective memories of migrations or



colonization, and that such a belief is important for the creation of a community spirit, irrespective of whether blood ties exist” (Bolaffi et al. 94).

The entire scenario of the Northeast can be vividly portrayed in the Northeastern literature be it in the form of poetry, novel or drama. Mark Bender is of the opinion,

The poem here tends to converge on themes and imagery (of the region): origins, migration, material culture, rituals, and features of the natural and human- manipulated environment. Though the cultural and linguistic links between these poets may be ancient and modern division’s complex, many of their poems resonate in ways that seem to dissolve borders and create poetic homes for their respective voices within the terrain of this upland region. (Bender 107)

Robin. S. Ngangom and Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih are key writers who give us the clear insight of the ground reality of their native place. They say,

...the writer from the Northeast differs from his counterpart in the mainland in a significant way. While it may not make him a better writer, living with the menace of the gun he cannot merely indulge in verbal wizardry and woolly aesthetics but perforce master the art of witness. (Nongkynrih and Ngangom ix)

The poems of Robin and Nongkynrih give us the glimpse of how India tried to control over its Northeastern states by two methods; the gun and the gold. In the gun method, the central government imposed the Armed Force Special Power Act (AFSPA), whereby they had complete control over the tension states by introducing strict laws and armed forces. In the gold process, the centre tried to overflow all the developmental schemes in order to ensure the development of the neglected regions.

However, the local or the state government wants more autonomy and power from the Central Government. As a result, there are frequent clashes between the central and the states. The worst sufferers are the common people, as they are arrested, tortured and some are even killed in the clash. For instance, Robin’s *Native land* gives us the picture of the extreme conflict going on between the different forces, its deadly consequence, the suffering of the common people and the helplessness of



the poet to change or put to halt the existing conflicts. The voice of the common people is lost in the labyrinth of the different external and internal conflicts.

Literature, however, not only portrays the realistic image of the society or place of a particular period but also gives the directions of sublimity or aesthetic representation that will act as a soothing effect to the prevailing realistic disorder or chaotic situation. Kynpham's poem *Sundori* for instance, shows the love affairs between couples of two different ethnic groups even in the midst of the heightened ethnic violence. Their love acts as a symbol of humanity crossing the boundaries of ethnicity or regionalism.

Robin S Ngangom is a bilingual poet and a translator, born in Imphal, Manipur. Before analyzing his poem, *Native land*, it is necessary for us to know about the conflict going on in the land of the poet. Modern Manipuri poetry, according to Ngangom, "was born amidst the ravages of the Second World War, of which Manipur remains a forgotten theatre" (Ngangom, 2007).

Brig Sushil Kumar Sharma in his book *Ethnic Conflict and Harmonization: A Study of Manipur*, (2016) gives us the details of the mutual harmony among the three major ethnic groups of Manipur. He writes they stayed together for centuries in unity but the 'divide and rule' policy of the colonial administration widened their cultural gap leading to tensions and conflicts. He further says that

after India's independence, these communities continued to coexist peacefully, however, owing to separate aspirations and perceived insecurity regarding overlapping claim over natural resources, gradually they moved apart. Certain post-independence developments deepened these prejudices leading to inter-community ethnic clashes. These clashes also hastened the formation of various armed groups affiliated to respective ethnic communities. The insurgent outfits, therefore, were not only waging struggle against the establishment but were now seen more as a necessity against the hegemony and violence perpetrated by rival communities. (Sharma 2016)



The above statement of Brig. Sharma enlightens us about the actual clash-taking place in Manipur. Through literature, Robin has beautifully portrayed the ongoing clashes between different ethnic group in his place, its consequences and suffering and helplessness of common people in his *Native Land*. He writes,

First came the scream of the dying
in a bad dream, then the radio report,
and a newspaper: six shot dead, twenty-five
houses razed, sixteen beheaded with hands tied
behind their backs inside a church ... (Native Land, 1-5)

The poems begins with a realistic nightmare along with a gradual transition from the subconscious to conscious state in which the poet visualizes the piercing cry of the person who is in the state of losing their mortal bodies indicated with a continuous tense. The reality is more horrifying, terrifying or brutalizing when he listens to the radio report and goes through the headlines of the newspaper, which perhaps gives the accurate figure of the victims held in the mishap. We come to know that six-person are killed on the spot, twenty- five houses are burned down to ashes and the remaining sixteen are brutally butchered inside the church. The irony of the situation is heightened with the use of the word 'Church', which in fact is the place where people go to pray and find peace, but has been turned down into a slaughter place. The image we get from the introductory lines is, in fact, disturbing but carries a strong realistic picture of the ongoing violence, tension and terror going on in the native land of the poet.

If we look at the realistic picture of Manipur, Shivananda H in *Ethnic conflict and Security Apprehension in Northeast India* states

The clashes between the Naga and Kuki tribes which erupted in 1992 in the Chandel district remain a major ethnic conflict in the state sparking a reign of terror in the hills of Manipur. It resulted to death of nearly a thousand people and an enormous loss of property. Over 2,000 houses were burnt and hundreds of villages were affected. It continued for about five



years and came to end in the early part of 1997 after the intervention of the Meities and other neutral tribes. Besides, the demand by an ethnic group has been a reason for conflict with the others. (Shivananda, 2011)

The undercurrent of tension and violence is further intensified in the following lines:

As the days crumbled, and the victors
and their victims grew in number,
I hardened inside my thickening hide,
until I lost my tenuous humanity. (Native Land, 6-9)

Along with the passage of time, the number of 'victors' and 'victims' increases which clearly indicates that the violence, the terror that has been burning in the land of the poet is not going to end but rather it is increasing at an alarming rate. The poet in spite of witnessing all the gruesome reality is rather helpless to put an end, the never-ending quarrel going on in his place; so he is trying himself to be strong in such a dilemmatic situations. The poet has become a mere spectator of the dualities and conflicts and he is feeling dehumanized losing his not so clear humanity inside his troubled soul.

I ceased thinking
of abandoned children inside blazing huts
still waiting for their parents.
If they remembered their grandmother's tales
of many winter hearths at the hour
of sleeping death, I didn't want to know,
if they ever learnt the magic of letters.(Native Land, 10-16)

The troubled soul of the poet is caught in the arena of his imagination, which in fact is juxtaposed by the word 'ceased thinking'. The heart touching imagery introduces us to the innocent deserted children, which in fact might have become the victims of the conflicts and violence. The naive children are looking for their parents without knowing the fact that they too are becoming the victims of the tensed situations. The poet is not sure whether the children can recollect the tales that



have been told by their grandmother about the winter fire place at the hour of their approaching death which is intensified by the phrase 'sleeping death'. The poet is, in fact, curious to know whether those abandoned children are gaining education or not although we can find the negative statement, "I didn't want to know if they ever learnt the magic of letters." (Native Land 16) but deep down he was keen to know whether they were gaining proper education or not.

In his another poem *My Invented land*, the poet speaks in the same tune where he witnesses his own people marring the education of the coming generations and disturbing the peace and beauty of the prevailing situations.

My people have disinterred their alphabet,
burnt down decrepit libraries
in a last puff of nationalism
even as a hairstyle of native women
have been allowed to become extinct.
And the women heavy with seed,
their soft bodies mown down
like grain stalk during their lyric harvests;
if they wore wildflowers in their hair
while they waited for their men,
I didn't care anymore. (My Invented Land, 12-22)

The image then shifts from the innocent children to that of women who in spite of all hardship and trouble struggles to find a peaceful life to live in. The poet describes women who are all preoccupied with the domestic affairs indicated in line, 'women heavy with seed'. Their hardships are highlighted when he compares their soft bodies with that of grain stalk. We can find out the grim romantic feeling when the poet paints out the picture of the women who after all the hardships of life waits for the men to come wearing the wildflower in their hair; But the undercurrent of tension lies in the fact



that whether their men will return back or not in such a conflicting situations. He once again says he does not care which, in fact, is his intense care for the abandoned women.

The above stanzas vividly show the impact of the conflict and violence on all human beings. Not only the men involved in the conflict are affected but the innocent women, children; in fact, all other innocent people becomes the victim of the frequent clash going on in the native place of the poet.

I burnt my truth with them,
and buried uneasy manhood with them.
I did mutter, on some far-off day:
There are limits, but when the days
absolved the butchers, I continue to live
as if nothing happened. (Native Land, 23-28)

The concluding stanza, in fact, gives the realistic yet painful touch. Although the poet is well aware of the ongoing situations and has a deep care for the wounded humanity, he can't normalize the situation.

In his poem *Revolutionaries*, the poet describes how the revolutionaries affected all people of the region including the poets.

Before they used terror when things were beginning to go out of control and people showed aberrant behaviour, revolutionaries had asked poets in their lower ranks to compose patriotic songs for a country that cannot be found on a map....I know this for real; I grew up with revolutionaries. They had even asked me to translate a press release over the phone.
(Ngangom and Nongkyrih, 2009: 202)

Therefore, unwillingly, he says that he burns his truth and manhood along with day-to-day violence. He voices within himself that there should be some limits to this bloodshed and act of brutality and it even tries to come out as a matter of protest but when the violence and the conflict accelerate to its maxim the poet lives like a visible blind person ignoring what is going around in the poet's area.

Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih is also a bilingual poet writing chiefly in Khasi and English. The poetry of Nongkynrih shows the realistic picture of the tensions going on in Northeast: "terrorism,



insurgency, human rights abuses, environmental and ecological concerns, erosion of tribal values, and the corrupt politician-businessman-bureaucrat nexus” (Das 20).

His poem *Sundori* deals with inter-ethnic conflict in his native land and is addressed to a woman Sundori by a narrator, who aims for inter-ethnic peace and harmony in the region. While going through the poem, we come to know that both the narrator and his beloved belong to different ethnic groups.

Beloved Sundori,
Yesterday one of my people
Killed one of your people
And one of your people
Killed one of my people. (Sundori, 1-5)

In the above lines, the narrator is addressing his beloved named Sundori, a beautiful woman. He says to his love that their clansmen have fought and killed each other. However, the interesting thing to note here is that though there is violence, clashes, disturbances going on, yet the narrator and the lady are in love with each other.

Today they have both sworn
To kill on sight. (Sundori, 6-7)

Tension further accelerates when the narrator informs his love that the people involved in the violence have promised to kill the opponents if they ever meet each other. The conflict is at its zenith because the hatred is so much so that not only the people involved in the clash are in constant danger but all the innocent people including the narrator is in the risk of losing their life and are constantly living in tension and fear.



But this is neither you nor I,
Shall we meet by the Umkhras River
And empty this madness
Into its angry summer floods? (Sundori, 8-11)

The above lines clearly indicate that not all individuals residing in the tension area are involved in the violence. The narrator says neither he nor his beloved is the part of the clash. Therefore, he requests the beloved to meet near Umkhras River to put an end to all the madness, conflicts, disturbances, and not so comfortable situations of their clansmen. He really wants to empty the entire discontentment into the angry summer flood so that it can never come back again.

I send this message
Through a fearful night breeze,
Please leave your window open. (Sundori, 12-14)

The narrator wants transition from the tension situation to a peaceful one, but the circumstances are so fearful that he cannot meet his beloved in person and try to normalize the situations. If they dare to meet, the antagonistic forces might slaughter them. The imagery of fearful night breeze intensifies the horror and the not so comfortable situations prevailing out there. Finally, he requests his beloved to keep her window open so that his message can be reached through the fearful night breeze. Here, he takes the help of natural elements to reconcile the situations, as nature never distinguishes human beings based on any other identities that they acquire in life.

However, in reality, it appears that it is almost not possible for the narrator to meet his beloved yet their love stands as an epitome and perfect reconciliation to the different violence based on ethnicity, racism and insurgent disturbances. It tries to give the message to all the human beings that any problems and disturbances can be conquered by love. Thus, the deep insight into the poems of Robin and Nongkynrih gives us the vivid image of the prevalent tension between the different ethnic groups. It enlightens us about the realistic picture of their society, the heightened tension,



suffering of the common people, the helplessness of the poet and also the literary harmony and peace that the poet sees even in the undercurrent of tension and violence.

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Representation of Love, Revenge and Sacrifice in Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*

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Abstract: Partition is one of the most horrendous events in the history of the sub-continent. When India freed itself from the clutches of the tyrannical British regime in 1947, it was in a state of dilemma and confusion as to whether it should rejoice over its independence or whether it should lament the massacre and atrocities during the forcible migration of a large number of people. Many writers had tried their pens at the theme of partition of sub-continent. Among the several works of partition literature, *Train to Pakistan* (1956) by Khushwant Singh is looked upon as one of the masterpieces, which captures the attention of the reader from the beginning to its end. Here Singh critiques the tragic story of the partition of India and Pakistan in a realistic manner. Partition affected the whole country and Singh could not stop himself from writing about the tragic and heart wrenching events that the people of Mano Majra, a small village in Punjab, India faced. Here, the characters are quite simple and highly convincing. This novel also projects a realistic picture of the inexplicable incidents which were an outcome of communal feelings of the August 1947 partition and communal politics. At the end of the novel, the readers get to realize that the author has tried to imply that violence is not the only medium to bring an end to violence. Rather, recourse to other alternatives such as love and respect can be taken to suppress violence. The present study deals with



the aspects of love, revenge and sacrifice which are the highlights of the novel *Train to Pakistan* by Khushwant Singh.

Keywords: Love; Revenge; Sacrifice; Train to Pakistan; Khushwant Singh.

The partition is a pivotal theme in the novel *Train to Pakistan* by Khushwant Singh. It was the first partition novel published in 1956 which rose to fame universally. A kind of unacceptable and terrible feeling was constantly weighing heavily upon the mind of the author when he wrote this particular novel. As K. R. Srinivasa Iyenger aptly remarks:

It could not have been an easy novel to write. The events, so recent, so terrible in their utter savagery and meaninglessness, must have defied assimilation in terms of art. Notably, this novel portrays the social and political turmoil and events of the partition in various ways (Iyenger 502).

The third person narrative technique has been adopted as a medium of delineating all these events. Here Singh puts emphasis not only on the violence, horror and savagery of the people during partition, but also projects the victory of love over hatred in this world.

Portrait of a little village called Mano Majra is quite fascinating in '*Train to Pakistan*'. Indeed, Mano Majra was a typical village of North India then. It was located near the border between India and Pakistan, where people from different religions were leading their life peacefully and harmoniously. They were quite pleasant and cooperative with each other. They would love and respect each other in spite of their differences in cast, creed, religion and all other social aspects. They were above all sorts of narrowness and religious parochialism before the ghost train pulled into Mano Majra from Lahore. People of Mano Majra represented the true spirit of India. All of them had a common deity and this is manifested in the following lines:

.....a three-foot slab of sandstone that stands upright under keekar tree beside the pond. It is the local deity, the deo to which all the villagers-Hindu, Sikh, Muslim or Pseudo Christian-repair secretly whenever they are in special need of blessing.(Singh 10)

The gruesome impact of partition descended upon the masses of this particular village a little later compared to the other parts of India as they lived on the frontier and were far away from the



Independence movement. The novelist here also points out that people of Mano Majra were uninfluenced by the then freedom struggle. As the Lambardar rightly asked Iqbal:

Freedom must be a good thing. But what will we get out of it? Educated people like you, Babu Sahib, will get the jobs the English had. Will we get more lands or more buffaloes? ... No... Freedom is for the educated people who fought for it. We were slaves of the English, now we will be slaves of the educated Indians or the Pakistanis. (Singh 62)

Bapsi Sidhwa in *Ice-Candy Man* also imbues such kind of optimistic attitude in the life of the villagers, who, at the odd hours of partition had to meet their tragic ends. Villagers of Mano Majra, who had a scant connection with the political life of the nation, were surprised to confront an abrupt political cataclysm which occurred in their village. They were already informed about the violence outside their world by the large exodus of refugees from Pakistan at first. Gradually, such violence was disseminating into their village Mano Majra. Initially, they were completely ignorant of such violence across the western and the eastern border of India. Moreover, Refugees entering into India from Pakistan with the uncountable grim stories of killing, rape and arson make the villagers fearful and anxious about their future. Thereby, only murder of Hindu Ram Lal surprised the villagers heavily. River Sutlej was also found to be choked with the corpses which aggravated the tension in Mano Majra. The horrific sight of corpses-laden train in Mano Majra was beyond the bounds of their imagination. They were astounded heavily to see such strange happenings which they had never come across before. Train here stands for life. But this train also implies the doleful situation of humanity. Thereby it acted as a fatal blow to them. The wounds worsened when Muslims were being forced to evacuate their village Mano Majra by their fellow Sikhs. Police also wanted to keep the situation calm by asking Muslims to go the Pakistan for their own safety. At the beginning, the Muslim villagers of Mano Majra took that evacuation as something beneficial for them but bit by bit they became cognizant of the fact that this evacuation was only meant for the Muslim denizens from Mano Majra. They were moved to desolation when they came to know that they had to evacuate the place where they have been living for a long time. Muslims of Mano Majra thought their departure towards Chandannagar camp was only for a few days. But finally they got to know that they would be shifted away to Pakistan from Chandannagar camp for their safety with their



belongings under the care of their fellow Sikhs very soon. Their hopes were further dashed and faith became shattered after realizing the fact that their belongings would be under the care of a dacoit Malli and his gang. At that moment, the peaceful world of the Muslims in Mano Majra was torn apart. The thought of losing their belongings in the hand of pseudo protectors brought them under the grip of deep consternation. For Imam Baksh it was too much to give in to the idea of being evacuated from Mano Majra and being relocated to Pakistan. Eventually, he moaned “What have we to do with Pakistan. We were born here. So were our ancestors. We have lived amongst you as brothers” (Singh153). Finally a decision was drawn up that Muslims had to move over to Pakistan in their own interests, then Imam Baksh choked out “All right if we have to go, then we’d better pack up own bedding and belongings. It will take us more than one night to clear out of homes it has taken our father and forefathers and grandfathers hundreds of years to make” (Singh148). The conditions became worse after evacuation of Muslims from Mano Majra. The villagers turned more hostile to each other that the novelist criticises severely. The novelist has described this heart-rending displacement of the Muslim villagers in such a way that the readers are moved to tears. As the narrator says:

There was no time to make arrangements. There was no time even to say good-bye. Truck engines were started. Pathan soldiers rounded up the Muslims, drove them back to the carts for a brief minute or two, and then on to the trucks. In the confusion of the rain, mud and soldiers herding the peasants about with the muzzles of their stem guns sticking in their backs, the villagers saw little of each other. All they could do was to shout their last farewells from the trucks..... The Sikhs watched them till they were out of sight. They wiped the tears off their faces and turned back to their homes with heavy hearts. (Singh 159)

So the tragic incidents in the little village Mano Majra were nothing but the reflection of incidents in Punjab and Bengal in 1947.

Khushwant Singh further exhibits that villages like Mano Majra wherein the people have been able to keep enmity at bay till before partition, were all of a sudden stirred by the canard of an administrative officer, Hukum Chand at that time. Hukum Chand is a kind of hypocrite who pretends to be good and honest to Muslims. He tried to provoke Sikh people against Muslims in



many ways. Such incitement or rumour by Hukum Chand against his fellow Muslims triggered a kind of fear in Mano Majra. Sikh villagers would never allow them to be antagonistic against their Muslim villagers in pre-partition period. At the outset, Sikh villagers were in two minds whether to throw out their Muslim villagers or not. But as the provocation of Hukum Chand exerted its influence on the rabble, they decided to take revenge on their fellow Muslims. Even influx of the large number of refugees from Pakistan precipitated a sense of fear and suspicion among Sikh villagers towards their fellow Muslims to some extent. Consequently Sikh Villagers of Mano Majra stood committed to be shorn of their fellow Muslim Villagers. Thereby, Malli, a dacoit and their gang plotted a secret plan to halt the Pakistan-bound train laden with Muslim passengers for decimation.

At this juncture, Juggat Singh, a ruffian from Sikh community was astonished to hear such conspiracy schemed by some Sikh villagers because Juggat Singh's beloved Nooran was also aboard the same train heading for Lahore, Pakistan. Criminal Juggat Singh never wanted to inflict any sort of pain upon Nooran because he was in love with her deeply. Hence, at times he set off visiting her regularly in the field. Beauty of Nooran fascinated Juggat a lot. Even they did not let religion come between their relationships. Despite being a scoundrel, he was quite defensive of his beloved and made excuses for his beloved Nooran when she put up her fear of being ensnared by her fellow villagers. Even he was not permitted to go out after sunset by police because of his criminal record. One day when his mother was asking about his going out of home at night, he replied promptly –‘To the field, Last night wild pigs did a lot of damage’. Moreover, his mother forbade him to go outside after sunset as he was on probation. When police asked Juggat Singh about his whereabouts on the day of Ram Lal's murder, then Juggat Singh remained tight-lipped to save the honor of Nooran. Because of his silence, he was accused mistakenly for this murder in the village. Juggat Singh could not even bear the idea of slinging any sort of derogatory comment upon Nooran by someone unwarrantedly. He got angry with Bhola for making sardonic comments on their affair. Malli's comment upon Juggat's on the way to prison, “Sat Sri Akal, Sardar Juggat Singhji. Is there any message we can convey for you? A love message may be? To the weaver's daughter” (Singh 121), enraged him a lot. For Nooran, he decided to save the same train from the



hand of miscreant Malli and his gang at any cost. Thereafter Juggat Singh visited gurudwara and requested the Bhai, “I want the Guru’s word. Will you read me a verse?” On Meet Singh’s question to know Juggat’s purpose, he promptly replied to him ‘It does not matter about thatjust read me a few lines quickly” (Singh 198).After that, Meet Singh recited Guru’s (God) word from the Morning Prayer and Juggat Singh left the place .

Magistrate Hukum Chand and intellectual Iqbal are projected as prototypes of such persons who act as patriots in front of the villagers but here patriotism is only to fool the honest and simple villagers. One day they are exposed and the villagers wonder what the world is coming to. Even after realizing that they were being misguided, they did not step forward to rescue their fellow Muslim villagers at the crucial juncture of their life. In the last part of the novel, it is revealed to the readers that they were hypocrites who did not have genuine feelings and sympathy for their Muslim villagers. When Bhai Meet Singh expected of Iqbal to stick up for the villagers as he was an educated young one, Iqbal said “Me? Why me? ” He also told to Bhai Meet Singh surprisingly “what have I to do with it? I do not know these people. Why should they listen to a stranger?” (Singh.24). Here Iqbal showcased his callousness, hypocrisy by not standing up for the safety of Muslim villagers. After being an educated people, he proves himself self-centred which was unexpected. Religious leader like Meet Singh was also found to be fake who did nothing for the villagers. These people used to call themselves as social reformers who committed to serve the people but when situation demands for their sacrifice, they retreated themselves from the right action in right moment. But a ruffian named Juggat Singh raising himself above all the inhumanity and cruelty sacrificed his own life to save Nooran and the Muslim Villagers from the hand of the gang of Sikh villagers. He was shot dead by the leader of that gang. Villagers could not expect such noble deeds from Juggat Singh .Juggat Singh was deemed as a ruffian in the eyes of everyone before saving Nooran and fellow Muslim villagers because of his engagement with some anti-social activities in the past. Nobody in the village could believe that Juggat dubbed as a criminal would come up in such way to protect his beloved Nooran and fellow Muslim villagers from the destruction. Before this heroic feat, Juggat Singh was considered to be a gunda in his locality. Here he substantiated that how a gunda can become a real hero for the sake of his love. Juggat Singh



also proves to all that a criminal's love for his beloved can be transformed into the love for all Muslim villagers and humanity. In this context S.K. Dubey's comment are quite appropriate:

“In the sacrifice of Juggat Singh the novelist intends to inform the readers that the overpowering urge for violence in men may be resisted only by the force of love, which drives the hero of the novel, Juggat Singh, to avert mass killings by laying down his own life” (Dubey p.3).

Juggat Singh appeared as a speck of redeeming humanity amidst dark and cloudy situations. There, he played the role of a messiah of humanity. Uncompromising love for her beloved Nooran makes a ruffian Juggat Singh an ideal human being. Through this heroic deed, he also became an ambassador for peace and communal harmony. He would know it from quite early on that if he goes to protect the train carrying Nooran and Muslim villagers from the clasp of Malli led gang, he would certainly be killed by the gang of Sikh Villagers. Despite that, Juggat Singh did not back away from sacrificing his life for the sake of his beloved Nooran and fellow Muslim Villagers as well.

Novelist also highlights the general love between people belonging to different religions in Mano Majra. They would share their joys, emotion and sorrows with each other exceeding any sort of barrier. Their bond and mutual relationship between each other are to be praised in pre-partition period. It is also well worth pointing out the respect that the villagers of Mano Majra would hold for the religion of each other.

Besides setting out the love episode between Juggat Singh and Nooran, Novelist also depicts the love between Hukum Chand and prostitute girl Hassena. In the novel '*Train to Pakistan*' their meeting and love making process have also been outlined to some extent. Hukum Chand desired Haseena to be saved from the hand of that same gang because Haseena was also aboard the train bound for Pakistan. At that moment, Hukum Chand plotted a conspiracy to which Juggat Singh submitted himself. In this way, Hukum Chand succeeded in his attempt to save Haseena along with Nooran by sacrificing Juggat Singh's life.

Khushwant Singh has not only brought out the ghastly violence, horror, and bloodshed to the fore in '*Train to Pakistan*' but has also highlighted the use of other non violent ways to sort out issues in the novel. It is love and affection which can be a plausible solution for all the problems



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and this is the solution that the criminal Juggat Singh finally finds and uses to great effect in *Train to Pakistan*.

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Rupert Goold's Eponymous Adaptation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*

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Abstract: William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, a Scottish play, is one of his most adapted plays in 20th century. One of its major themes is rebellion, based on the female characters of the play, i.e. Lady Macbeth and the Weird Sisters. The present paper focuses on the interpretation of the characters of three Witches in director Rupert Goold's cinematic adaptation of *Macbeth* in 2010. While focusing on their characters, it discusses the sexual politics presented in the film. His adaptation makes it clear that Macbeth is just a puppet acting upon the commands of the three Witches who, in this 2010 movie, undertake various disguises, e.g. hospital nurses and house servants. Continually regulating the situation and prompting Macbeth from behind the scenes, they play a greater part than in Shakespeare's play. This paper also argues that how their demonstration offers an explanation of the sexual politics in society and how the cinematic techniques have been used to emphasize the characters of these Witches. Apart from this, it will also be discussed how the setting of the story, special focus on the costumes, use of colour and lighting has contributed to this adaptation. Although, Goold's *Macbeth*, like Shakespeare's play, focuses on variety of dramatic and historical events, yet his film is more modernized in the sense that it concentrates on gender roles in the society, makes use of historical figures from the 20th century and includes significant references of World War II. The paper tries to depict how Goold's film provides us with a comment on the gloominess of post-modern world.

Key words: Cinema, Sexual Politics, Witches, Modernization.



Whenever a writer writes a story, by taking background of a central story, he deals with the beliefs, prejudices, influences and sentiments of the cultural background of the author. In case that story is thus adapted, to keep the story acquainted with the audience, or in order to make it more and accessible, the themes, world, events, motivations, characters, points of view, contexts, imagery, symbols, etc. that views and beliefs which most deeply helped influence and construct, are at first and most commonly altered and adapted to match and adaptor's requirements, or an audience's needs. The aim behind this is to remain true to the central theme of the story, because the story is common attribute, and its theme is transferred to various genres and media. In Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, this central theme is morality and loyalty. In order to move this theme across cultures, a writer who is adapting the story must take into note that the adaptation, like the story being adapted, is always set in the background of a culture and a society and not in a vacuum. He must be well aware of the culture and society in which he is setting his adaptation so that his adaptation can be successful, since it will certainly alter and influence his adaptation. Cultural adaptations are the most complicated of all adaptation, since if an adaptation is too close to story being adapted, it disappoints. And if the audience disagrees with the cultural observation of the author, the adaptor can be criticized for failing to create a movie or adaptation which is true to that culture.

Director Rupert Goold's adaptation *Macbeth* (2010) is very close to Shakespeare's original *Macbeth*, and Western audience can easily understand Goold's work once they are made familiar with the setting. Goold makes use of Shakespeare's exact language while setting his film during World War II in a country which is never termed but apparently shaped after Nazi-Germany. It is apparent from the fact that the artwork and decorations of the banquet hall where Macbeth encounters ghost of Duncan largely looks like Nazi propaganda artwork.

Lady Macbeth (brilliantly played by remarkably talented Kate Fleetwood) is largely manipulative. She is never afraid of getting angry, mocking at Macbeth like one is bullied in a school. Macbeth is like a toy in Lady Macbeth's hands. He is keenly in lover with Lady Macbeth



and he can do anything to make her lady happy. In the scene when he argues with himself over a prediction, he feels apparently anxious and troubled to betray Duncan. But he is more afraid of denying Lady Macbeth than betraying Duncan and murdering him. Although, he talks to Lady Macbeth, "We will proceed no further in this business," yet his words and manner of his speaking doesn't show any conviction. Thus, we can consider from the very moment he utters it, in spite of the debate between them not yet started, that he is going to lose this battle and he himself is aware of this fact. He shivers and fiddles like a baby who is telling his mother very first time that he is going to do something as opposite to asking, keenly waiting for reply to see if he can hideaway from it. Patrick Stewart's Macbeth is not willing to do this act of betrayal since Duncan trusts him more than anyone else and showers great favours on him. But his loyalty is hollow from inside and it is easily torn to pieces by Lady Macbeth which shows that in Western world, traditionally, family is the first priority and the loyalty towards one's master comes afterwards. Lady Macbeth makes use and misuse of this fact. She wickedly accuses Macbeth of being a coward, being afraid like "the poor cat in the attic." Along with this, she doubts his love and faithfulness towards her and challenges his manhood saying "when you durst do it, then you are a man." By such means, she succeeds in convincing Macbeth and he, without any delay, willingly agrees to murder Duncan in order to make her happy and to prove his faithfulness as a husband and man in his wife's eyes. In Western society, when the masculinity of a male is questioned and doubted by a female, especially by his own wife, it is considered an insult. Moreover, if he does not respond to this question with some revenge, it further evidences lack of masculinity on the end of that man. For this reason, Lady Macbeth's approach of mocking at Macbeth is highly successful to convince him to murder Duncan and achieve his goal. Lady Macbeth is a very skillful woman who knows very well how to control and operate her husband and her approach of manipulation is highly based on the cultural background of Western society.

Goold's *Macbeth* also includes the growth of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's madness and consequent fall from power. The major reason behind Macbeth's madness and departure is the guilt, his fear and power journey brought to him through proving his masculinity in the eyes of his wife



and everyone else as well. His fear is due to the fact that though he is courageous and brave, he is still afraid of death. His madness is brought to him by the fact that he is engrossed in accumulating the power. While the madness of his wife, Lady Macbeth, takes place when she loses control over everything what belongs to her world. She made use of her husband in order to rule over the societies and ages where women had no power and rights. But now that Macbeth himself has lost control over his mind and deeds, Lady Macbeth also loses control over him. It is not that she is feeling guilty for having Duncan murdered by her husband which makes her washing blood strains from her hands again and again, rather she is disturbed by the guilt that she has put her husband into this madness by putting him at a stake to achieve her goal. She repents and longs for her past days when they were content in whatever they used to have.

Apart from the above observations, Goold's *Macbeth* can also be assessed as a reflection on postmodern gloominess. It opens at an operation room of a filthy hospital with white tiles which looks like an electroshock compartment of a mental asylum. In this scene, the Three Witches, who are posing as nurses, are given a tempting appearance on this restoration of desire, murder, and betrayal. The injured army man has given the information of battlefield to Duncan and Duncan gives him in the skilled hands of nurses who inject an unknown serum into the blood of sergeant and watch him shivering who soon dies on the stretcher. Now, it is up to the audience to decide whether this act of killing the sergeant in such a way is mercy for an injured man or mercilessness for an army man. Whatever it is, it sets the stage for *Macbeth*. Goold does not only numb his audience with the manifestation of violence and gloominess, his film exposes the moral failures of modernity. His design and themes are based on futurist totalitarianism; the demonstration of ordinary worldly habits; and the presentation of witches soaked in technology and despair.

Goold has provided his film with Stalinist Russian setting which includes images of quickly moving tanks, soldiers trooping in military displays, and enthusiastic crowds gathered at essential political rallies, which all point at a futurist theme focused upon technology, speed, and violence. *Macbeth* criticizes the risks of using aesthetics to convey political belief without decreasing it to a



responsive form of preachy informative art. Goold's acceptance of the dangers of totalitarianism is depicted by presenting Ross as technocrat who is engrossed in the war of the fighting parties and is made to choose one side. We are provided with three sides of Ross in a small period of time: his pain and self-preserving confession towards the nature of Macduff's escape and location of Lady Macduff, his fated effort to give warning to Lady Macduff and her children about their coming death, and his guilt-ridden confession to Macduff that his family has been murdered by Macbeth. As a government middle manager, he believed that he was beyond the chaotic penalties of building an empire. His folly offers a detailed explanation of current argumentations on the use of agony and limiting the public freedoms in the middle of global war on fear.

One of the major things to be noticed about this production is that it is continuously unsettling. A few things spread throughout the film create discomfort and tension which make the total effect frightening and unsettling. The absurdly domestic habits are exposed to horrify and distance the audience. One of such things is food which is used most commonly, generally compared with disturbing events, altering the triviality of a sandwich into horrifying. Throughout, the food is presented in such a way that it appears disgusting. It is a setback of the normal human nature to be drawn to eatables, similarly like all good and bad looks overturned or jumbled in Macbeth. Good is bad and bad is good, and our normal nature is so changed that Macbeth's cooking a sandwich is at the same time revolting and horrifying. The red soup being served at the banquet, immediately after the murder of Banquo, is absolutely disgusting since we realize that it looks like the blood of murdered. Thus, Goold alters the dullness of food into one of the most disturbing element of the play.

In spite of the presence of extensive political themes, the consumption of food on the stage offers a more rigorous reproduction of the human condition. This decision of Goold provided the audience with humour when they watch an actor stops on a dialogue because his or her mouth is filled with food or drink. But the overall effect of this is quite alarming. At the moment when Duncan declares Malcolm the Prince of Cumberland, Macbeth turns his eyes towards his half-



finished beer as if it has been freezed before drinking it. After that, Lady Macbeth reveals the ugliness behind the sacred taboo of coldness when she forced Macbeth to kill Duncan at their home while she adorned raspberry torte. In another significant moment, Macbeth arranged the murder of Banquo while normally making a sandwich. The consequence of showing food within *Macbeth* is that it kept worldly reality at the front the thought- foodstuffs offer us life, but they also remind that there is no escape from death. The present absence of Banquo from the banquet takes terrible vitality not only because of the use of dining table as a fashion runway of postmodernity but also because of the fact that like hunger and thirst Banquo's death is also the result of human need.

Along with this, the film also provides the audience with a blend of and unequal, absurd mixture of old and new costumes, technology, props, architecture throughout the film. To examine the dresses, we see that one character is dressed in such a way like he is a paper boy of 1920's while the other before whom he is standing is dressed in such a way like he has walked out of a GQ catalog. The director has made use of odd technology and props including the PA system, the sinks, the modern steel refrigerator etc. If we try to understand what times they are trying match we'll encounter too many contradictions. In my words, it is done decisively to confuse the audience into overlooking the uncertain time they are in and pay attention to the dialogue. I can say that had the film been set in a time closer to the 17th century, a great deal would have to be lost and the film would perhaps be interesting to attract the audience.

Besides the above details, Goold's direction of the Three Witches (Played by Sophie Hunter, Polly Frame, and Niamh McGrady,) is also remarkable. They are also very unsettling, largely because they are omnipresent and apparently normal until they are rapidly changed from nurses or ordinary servants into something else completely. It seems like they have clearly chosen to reverse the order to better depict what the political conditions were at the beginning of the play. Thereafter, they reveal themselves from behind the masks and arrange meeting with Macbeth. It is completely unpredictable and completely frightening.



As mentioned above, these Three Witches are everywhere: in the dresses of nurses in the hospital, cooking food at the arrival of Duncan, treating Lady Macbeth, serving food in the hall, and being with Macbeth at the time of battle. Their presence at everywhere is upsetting since their behaviour is extremely unexpected and horrifying. Their over-modest servant dresses are also frightening. Playing as nurses, room maids, mortuary workers, and cooks, they are the inevitable mortality of human condition with their connection with filth, blood and excrement.

Whenever the Witches are shown on the screen, various sorts of extraordinary effects are used to mix the natural and supernatural. Some mixtures of fast-forwarding and jump cuts show that they can increase and decrease the speed of their actions. Sometimes, they can jump from one place to another without moving a bit. Another major effect used in this direction is an extraordinary synthesizer in order to distort the voices of the Three Witches when they chant. These Witches are also certainly gifted with reanimation and here the director Rupert Goold has blurred the edge between science and magic. Thus, these Witches, being supernatural and omnipresent, are so powerful that they are capable of controlling almost every major action of Macbeth and he is nothing but a puppet playing upon the fingers of these Witches. Thus the roles played by these Witches and Lady Macbeth as well demonstrate the sexual politics present in the Western society. Together they show how a man like Macbeth cannot do anything on his own and how he becomes a toy in the hands of his wife and the Witches. Macbeth, according to me, without the Witches, would have been going along pleased at the honours done to him for his successes in the war. Not only this, he could have earned more and more. But once the thought of becoming a king is lodged in his mind, he can't help but work out in order to turn this thought into reality and where he lacks conviction his wife fills him with the enthusiasm.

The setting of the film is the real representation of the gloominess of the modern world. Most sets of this production are like underground tunnels or cellars with kitchen appliances of industry. It serves as a very affective visual metaphor. The elevators are used to go down into the earth, which is exactly like falling into Hell. The location is filthy and moist. Paint is unwrapped



from the walls, water is dripping from the pipes, footsteps echo while walking on concrete. Whole place is surrounded by devastating fear and bleakness. Even the bedrooms are not provided with the touch of comfort or humanity. But, it makes no sense a rational setting since the King of Scotland needs not to live in a damp underground tunnel. But Goold decides to prefer visual metaphor to rational setting. And it worked most probably.

Thus, given the scene of estrangement, discomfort and terror set, I turn to Macbeth and other major characters. Macbeth, which is played by extremely talented actor Patrick Stewart, is very daring from the starting of the film. He does not give any sign of being a good guy. In fact, his coldness is almost very much because he seems like such a man who will not have much difficulty murdering Duncan. His thoughts make him able to make plots in order to achieve his goals. For example, in the dagger scene, Macbeth seems fascinated but not frightened at all by his hallucination. He draws his power not from being a compassionate villain, but from being an influential portrait of evil, fascinating but not pleasant. His relation with Lady Macbeth is also not a relation founded on love but complete enthrallment. His wife, Lady Macbeth, is quite younger to him. But she possesses a very influential sexual attraction. He is preoccupied by her and almost depends upon her and he is not capable of denying her. Lady Macbeth is such a kind of woman who could operate this kind of control over him. In fact, she is evidently the dominant half of their relationship, until she falls under his control towards the end, observing when her husband performs the murders of Lady Macduff and Banquo without her. Though her madness, as explained above, is beautifully done by the director, but it does not provoke much sympathy in the audience. Throughout the movie, they keep their hands on top of each other in order to walk forward, commonly when they are ascending a new stage. The way of holding hands and assuming this position is very illuminating since it reveals the state of their association at a particular time. First, Lady Macbeth keeps her hand up and her husband Macbeth unwillingly follows her. But towards the end, he seizes her hand and nearly drags her away. It is not depict the breakdown of their relationship. Rather it depicts the essential shift in power dynamic. This is why he becomes less fascinated by the power of his wife as he gains more power of his own.



In this production of Goold, Stewart gains the exact image of Macbeth. He starts with coldness, distance and indifference and develops these qualities as the movie goes on. As the film progresses, he becomes completely isolated from audience, until he is brought back into humanity all of a sudden. He is so much shattered that he is left with only one possible choice that is nihilism. It seems like an act of humanizing a terrible man.

Apart from Macbeth, the Porter (played by Christopher Patrick Nolan) also has a significant part in this film. He has been one of murderers who killed Banquo. He is evidently considered to be one uninterrupted character through all these scenes. He also shares the inhuman quality of the Three Witches. Through the focus of the camera on the background of the tunnel he is in, he mixes the foreground just to look back into existence when the focus of the camera is changed. This fading effect provides him with his inhumanity. Besides, his presentation is also very frightening. He is filthy, demonic and immoral. His coming into Lady Macduff's room with a saw is the apex of his inhumanity. In fact, he is the perfect porter to take you into hell and to prepare Macbeth for his final battle.

The character of Ross (played by Tim Treloar) is also worth mentioning here since he is one of the few noble characters of the film. He is evidently separated from the starting of the film and focus is drawn to him on various occasions. Unlike others, he does not wear military dress, and is more aged than most of the other characters and looks more like a teddy bear than commander. The very first scene wherein he actually stands out is where he talks to Lennox (played by Mark Rawlings) about the present state of Scotland. Generally, Macbeth's praise by Lennox is sarcastic and satirical, but at this time, he is questioning about the whereabouts of the Macduff from the bound Ross. Although, it surely changes the complete meaning of the scene, yet it is effective. At this point, Ross defies hopes with his firm denial to voice support for Macbeth, and afterwards allies himself evidently with Macduff and Malcolm.



Apart from the above characters, the story of Macduff has also been told very efficiently and it serves as a fine story for the merits of understatement. The role of Lady Macduff has very sweetly been done by Suzanne Burden and her mother-figure has largely endeared her to the audience even in the short period of time. She also substitutes Lennox for the first part of the scene where Macduff comes to know about the murder of Duncan. Thus she is not an unpredictable character. Goold presents the murder Macduff family very excellently. There is no doubt that it should be horrifying. But the most effective way to achieve horror is to provide a clue about it and leave the rest to the work of imagination. And this is what has been done in this case. There are two murderers on the screen, evil-figure Porter and Macbeth, who are near him and then suddenly the view is shifted to the scene terrified Ross is peering around the corner and departs in horror. The audience are shown the executed head of the doll of her daughter and the heel of her foot. But the reaction of Ross reveals everything else to the audience what they need to know. The audience are not provided with the horror in its full face, but they are free to understand what has happened from the face of Ross. We can say that the imagination always comes up with better atrocities than the screen can. The reaction of Macduff is also performed very well. His devastation is depicted more effectively in his eyes and trembling lips than his breaking down and sobbing. His line "All my pretty ones, did you say all?" is considered to be one of the most disturbing lines of Shakespeare and it needs to be packed with a punch. Macduff, masculine and strong Macduff, puts forth the same questions again and then leaves the room without any other word. This is extremely effective which makes the audience feel sympathetic towards the Macduff family.

Conclusion

Hutcheon, in *A Theory of Adaptation*, correctly says that "adaptations are often compared to translations. Just as there is no such thing as literal translation, there can be no literal adaptation." *Macbeth*, adaptation of Goold, is not an entirely literal adaptation of Shakespeare's text, because then it could not be called an adaptation but a reproduction of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Moreover, the world has changed to large extent from the time of Shakespeare and the way we observe certain



stories and values has also been changed. Goold, while remaining true to the core of Shakespeare, has brought in essential changes which are available to his audience. His alterations are effective in a way that he has adapted Shakespeare's play for a modern Western culture. In order to make the story more approachable for his modern Western audience, he has placed it in the twentieth century and to put it lightly within the setting of World War II is really very influential since almost everyone in Western countries has learnt about this in history classes. The motivations and terrors of his Macbeth are more real and applicable since he is put in such a time and situation wherein many people can relate themselves to these conditions because this is why a number of Western countries were effected. But Goold does not openly say which side of the tussle Macbeth is on. And by doing that, he abolishes the danger of developing any kind of hatred or prejudice on the part of the audience.

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Obsessions with Shopping in Chick Lit: A Study of Sophie Kinsella's Shopaholic Series

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Abstract: Shopping, which can be defined as an activity wherein a buyer browses the accessible products offered by a retailer, is a gratifying activity particularly for women. This concept of shopping along with the theme of fashion and consumerism has been celebrated as one of the prominent themes in Chick Lit, a contemporary genre of popular fiction. 'Chick' is an American slang for a young woman and 'Lit' is a shortened form of the word literature. It usually focuses on various concepts and issues in the lives of women such as love, marriage, fashion, beauty, relationship, friendship, roommates, weight control, consumerism and much more. It addresses such issues often humorously and lightheartedly. As a simple definition, it is literature by women, for women and about women. There is a huge list of writers who have penned their works in Chick Lit form. Sophie Kinsella is one of such writers along with Helen Fielding, Lauren Weisburger and many others. Her famous *The Shopaholic Series* which falls under the category of contemporary genre discusses the features of Chick Lit by laying stress on the theme of shopping in her novels. *The Shopaholic Series* focus on the misadventures of Becky Bloomwood, a fashionable woman in her 20s and financial journalist who is addicted to shopping and cannot manage her own finances. This research paper, however, attempts to discuss the concept of shopping in Sophie Kinsella's *Shopaholic Series* in the context of Chick Lit. Theories of Baudrillard and Freud will be taken into account in this paper.

Key words: Chick Lit, Shopping, Consumerism, Shopaholic Series, Sophie Kinsella.



The word 'shopping' pertains to an activity in which a customer browses the available goods or services presented by one or more retailers determined to purchase a suitable selection of them. In some contexts it may be considered a leisure activity as well as an economic one. In ancient times, in Greece *the agora* served as a market place where the merchants used to keep stalls or shops to sell their goods. In ancient Rome, there was a market place known as the forum. Fairs and markets were established to facilitate the exchange of goods and services. People used to shop goods at a weekly market in nearby towns. With the passage of time, there was transition in shopping from 'single-function' shops selling one type of good, to the store where a large variety of goods were sold. Shopping hubs or shopping centers are collections of stores. Typical examples include shopping malls, markets, bazaars etc.

Shopping, consumption and consumerism are present in popular fiction just as they are in 'real life'. Within Chick Lit which is a genre of popular fiction, it is definitely a rejoicing theme. 'Chick' is an American slang for a young woman and 'Lit' is a shortened form of the word literature. As a simple definition, it is literature by women, for women and about women. The term 'Chick Lit' is often related to Chick Flick, a genre of film which appeals to young women. It was first used in English speaking circles by Princeton University students. Later the term was employed by American novelist and co-editor Cris Maza and Jeffery Deshell in their groundbreaking anthology *Chick Lit: Postfeminist Fiction* (1995). Chick Lit originated in mid-nineteenth century with its cornerstone novels Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1996) and Candance Bushnell's *Sex and the City* (1997). It typically portrays female protagonists in their late teens, their twenties and thirties who succeed in their lives and tackle the obstacles in their own way. It usually focuses on various concepts and issues in the lives of women such as love, marriage, fashion, beauty, relationship, friendship, roommates, weight control, consumerism and much more. It addresses such issues often humorously and lightheartedly. Moreover, recurring images such as a pair of heels, protagonists holding a shopping bag and women's red mouth with pearl necklace on its covers are the telling of Chick Lit genre. Throughout all Chick Lit novels a tremendous amount



of attention is paid to the labels of their clothing, whether it is a shopping bag or a grotesquely passé Laura Ashley dress. Chick Lit is a distinguishing genre from other literary genres because of its humorous effect. The personal and confiding tone which always contains humour differentiates it from regular women's fiction. It aims to entertain, thrill and comfort readers. Its deviation lies in its entertainment value. In such novels, women have to struggle but their struggle is for professional success in publishing advertising, fashion or in film industry. Chick Lit novels celebrate consumerism and protagonists preoccupation with shopping makes such novels different from other literary genres.

There is a huge list of writers who have taken Chick Lit themes and penned their own Chick Lit. Sophie Kinsella is one of such writers along with Helen Fielding, Candance Bushnell, Lauren Weisburger, Anuja Chauhan, Swati Kaushal, Rupa Gulab, Kavita Daswani, Advaita Kala, Terry McMillan, Gemma Burgess, Jennifer Weiner, Ally Carter, Meg Cabot and Melissa Bank. Sophie Kinsella is a British Chick Lit author who has written her standalone novels as Madeleine Sophie Wickham. Madeleine Sophie Wickham is best known for her works under her pen name Sophie Kinsella. She is famous for writing *The Shopaholic Series* which falls under the category of the genre of popular fiction most often referred to as Chick Lit and discusses the features of Chick Lit by emphasizing the theme of shopping in her novels. All her novels have been adapted in movies (the genre known as Chick Flick). Kinsella is the middle class woman who loves shopping. It can be shown from her videos (googlevideo.com), in which it is shown that Kinsella loves shopping and she possesses a few branded shoes that are saved in her shoeseum (the museum of shoes). Her novels significantly contribute to the socialization of women as shoppers and offer a positive representation not of regular, necessary spending but of compulsive, uncontrollable, pathologic extremes of said activity. Kinsella's novels put forth a positive image of women as addicted shoppers and over-spenders. In *Shopaholic*, over-spending is portrayed as something fun and enviable that does not have serious repercussions in life. *The Shopaholic Series* focuses on a heroine who never stops obsessing over shoes and starts attempting to change her world. She never leaves her job to do meaningful work or questions the nature of her relationships. The heroine



doesn't react to the problems in her world and neither does the book's reader; she never changes throughout her reading experience.

The Shopaholic Series focus on the misadventures of Becky Bloomwood, a fashionable woman in her 20s and financial journalist who is addicted to shopping and cannot manage her own finances. She is nearly always in debt because of her habit. The series focus on her obsession with shopping and its resulting complications for her life. Throughout the series, she makes a temporary move to New York City, marries her boyfriend Luke Brandon, finds out she has a sister, and even has a baby. However, her love for shopping never goes away, and continues to cause her problems. The first book in the series, *Confessions of a Shopaholic* (2000), has also been released under the title *The Secret Dreamworld of a Shopaholic*. The other books in the series include *Shopaholic Abroad* also published as *Shopaholic Takes Manhattan*, *Shopaholic Ties the Knot* (2002), *Shopaholic and Sister* (2004), *Shopaholic and Baby* (2007), *Mini Shopaholic* (2018), *Shopaholic to the Stars*(2015) an *shopaholic to the rescue* (2016). Her first two books *The Secret Dreamworld of a Shopaholic* and *Shopaholic Abroad* which in the United States were known as *Confessions of a Shopaholic* and *Shopaholic Takes Manhattan* respectively. All seven novels became bestsellers. The other novels by Sophie Kinsella include *The Domestic Goddess* (2005), *Can You Keep a Secret* (2003), *Remember Me?* (2008) and *Twenties Girl* (2009).

The first novel *Confessions of a Shopaholic* unravels the story of main character Rebecca Bloomwood, a financial journalist, who is in a serious amount of debt through her shopping addiction. The second novel *Shopaholic Abroad* (also Known as *Shopaholic Takes Manhattan*) follows the story of Becky and her adventures when she's offered the chance to work in New York City. The third novel *Shopaholic Ties the Knot* focuses the story of Becky and her boyfriend (later fiancé) Luke Brandon as they become engaged and plan their wedding. The fourth book *Shopaholic and Sister* is the story of Becky and her husband Luke as they return from their ten-month long honeymoon. The Fifth novel *Shopaholic and Baby* is the story of Becky and her husband Luke as they navigate Becky's first pregnancy. The sixth book of Shopaholic Series *Mini Shopaholic*



focuses on the main character Rebecca, her husband Luke Brandon and their daughter Minnie. In *Shopaholic to the Stars* Becky sets her heart on a new career as she is going to be a stylist to the

stars. Choosing clutch bags and chasing celebrities, Becky loses touch with her family and her best friend. In *Shopaholic to the Rescue*, Becky is on a major rescue mission. She is on a road trip to Las Vegas to help her friends and family. She is determined to get to the bottom of why her dad has mysteriously disappeared, help her best friend Suze.

The Shopaholic Series, in fact, suggests shopping is an utterly enjoyable, even passionate experience for anybody and everybody. Arguably, though, Becky's devotion to shopping threatens the marginality looming in the background of the romance plot. While by definition a romance ends with a wedding, Becky's consumer driven tale readily includes the honeymoon, which offers tremendous shopping opportunities, and the first home, which opens up entirely new consumer avenues. Though she has a load of debts on her bank overdraft and credit card, nothing stops her from buying new clothes, shoes and other things which others may think as unnecessary.

The title of the book 'Shopaholic' refers to compulsive shopper. The term 'Shopaholic' implies addiction and pertains to buyers. Shopaholic is more likely to demonstrate compulsivity as a personality trait, has lower self-esteem, and is more prone to fantasy than the average consumer. A shopaholic fills his or her emptiness with object s/ he does not even need. The protagonist Rebecca Bloomwood is a shopaholic who is obsessed with shopping all throughout her life. She moves to New York and becomes a personal shopper, a career she enjoys and succeeds at. She has several credit cards, and a shopping addiction. She's a journalist for a gardening magazine but her dream is to join the fashion magazine *Alette*. Shopping enables her to invent a mainstream, ideal persona and, ultimately, realize an ideal life.

The cover pages of all books of this series by Sophie Kinsella are the pictures of women holding shopping bags and wearing sophisticated and feminine clothes. These cover pages depict women's obsession with shopping. Stephanie Harzewski in *Tradition and Displacement in the New*



Novel of Manners claims that Chick Lit's association with the color pink is no coincidence; the books participate in a "feedback loop with fashion trends, as pink for several seasons has been the new black" (35).

Lieberman and Lidner in their book *Unbalanced Accounts: Why Women Are Still Afraid of Money* illustrate women's attitude towards money as they say, "as they shop, the anxieties give way to pleasurable fanaticisms which offer a real, if brief sensation of relief" (162). Becky represents what Lieberman and Lindner denote. When Becky spends money it is not with the intention that this spending will lead to the overall improvements in her lifestyle. She hopes that these purchases will help her new appearance of affluent life style. Becky's view of money changes as emotional needs and anxieties change. Like most Chick Lit heroines, Becky enjoys the thrill of the new buy, and as is the case for most of them, her life deteriorates to a point where everything seems to be bleak, until she gives up her commodity worship to find happiness. Hence, while fashion allows her to keep up with the consumerist "Joneses" and briefly bask in the self-confidence it buys her, longer-lasting happiness is achieved only when capitalistic ambition is thwarted and the status quo is restored in the end. Becky Bloomwood is in a continual process of buying the trendiest thing on the market to create a newer, more improved version of herself. Shopping becomes a favorite sport of Becky. She becomes fond of buying new and branded dresses. As Becky denotes in *Confessions of a Shopaholic*, "I put on my new gray cardigan over a short black shirt, and my new Hobbs boots — dark gray suede — and I have to say, I look bloody good in them. God, I love new clothes. If everyone could just wear new clothes every day, I reckon depression wouldn't exist anymore." (171) When Becky shops, the world gets better for her. The female protagonist, Rebecca (Becky) Bloomwood exemplifies contemporary capitalistic society's acquisitive materialism. She is a consumer with a fashion fixation, enthralled by the Marxian mysterious powers of the high-fashion designer articles she purchases. Becky's obsessions with shopping reflect Jean Baudrillard's idea, elaborated in *The System of Objects* (1968), that advertisements teach consumers that they need to purchase commodities which will reflect their personalities. Becky is influenced by advertisements and addicted to shopping.



The characters of Chick Lit believe that the proper clothing (for example, a stylish business suit) can transform them into something they're not (a savvy businesswoman). Why do they believe buying these products will transform their lives? And when the products don't, as in the case of the Jigsaw suits, why don't the characters question their faith in material goods? Why is there such an emphasis on shopping? Why do these women have the same attitude toward career advancement as children who pretend what they "want to be when they grow up"? why people become consumerist. Someone becomes consumerist because of many reasons but this series explain that Rebecca becomes consumerist because her environment. She feels ugly and many people will laugh her when she wears unique thing or antique thing. Rebecca always wears fancy brands to show off her fashion sense. Psychoanalytic critics connect this activity of shopping with identity. They argue shopping is used to define both individual and social identities through pursuing imaginary ideal consumer objects. This means consumers consume products not only to satisfy our biological needs but also to carry out an ego project of identity formation. According to them, desire is the motivational force behind consumer's everyday experiences of buying objects. In Lacan's *Seminar Twenty On Feminine Sexuality* (1972-73), he discusses 'jouissance, another important concept used to explain the excited state of desire that moves children and adults alike to want to buy, as it devotes specific attention to passionate desire for the sake of desire. Desire, according to Lacan is the powerful emotional motivational force behind consumer's everyday experiences of longing for and fantasizing about particular consumer objects. For Rebecca, shopping is a way of life, her desire, her pleasure, ego satisfaction and as an activity of escapism. Becky's emotional needs are temporarily fulfilled by the idea of shopping and act of shopping because both are pleasurable activities. Her shopping compulsion offers her an escape from her dejection and promises her to outfit her with a sense of success. She is so crazy to buy the scarf. She says in *Confessions of a Shopaholic*, "Everyone I know in the entire world aspires to owning a Denny and George scarf. I have to have this scarf. I have to have it. It makes my eyes look bigger, it makes my haircut look more expensive, it makes me look like a different person. I'll be able to wear it with everything." (3) That green scarf is the iconic item that Becky wears and gets her the name "Girl in The Green



Scarf". Thus the desire for Scarf becomes Becky's vehicle for creating self. She continuously creates looks for herself, describing herself by what she wears, such as "the Girl in the Denny and George Scarf." She is the only woman in this series who is absolutely obsessed and drunk with the desire to select and purchase. This becomes a dirty secret when she discovers she is in trouble for spending more than she makes, beginning the string of lies that ties this plot together. While on a date with wealthy Tarquin, he brings up the subject of shopping and how she must love it. Trying to impress, she tells him that she hates shopping. "Really?" says Tarquin in surprise. "I 40 thought all girls loved shopping." Rebecca replies, "I'd far rather be...out on the moors, riding along. With a couple of dogs running behind" (219). She does not want to be known as a stereotypically frivolous, superficial female shopaholic, but she and the reader understand that this is exactly what she is. It stays a dirty secret until the end of the book, when her shopping and financial troubles actually land her a well-paying television. Thus, Becky is the perfect example of a shopaholic who dresses above her means and for her dreams.

Rebecca becomes "the girl in Vera Wang gown" when she wears this dress. The Vera Wang Gown figures prominently in the pivotal scene in *Shopaholic Takes Manhattan*. When She tries this dress she thinks, "I Had to have it. I had to... I was not me anymore. I was Grace Kelly. I was Gwyneth Paltrow..." (251). The dress transforms Becky into a princess, a movie star. This dress allows becky to look like the woman of her fantasies. Becky and Luke's relationship revolves around shopping and visting posh hotels and restaurants on both sides of Atlantics, benefits of Luke's financial and social status. In *Shopaholic Ties The Knot*, Becky and Luke's marriage is the ultimate display of conspicuous consumption. Becky's never ending search for perfect wedding dress illustrates her varies identities and dreams. When she wears the dress designed by her designer friend Danny and later her mother, Becky fulfills some of her dreams.

Rebecca's excessive shopping and buying habits are pathological and should be approached as such, for even if she attempts to improve the status of her finances and tries to modify her behavior, she never succeeds. For example, in an outing to a craft fair she firmly declares "I'm



really just going to keep Mum company, and I'm certainly not planning to buy anything." Notwithstanding, she gives in and buys ten handmade cards. After all, they were "amazing" and "only £1.50 each!" A short time later, she adds "a gorgeous blue ceramic plant holder with little elephants going round it" to her bounty (49). Rebecca simply cannot resist the urge to buy. Her tendency to compulsively and obsessively buy material goods renders her unable to curb her spending. One of Rebecca's attempts to take control of her finances consists on listening to her father's advice to "C.B." (or Cut Back). In typical shopaholic fashion though, instead of cutting back, Rebecca starts the C.B. process by spending money. As a first step, she buys a self-help book called *Controlling Your Cash*. Thus, instead of cutting back and reducing her spending, she goes shopping and buys more. When Rebecca has 12 credits card, she is satisfied but in other side she is frightened because she has big obligation. Having lost her Saturday job at a boutique, encountering her childhood neighbor and his girlfriend, Becky instantly draws her attention to the power of her purse strings to lessen her woes: "Twenty quid. I'll buy myself a nice cappuccino and a chocolate brownie. And a couple of magazines. And maybe something from Accessorize. Or some boots... God, I deserve a treat, after today. And I need some new tights for work, and a nail file. And maybe a book to read on the tube" (135). This uneven stream of consciousness typifies Becky's habitual shopping, and careless lack of self-control. For Cinderella, the answer to her life of subservience appears in the form of a glass slipper; in case of Becky, salvation from financial damage comes to her in the form of a new job as a financial expert in Morning Coffee. Although she gracefully solves the financial problems of those who come to the show with their money troubles, yet she remains in a state of 'danger' owing to her own indebted state. Thus, Kinsella describes Becky's habit of spending as a form of safe consumerism, i.e., even though she is in an unstable state, she never confronts effects for her compulsive spending.

Becky is successful in spite of and, in part, because of her consumption. Becky is intellectually vacuous and willing to take advantage of people, but she has style and can laugh at what are, after all, only typical feminine foibles. She plays into the Western hegemonic stereotype of 'woman' as an uncontrollable shopper. But finally the shopping habits of Becky range from



delightful to terrible. She is addicted to shopping, and she uncontrollably buys everything she likes, particularly clothing. Unfortunately, she can't afford any of it. She is thousands of pounds in debt, and she receives bills every day from VISA and Endwich Bank. She often denies her overspending, or rationalizes her actions. She usually refers to purchasing items as an investment, or claims that they are future Christmas/birthday gifts for friends. She refuses to meet with her bank manager, Derek Smeath, nor does she read his letters of concern. Becky always provides an excuse to postpone a bank meeting (broken leg, dead dog, gangrene, etc.). Her efforts on trying to cut back on her debt always fail, and she does little to stop herself from shopping even more.

In *Shopaholic and Sister* Becky is very happy that she has got a sister companion who would her in shopping but later she comes to the realization that going shopping for unnecessary items can be boring, but she had never been able admit it. During a visit at supermarket, Becky wants to enjoy shopping but Jess is on her case to save money and not buy unnecessary things. As she continues to ignore Jess and collect more items in her shopping cart, she warns Becky that if she continues to behave the way she is in storing up problems for herself: Luke will leave her. After a shopping trip at a supermarket, they have a falling-out with each other. Jess thinks she lives in a fantasy world and is a spoiled brat. In the next books of same series she is presented as consumer who is ready to shop for her baby who is about to born. She is planning to buy a new home. Becky is also planning a surprise party for Luke. She faces the financial problem of throwing a grand party. Thus her expenditures never end.

The shopping activities mentioned in this *Series* are also found in the real life. The women wear and dress up their family with the branded famous products before they go outside. That activity done by women is influenced by some factors such as the fever of Hollywood actor and actress that becomes trend. Besides, the private pleasure given by the branded products in the form of advertisement brainwashes women to buy a lot of branded products. Possessing branded products continually as the effect of the advertisement cause the booming of consumer society. Consumer



society means a society that devotes a high proportion of its income to luxurious goods and undertakes little saving.

Thus, Sophie Kinsella's descriptions of Becky Bloomwood's shopping sprees actually encourage women readers to indulge, rather than curb, their spending. Becky struggles to control her compulsive shopping habit, encouraged by the glossy advertisements that grace the pages of her favorite magazines. Through their depictions of this exaggerated consumer behavior, Kinsella ridicules the advice given by these publications and comment ironically on both women characters as readers and consumers.

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Trauma of Partition in 'Train to Pakistan'

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Abstract: The Partition of India has been one of the most traumatic experiences of our recent history. It disturbed the Indian psyche and also its social fabric. It brought to an abrupt end a long and communally shared history. Partition was and has remained a decisive event in India's social and political life, the reason being its volume and scope with regard to India. So, it was natural that it touched all and particularly the creative writers like Khushwant Singh. 'Train to Pakistan' enjoys the distinction of being the first novel which is by far the best and the most powerful novel on partition of India. Here, truth meets fiction with stunning impact as Khushwant Singh recounts the trauma and tragedy of partition through the stories of his characters, stories that he, his family and friends themselves experienced or saw enacted before their eyes. He evokes the peaceful and frightening phase before and after the partition of India and Pakistan.

KeyWords: Stunning, Trauma, Psyche, Enacted, Fabric& Culmination.

The Partition of India has been one of the most traumatic experiences of our recent history. It disturbed the Indian psyche and also its social fabric. It brought to an abrupt end a long and communally shared history. Partition was and has remained a decisive event in India's social and political life, the reason being its volume and scope with regard to India. So, it was natural that it touched all and particularly the creative writers like Khushwant Singh. 'Train to Pakistan' enjoys the distinction of being the first novel which is by far the best and the most powerful novel on partition of India. Here, truth meets fiction with stunning impact as Khushwant Singh recounts the trauma and tragedy of partition through the stories of his characters, stories that he, his family and



friends themselves experienced or saw enacted before their eyes. He evokes the peaceful and frightening phase before and after the partition of India and Pakistan.

The freedom of India from British rule in 1947 and the splitting of the country into Muslim dominated country of Pakistan and the Hindu dominated country of India, is the greatest event in the history of modern India. What should have been the joyful culmination of decades of anti-British struggle, became a shameful debacle as Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs turned on each other in a fury of religious bigotry. The violence surrounding partition is the main subject of *Train to Pakistan*.

The writer recreates a tiny village in the Punjab countryside and its people during that fateful summer, when the flood of refugees and the inter-communal blood-letting from Bengal to the Northwest Frontier at last touches them; many ordinary men and women are bewildered, victimized and torn apart. The village, Mano Majra, is on the railway-line near where it crosses the swelling Sutlej, its inhabitants, mostly Sikh farmers and their Muslim tenants have remained relatively untouched by the violence of the previous months. The village money lender, a Hindu, is murdered. Jugga, a roughneck Sikh and a clean shaven visitor, Iqbal Singh are rounded up, and the things change for the worse when an east-bound train, full of corpses, makes an unscheduled stop at Mano Majra.

There have been many stories of Hindu and Sikh refugees being killed as they fled their homes from what was now Pakistan, but the arrival of this train was the first such incident witnessed by the villagers. Mano Majra turns into a battlefield of conflicting loyalties which none can control. In the stirring climax, it is left to Jugga, the village gangster to redeem himself by saving many Muslim lives.

The traumatic experience of the partition shook Khushwant Singh to the core of his being and the inhuman and savage killings of the innocent people envenomed his heart. The mortifying and spine chilling incidents of August 1947 had shaken the faith of people in the nobility of mankind. Khushwant Singh is also greatly disillusioned and his presumption regarding man and life



is all shattered. The inner struggle and agony raging with in him is brought about by Suja Alexander in her work 'Personal Concerns Go Public In Train to Pakistan'.

The beliefs that Singh had cherished all his life were shattered. He had believed in innate goodness of the common man. But the division of India had been accompanied by the most savage massacres known in the history of the country.... He had believed that Indians were peace-loving and non-violent After the experience of the autumn of 1947, he could no longer subscribe to these views.

While India achieved independence, the world had the chance to watch the rarest event in the history of nation: the birth of twins – India and Pakistan. It was a birth accompanied by strife and suffering. Zar, Zoru and Zameen (wealth, woman and land), all three so beloved to man were brutally violated. Almost ten million crossed a sketchy line drawn by a crumbling empire. Only half of them reached an alien land they were forced to call home. Migrating men used their women's odhnis to wrap up whatever they could salvage of their wealth – treasures accumulated over generations tied in three yards of cloth and ran in opposing directions. Hindus to the east, Muslims to the west. Mansions were deserted, acres left behind, families cut to half. The entire geography of sub continent was soaked in blood.

As the novel opens, the very first sentence refers to the calamitous year of 1947. It was the time when the country which was in fetters for two hundred years, freed itself from the foreign yoke. The weather itself is symbolic of the complicated scenario, the newly born polity was confronting:

The summer of 1947 was not like other Indian summers. Even the weather had a different feel in India that year. It was hotter than usual, and drier and dustier. And the summer was longer there was no rain. People began to say that God was punishing them for their sins.

As the division of the country is formally announced, communal riots overshadow the changes taking place in India. There are references to important cities like Calcutta which are lifelines of the country, brutally torn apart by the riots claiming lives of thousands of people. The country that should celebrate the newly won independence of its citizens has to mourn for their



tragic deaths. In the border states of Bengal, Bihar there are people who are forced to abandon their homes to save their lives. Those who refuse to go are brutally murdered.

The refugees travelled on foot, in bullock-carts, trains and collided with swarms of Muslims fleeing to Pakistan for safety, which for them is their promised land. Both the sides hold each other responsible for the destruction and bloodshed. But the novelist holds a true, impartial view:

The fact is both sides killed. Both shot and stabbed and speared and clubbed. Both tortured. Both raped. From Calcutta, the riots spread north and east and west: to Noakhali in East-Bengal, where Muslims massacred Hindus; to Bihar, where Hindus massacred Muslims. Mullahs roamed the Punjab and the Frontier-Province with boxes of human skulls said to be those of Muslims killed in Bihar.

The summer of 1947 brought in its wake migration of ten million people – Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs as the creation of new state of Pakistan was formally announced. Within a month or two, almost a million of them were dead. The winds of terrorism were blowing all over northern India. There were only a few places in the remote reaches of the frontier that were able to maintain peace.

One of these places was the village of Mano Majra. It is a small in this village, close to the Indo – Pakistan border and serves as the setting of the novel. For centuries in this village, Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs have loved each other as brothers and lived together in peace. But this tiny village becomes the target of communal conflict and violence generated by the partition:

Mano Majra is a tiny place. It has only three brick buildings, one of which is the home of money lender Lala Ram Lal. The other two are the Sikh temple and the mosque There are only about seventy families in Mano Majra, and Lala Ram Lal's is the only Hindu family. The others are Sikhs or Muslims, about equal in number It is the local deity, the Deo to which all the villagers repair secretly whenever they are in special need of blessing.

The villagers therefore, represent the true spirit of India and Deo the local deity becomes the symbol of communal harmony who is worshipped by the whole village disregarding the religion, caste and creed. Before the partition, the life in Mano Majra remained unaffected by political events



of the country. But the changes taking place in the country after independence effect the smooth lives of Mano Majrans as the village is caught in the whirlwind of partition. Mano Majra is located near Sutlej river. The river is symbolic of the smooth course of life in the village. It also stands for vitality which is reflected in the lives of Mano Majrans as the village symbolizes secular values of the nation.

One of the symbol of continuity of life is the railway-station of Mano Majra. In contrast to the village, which is a fixed point in space, the train is a symbol of movement. The train signifies groups of people heading towards various destinations. Train is also a symbol of machine age, leading to the increasing degree of dehumanization. The villagers' activities are patterned according to the arrival and departure of the train and is the only source which links the village to the outer world. Trains therefore, service as life-force for the villagers:

All this has made Mano Majra very conscious of trains the driver blows two long blasts of the whistle. In an instant, all Mano Majra comes awake. Crows begin to caw in the keekar trees. The mullah at the mosque stands facing West towards Mecca and with his fingers in his ears cries in long sonorous notes, Allah-ho-akbar. Then the priest at the Sikh temple intones his prayer.

In the novel, the village is not presented as a place of perfect idyllic bliss. The peaceful life of the village is disrupted by the dacoits who murder the village moneylender Lala Ram Lal and loot him of all his property. Such violent incidents in the novel are a prelude to what is going to happen later on. It foreshadows the disaster that is soon to follow. Writes Khushwant Singh, "The life in Mano Majra is stilled, save for the dogs barking at the trains that pass in the night". It had always been so, until the summer of 1947". The words are a premonition of what will happen in the later course of the novel.

At the time when the dacoity takes place, the hero of the novel, Juggut Singh has been to the fields to see his beloved Nooran, the daughter of the village Mullah, Imam Baksh. Their love is unconditional as it transcends the barriers of religion – a Muslim weaver girl and a Sikh boy. Later



on, it is in the same village that the innocence of their love is shattered by the brutal and savage forces of partition.

To the north of the railway bridge, is an officer's rest house where people of eminence, who come to Mano Majra, make a temporary stay. On one such morning before the dacoity, Hukum Chand, the district magistrate and deputy commissioner visit the place. He has been deployed there to avert any kind of communal trouble in the area. His conversation with the sub-inspector reveals the naked dance of death in the country immediately after partition:

God is merciful. We have escaped it so far. The convoys of dead Sikhs have been coming through at Amritsar. Now one person living! The Sikhs retaliated by attacking a Muslim refugee train and sending it across the border with over a thousand corpses. They wrote on the engine, Gift to Pakistan.

The delineation of all these changes taking place in the country show how the satanic and evil forces of enmity and hatred have replaced the moral and secular values of the nation. Even the politicians are busy playing mind games. They can do nothing for a changed and transformed polity like India. Their decision to divide the nation on religious lines was a tragic blunder. The novelist pokes a bitter satire on these demagogues by making the sub-inspector his mouthpiece: "What do the Gandhi caps in Delhi know about Punjab? They haven't had their mothers, wives, sisters and daughters raped and murdered in the streets".

The people who were entrusted with the task of maintaining peace, law and order were burning with the fire of communal hatred. The police and the higher administration was involved in inflicting ruthless cruelties upon people in India and Pakistan. Ironically, the saviours were performing demonic acts that question the basic ethics and norms of humanism in India or the world in any decade or era.

It was on the morning after the dacoity that Iqbal Singh enters the village. He becomes the object of novelist's bitter sarcasm. He calls himself a social worker and has been sent there by his party to create awareness among villagers regarding partition of India, so as to prevent any kind of communal violence as Mano Majra is a vital place for refugee movements. He comes with the



objective of reforming the simple villagers whom he finds uncivilized, but later on a ruffian like Jugga, whom he abhors turns out to be a better person who saves the values of humanity proving Iqbal Singh to be a self centered man and a perfect failure. Kamal Mehta in his essay Train to Pakistan: A Study of the Partition and its impact on the People says: “Iqbal is a nice satirical portraiture of the pseudo intellectual and the progressive elite class that criticizes all others but is itself impotent to contribute anything during the ordeal....”

The fractured independence that India attained is of least importance to these villagers. Their views on newly attained independence of the country is an eye opener. “... Educated people will get jobs the English had we were slaves of the English; now we will be slaves of educated Indians or the Pakistanis”. The analysis is indeed starting. The irony of the whole situation is that when India got Independence, people were forcibly transported to new destinations and had to leave everything behind.

In the beginning, the peace loving inhabitants of the train-conscious Mano Majra were not at all affected by what happened in the country. They were ignorant of the rampant killing and bloodshed all over the north of the country. But it was in September that the things started changing in Mano Majra. It was one morning that a train from Pakistan arrived at Mano Majra railway station. The train had something ominous about it. It was not like any other train as its arrival created a standstill in Mano Majra. The train was obviously from Pakistan and it was carrying dead bodies of innocent people. There was a deadly silence in the village. Everyone had a hint of what the train was carrying. In the evening, the people went to the Gurudwara to seek solace.

The train which is a symbol of journey, of life, of connecting people from different places becomes a ghostly reality of dead being loaded from across the border as well as from midst of mayhem, both Sikhs and Muslims prayed for peace and tranquility. That evening things changed in Mano Majra. Whatever happened cast its gloom over the entire village. No one remained unaffected whether he was a simple and religious man like the village mullah or a bureaucrat like Hukum Chand. Imam Baksh did not chant the prayers out of Holy Koran that day. same was true for Meet Singh and like him all the villagers had lost their peace of mind.



The entire Mano Majra was bleeding. Everybody was thinking of the bloodshed and violence that was spreading its tentacles over edenic world of the village:

Muslims sat and moped in their houses. Rumours of atrocities committed by Sikhs on Muslims in Patiala, Ambala and Kapurthala, which they had heard and dismissed, came back to their minds. They had heard of gentle women having their veils taken off, being stripped and marched down crowded streets to be raped in the market place

As Alok Bhalla puts it in these words in his Stories About the Partition of India:

The partition had broken the covenant that men must make with men, castes with castes, religion with other tolerant religions, without which our survival is precarious and our enslavement by the barbarian is certain.

For every Muslim of Mano Majra, every Sikh was now a stranger with an evil intent. The atmosphere of love was now replaced by that of fear and suspicion. Muslims started recognizing the Sikhs as their enemies since ages. To them, their beard and long hair as well as kirpan was something that was anti-Muslim. For the first time, the name Pakistan came to them as a heaven of refuge – A Promised Land for the Muslims, where there were no Sikhs. The Sikhs on the other hand recollected the words of their Guru: “Never trust a Mussulman”. .. what had they done to Sikhs? Executed two of their Gurus, assassinated another and butchered his infant children”.

The sadistic violence on the other side of the border had created clear cut divisions in the village. Though people of virtue and wisdom still trusted each other, but were hopeless in front of the decisions taken by the government of India. The Muslims had no other option but to leave Mano Majra. Meet Singh assured Imam Baksh, “As long as we are here nobody will dare to touch you. We die first and then, you look after your selves”.

Partition indeed was a great human tragedy caused by politics of the day bringing in its wake untold miseries, sufferings and indignity to the affected man, women and children because they were uprooted savagely from their ancestral hearth and home, while warring communities on both sides were after their blood. The scar of partition had created a deep wedge between the two communities that rendered them helpless. Muslims of Mano Majra were taken to Chundunnugger



refugee camp from where they will move to their new nation Pakistan. Sadly this change had occurred overnight.

By evening, Mano Majra had forgotten about the departure of its Muslims and their attention was diverted by the rise in the level of river Sutlej. It seemed as if the river had been turned into a death-bed. "Its turbid water carried carts with the bloated carcasses of bulls still yoked to them. There were also men and women with their clothes clinging to their bodies ...". The Sutlej tragedy was thrown into background by another train loaded of corpses from Pakistan. The dead bodies had to be buried. So, a bulldozer arrived. Like a monster, it started eating up the earth. "The place looked like the scar of a healed up wound".

The demonic forces of violence had been playing with the sentiments of innocent villagers. In the name of values taught by Sikhism, the fundamentalists in Mano Majra wanted to satisfy their violent instincts. In order to avenge the murder of those who were killed, these people wanted to kill innocent Muslims of Mano Majra. It seemed as if they had lost their sanity and were acting like lunatics. Malli and four of his companions stepped over the threshold and promised each other to participate in this act whole heartedly. The irony of the entire situation is that they were going to commit heinous crime of mass-murder in the name of god. Bharati A. Parikh in her critical work *Train to Pakistan: Humanity at Stake* says:

The novel sets the tone of forthcoming doom. The naked dance of death moves forward unabated. The puny politicians failed to gauge the devastating impact of horror and holocaust on the minds and lives of millions of citizens The death lurks all around....

At that point of time, the diplomat Hukum Chand plays his trick and orders the sub-inspector to release both the prisoners – Juggut Singh and Iqbal Singh. His plan to release Jugga was to avert the tragedy that was going to leave its nasty mark forever on Mano Majra within a few hours. In a situation, where a diplomat failed to take any decision, the lover succeeded. It is his indulgence in Haseena, a prostitute that prompted him to release Jugga as he was aware of Jugga's love for Nooran, the Muslim weaver girl.



When Jugga comes to know about evacuation of Muslims from Mano Majra, his immediate concern is his beloved Nooran. He is a true valiant who has decided his course of life. Jugga goes to Gurudwara to pay obeisance to God before the final act. His prayers are different from the vows of the fundamentalists as the former comprises of piety and the later is a sham. Though a ruffian, he proves to be a real hero in the end. The way morning brings hope, Jugga is the hope for humanity in his own way. He has now transcended his earthly character. He has conviction that by saving the innocent Muslims, he is going to do something good. Ironically, this illiterate and budmash rustic comes to represent the values ever honoured by India.

Juggut Singh's love is indeed a positive and dynamic force in the novel as it cuts across all the barriers. When the men with power and authority sulk in their chamber in indifference and inactivity, religious men and politicians recoil in fright and timidity, it is Jugga, the romantic deviant who boldly combats the forces of darkness and death. He sacrifices himself in an attempt to save his beloved Nooram and consequently saves the lives of thousands of Mano Majran Muslims targeted for massacre. His indomitable courage and unconquerable will averts the gloom of inhuman violence surrounding the village and marks him as the symbol of undying goodness, love and self sacrifice.

Khushwant Singh through this event compels us to consider what man has made of man. The peace loving people of Mano Majra are injected with the venom of communalism and egoism by the people in power only to further their own nest. His heroic death is a sacrifice that unmasks the hypocritical and Machiavellian civilized society. The freedom of the country was never a simple and peaceful process. It cost the lives of millions of people of undivided India. It showed incapability of the nationalist elite to bring a peaceful transfer of power. The rape of women, castration of men, loot, murder, arson, bloodshed was failure of patriarchal nation state to protect the honour of its men and women.

In the end, it is the pure love of a Sikh boy Jugga and a Muslim weaver girl Nooran which transcends all that is earthly and raises itself to eternity. The fanatics have planned to murder all the Muslims of Mano Majra who are going to Pakistan by train. But the train is carrying Jugga's beloved Nooran. In order to save her life, he risks his own life and meets his tragic end.



It is his devotional love for Nooran which wins over the communal conspiracy of the fundamentalists. Jugga's selfless love for Nooran elevates itself over all the barriers of selfishness, greed, hatred or communal barriers of caste, creed, religion and reveals the failure of Hukum Chand as diplomat and Iqbal as socialist. Jugga's beloved Nooran, whom he will never be able to marry moves to Pakistan. His child growing in her womb is symbolic of moral earnestness which the politicians, bureaucrats, socialists of that time lacked. The novelist with his acerbic prose effectively highlights the brutality of partition which brought for the people of Mano Majra separation, the people who had been living peacefully for centuries together.

Train to Pakistan is the story everyone wants to forget yet one cannot overlook this inevitable, inescapable stark reality of our past. When the nation was on the threshold of a new dawn, it also faced unprecedented destruction, bloodshed and trauma. Khushwant Singh has successfully delineated this unpleasant phase of our national history in the novel. He has presented Mano Majra as a microcosm of the communal temper of the country during the days of partition. It is the self sacrificing love of Jugga that breaks the rule of the jungle, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. On this battleground of Mano Majra, the forces of evil are vanquished by one of the forces of good, that is love.

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Politics of Subjugation and (Re) locating Marginality: Reflection on Social Identity in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*

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Abstract: Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Hungry Tide* tells the story of the margins. Its background itself lies on the margin of West Bengal and it depicts the almost unheard story of the refugees coming in the 1970's. These refugees are powerless group without financial, commercial and political power. Still they have become victims of politics. The story of their lives has not found space in Bengali elite society and its voice has remained muted. Ghosh brings out the almost untold story in fictional garb. It recounts the final hours of turbulence in Morichjhapi island¹ which was forcibly cleared of refugees by police and military troops following a protracted siege. Peter Leonard defines marginality as, "...being outside the mainstream of productive activity and/ or social reproductive activity". There has been scarcity of fiction dealing with the turbulent lives of the Sundarban as there was political suppression. Ghosh takes interest in depiction of subjugation of the refugee people who took shelters in that area. They were excluded from the power and position found at the centre. In Sundarban natural phenomenon has always co-existed in conflicting situation with the mankind.² This novel is a narrative of dispossession and it challenges colonial history on the Indian subcontinent. Ghosh focuses on the tragedy of the personal lives against a massive historical sweep of Morichjhapi massacre. Ghosh has taken proper care to depict the milieu, customs, tradition and human beings' effort to carve out a new civilisation on the almost deserted land. The people are on the margins as government with its panoptical gaze has tried to silence them with its vicious political persecution. Ghosh calls into question the official narrative of political control. It is marginal people's narrative, thematically registering different histories of dispossession and migration and further setting forth the cultural significance of a smaller island. This island has remained as other world to most of urban citizens but it, in Ghosh's vision, proves to be an ideal world giving shelter to all the people irrespective of caste, class, religion, race,



ethnicity. Ghosh tries to point out marginal situation in a post-independence world from multiple points of view.

Keywords: Subaltern, margin, history, refugee, partition etc.

Partition of India has always been regarded as the most pertinent event in modern India. It was consummated in 1947. But its after-effects have structured the social life and nature of South Asia in a new way. It reduced both the citizens and refugees to stateless objects as they were evicted from their motherland and they had to embrace the unfamiliar soil as their abodes. In Indian continent it could be compared to the Holocaust of German. Ayesha Jalal calls this partition as-“A defining moment that is neither beginning nor end, partition continues to influence how the peoples and states of Postcolonial South Asia envisage their past, present and future” (4). Therefore, it was a dark period in Indian history as it led to the formation of a new nation-a nation which, metaphorically speaking, rose out of the ashes of burnt down country. Ultimately, India became able to shake off the chain of bondage from British rule but partition claimed many lives. The colonial force left India but it marked new scars. Therefore, many of the Indians think that the real freedom is yet to be achieved. Nehru thinks that, India had fulfilled a “tryst with destiny”³ with its attainment of Independence. But in the later years people have watched sites of pain. As a result, lakhs of people could not help bearing the brunt of partition. People of West Punjab and East Punjab left their homelands in thousands and they underwent excruciating torture in the hands of the orthodox Muslim who belonged to the major community in the then period. The partition of the country brought many hazards at the outset. Politicians of both sides could conjecture that it would somehow affect the countrymen. But they could not imagine how it would bring disastrous result upon the social life, values and passions of Bengalese. People could have the glimpse of several waves of exodus which took place after the Independence. But the exodus from East Bengal could not get public limelight as prominently as it found in the western front. The condition of the dalits became far more wretched and piteous. “Partition,” as Annu Jalais thinks, “however, meant that Dalits lost their bargaining power when they were divided along religious lines of Hindus and



Muslims and became politically marginalised minorities in both countries.” Ghosh has taken the real history from 1970’s decade and has enlivened it with his power of imagination.

Refugee problem is not any new issue. This problem has been going on for hundreds of years. But this problem has reached to the extreme in modern period. There is distinctive historical background associated with each refugee problem and refugee movement. We call him refugee when he is uprooted from his country home forcefully. In her book *The Greater Common Good* Arundhati Roy has dealt with the history of crores of natives⁴ who have been displaced from their own homes when the government planned to set up projects and urbanization. Both the migrant and refugees shared the spirit of bonhomie and solidarity and their almost equal experience of marginalisation brought them together over a common cause. Once the borders were established, about 14.5 million people crossed the borders to the relatively safety areas of religious majority. According to the census of 1951, 7.226 million Muslims went to Pakistan from India and 3.5 million Hindus moved from East Bengal to India. Though they could be said the citizens of newly independent India, the question of a threat to national security easily came to one’s mind. According to some estimates, more than 10 million Bangladeshi refugees escaped in 1971 and took shelter in India.

Ghosh has written this novel about the poorer Bengalees from East Bengal who came to West Bengal after 1971. Those people were sent to various inhospitable areas outside West Bengal and were assured that they would be relocated in West Bengal in gradual course of time. Since then they were considered to be the second ‘class citizens’ of the state-The government, she said, saw these people as squatters and land-grabbers; there was going to be trouble; they would not be allowed to remain” (*The Hungry Tide*, 190). Under the aegis of Dandakaranya Project⁵, the refugees were sent to the semi-arid and rocky places and thus, they were removed both culturally and physically from their familiar world. The communist party burst in protest against this evil treatment on the refugees and promised that they would provide suitable rehabilitation when they would come to power. They could not acclimatise themselves with the unhygienic weather and



rocky soil and therefore, they were expecting rehabilitation in the uninhabited islands of the Sundarban. Actually, Sundarban has long been treated as immense archipelago situated between the vast Indian ocean to the south and the fertile plains of Bengal to the north. The early inhabitants left the place due to the severe depredations of pirates. Ghosh has given most recent account of East Bengali Hindu refugees who were seeking shelter on the island of Morichjhapi in the late 1970s. The Sundarban has always exerted fascination over the Bengalese psyche. W.W. Hunter devotes an entire book to the Sundarbans where he makes a passing reference only to the people as “few wandering gangs”. Hunter’s tradition continues even to this day. One can only find the segregated history of the inhabitants. There is a pervasive silence on the social and human facets of the region.

Political history changed a few years later and left front came in power. But they brushed aside the problems of refugees. In this situation thousands of refugees returned to West Bengal as they yearned to set up there by eking out hard work. At first they seemed to be free from the relative oppression and exploitation that they had undergone in the hands of Muslim communalists and upper class Hindus. Gradually, this situation came to an end but they found themselves pitted against the government. Indeed, “the government had made it known that they would stop at nothing to evict the settlers: anyone suspected of helping them was sure to get into trouble” (*Hungry Tide* 122). Thousands of families took shelter on Morichjhapi. It was an island situated beyond Kumirbari and the refugees demanded nothing but legal citizenship. Surprisingly, they were marked as devastators and government accused them of undeservedly plotting against the state. They were treated as betrayers and therefore, forced to decamp from the place. The government blocked the Morichjhapi Island on 24th January of 1979 and later this island was completely isolated from the mainland. As a result, the refugees could not get minimum elements of sustenance for living on this island. So, many of them fell victim to death due to lack of medicine and food. Still in a short passage of time, they turned it into habitable place, and made it a perfect replica of a civilization. They set up school, bread factory and raised the river bank. It was regrettable that no newspaper⁶ except ‘Kalantar’, ‘Janani’, and ‘Jugantar’ came afore to publish the news which was related to Morichjhapi. Bengal intellectuals like Sunil Gangyopadhyay, Niranjana Halder, journalist



Jyotirmoy Sengupta, Sukhranjan Sengupta dwelt heavily upon the ill-treatment on the inhabitants of Morichjhapi. Actually the then chief minister declared Act 144 on Morichjhapi for the journalists lest the press should support the public sentiment and the efforts of the refugees and their militancy and self-importance.

Indeed, the inhabitants of this island were not thought to be human-beings and social beings. So, they were thought as miscreants, anti-socialists and outsiders making congregation in an island. People were not allowed to enter Morichjhapi without special permission and those persons who were attempting to enter were imprisoned for a few days. Refugees living there were considered “forbidden people inhabiting a forbidden land”. Police imposed economic blockade on the inhabitants of the island. The refugees were the wretched of Bengal of that particular period. Government also played hide-and-seek with them and they were kept in rigid subjugation. So, when the refugees attempted to occupy one of the uninhabited island and turned it into habitable and developed one, the government came down upon them with all the mighty force. Thus, there was “a confrontation with the authorities that resulted in a lot of violence” (26). The government attacked them with the pretext of preserving eco-system. Actually the government tried to show off its power and drove the people to the periphery zone of almost non-existence. The refugee people set up the settlement camps in economically marginalised land within Sundarban areas. Still it boosted grievance from the part of the authority.

Ghosh presents this history through reflective memory and subjective voice, through a part of ‘family history’ of Kusum and oral telling of painful experiences by Nirmal. Kusum was a native woman of the tide country and she was fated to undergo excruciating pain. She became widow at her early age and therefore, she had to seek new home. At this time she got mingled with some ill-fated persons who are described as “ghosts, covered in dust”. The life-story of these ill-fated persons would gradually take the shape of a history of Morichjhapi. So, they were on the way to build new home. The refugees’ struggle for a niche in Sundarban can be identified as the metaphoric reclamation of voice in New Left Front West Bengal.



Amitav Ghosh has tried to recover history. This history of Morichjhapi contains several events, persons, their ideas that got suppressed at some period of Indian history. But writer has tried to reconstruct the past and its hidden remnants. He tries to fill up the gaps with remarkable understanding correcting the errors. In his acceptance of the Nobel Prize in 1957 Camus writes, “The Writer’s function is not without its arduous duties. By definition, he cannot serve today those who make history; he must serve those who are subject to it” (quoted in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*). History as Gandhiji thought may be collected record of conquests but literature changes its focus and emphasizes upon the lived realities. But it is a truthful matter that the stories of the subaltern have been silenced both at the level of the state and at the level of the history writing. Resultantly, many facets of histories have emerged instead of one facet in the course of history writing. However, one can recover the “voice” throughout different modes. Some may be contemporary, having the immediacy and reflecting the concerns of the here and now. But others may be reflective because they can come after a gap of many years. The history of this reflective voice is important and written by others. People try to define their own identities but there are conflicts about the manner how these identities get represented. A voice reads into and interprets other voices. The former voice tries to recollect and reconstructs events from that voice. This voice helps in recording the memories of the real people. Thus, one can gaze at history and other associated things throughout the memory.

Their remembering voice pertinently reveals that they are the victims of partition. They are the neglected subjects of history. Still, they can build a community, the same nation in unison because “we shared the same tongue, we were joined in our bones; the dreams they had dreamt were no different from my own” (165). Ghosh here unequivocally suggests that nations and communities are not imagined by the elite class alone. Powerless, dispossessed, poor people also have something to contribute to the construction of nation. Ghosh has given details about the civilisation that was developing due to the hardship of the new comers in course of time:



They had set up their own government and taken a census-there was some thirty thousand people on the island already and there was space for many more. The island had been divided into five zones and each family of settlers had been given five acres of land. (172)

This is the starting point of a new history which would come in conflict with the mainstream history of government. This written down history is enriched by the direct experience of Kusum who fell victim to the whimsicality of history. She narrates her own history and Nirmal records that story in his journal. This story became inseparable part of history and forms the backdrop of this.

Those people become marginalised. Marginality is the condition of being subordinate by others. 'Marginal' refers to the individuals who exist in the society but cannot properly mediate themselves to its norms. The upper class tried to marginalise the lower class in every possible way. Marginality is a bad experience and it forbids the individual to obtain the resources of society. An individual is obstructed from participating even in local life. Peter Leonard defines "marginality" thus: "...being outside the mainstream of productive activity and/or social reproductive". The Encyclopaedia of Public Health defines marginalised groups as, "To be marginalised is to be placed in the margins, and thus excluded from the privilege and power found at the center". Latin thinks that, "Marginal groups can always be identified by members of dominant society, and will face irrevocable discrimination" (qtd in Saksena Devesh). Marginality exists in a society which severely experiences the transformation and turmoil. This text looks forward to analysing the participation of the marginalised groups in local area with different degree of decentralisation. Those groups fight against the oppressive situation, corruption and injustice and ultimately reveal the misdeeds of the authorities. Here, the refugee people are marginalised. They have been considered as fringe claimants to the status of the citizenship. These homeless people come to background of history and emerge as the new subalterns. They suffer from deprivation and are distanced from power. So, their subject position is plural and this position problematizes their subalternity. They have been pushed to the margins. In this novel individual is placed in crisis point and they are pitted against the state apparatus. It unambiguously describes the relationship between the state and the citizen. State is important part of governance in India. The governance includes the government, political parties



and several other interest groups. It also includes the administrative section and the bureaucracy. Bureaucracy occupies a central part in implementing policy. It is the source of power of the state where the state constructs its hegemony with the dominant classes. The government served as the oppressive power. This novel documents peoples who are victimised by the postcolonial nation-state. So, those victimised people burst in protest against the government's oppression and seek help of media:

We need to let people know what we're doing and why we're here. We have to tell the world about all we've done and all've achieved. Can you help us with this? Do you have contacts with the press in Kolkata? (172).

Govt plays the role of the elite section and so tried to suppress the dissent voice of the refugee people so that those poorer people who are only seeking lands to inhabit may be wiped out in a massacre by the state. In this respect one can recollect the unequivocal comment of Neil Bissoondath in *A Casual Brutality*:

As they (the colonizers) exploited us, so we (the post colonials) exploited each other ...We had absorbed the attitudes of the colonizer, and we mimicked the worst in him. We learnt none of his virtues. (200-201, Bissoondath, Neil)

We know that the native was once subaltern during colonial rule as the English people treated them in inhuman way. The country has achieved freedom but this idea of the subaltern still perpetrates in the post colonial period through different entities. It is an enchanting book of Ghosh, which captures the rudimentary but neglected piece of history. This history is set in apparently exotic place but Ghosh has been careful enough to depict the milieu, customs, tradition and human beings' effort to carve out a new civilisation on the almost deserted land. The people are groping to find the center but they fail to find the hope and only stand on the the margins as government with its panoptical gaze has tried to silence them with its vicious political persecutioun. Ghosh calls into question the traditional official narrative of political control. This narrative exclusively forms part of the marginal people and it thematises different histories of dispossession and migration and



points out the value and cultural significance of a smaller island. This island may appear as another world to most of the urban citizens. But it is a visionary world-an ideal space-which gives shelter to all the people irrespective of caste, religion, race, ethnicity etc. Ghosh has been successful to point out marginal situation in post-independence world from multiple points of view.

Notes

1. Morichjhapi was uninhabited island set in a mangrove forest and the massacre committed there was known as Morichjhapi massacre in which several hundred people died but the actual number is still in mystery.
2. Sundarban was once believed to be the habitable place for pirates, *tantric* etc. We get a reference in Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's *Kapalkundala*. People always tried to avoid this place because of rough weather.
3. 'Tryst with Destiny' was a famous speech delivered by Nehru on the eve of India's Independence, towards midnight on 15 August 1947.
4. Adivasi people became specially affected due to the projects though Indian constitution gives special status to them. Roy became concerned at the construction of Sardar Sarovar reservoir.
5. Dandakaranya Project run by Dandakaranya Development Authority and headed by Saibal Kumar Gupta was formed to resettle the Bengali refugees in Orissa and Chattishgarh.
6. News could not be leaked because everyone was debarred from entering into this area and there was no social media or social site at that time to spread news.

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. Meaning, Scope and Aim of Cultural Studies

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Abstract: ‘Cultural studies’ is an interdisciplinary area of research and teaching that studies everyday lived culture and examines meanings, ideas, behaviour, values, beliefs and attitudes held by a community. These meanings are generated and controlled by those in power. Cultural studies focuses on the politics of culture and its history by relating aspects of culture to social class, nationality, ethnicity and gender. The present paper examines the meaning, scope and aim of cultural studies.

Keywords: Culture, masses, power, meanings, ideology.

‘Cultural studies’ is an interdisciplinary area of research and teaching that examines the manner in which individual experiences, everyday life, social relations and power are created and transformed by culture. Thus, everyday lived culture forms the main focus of study for this research field. It examines not just the specific elements of a culture, but also the manner of everyday living in any society. Cultural studies is an amalgamation of various theories such as the political theory, feminist theory, social theory, history, philosophy, media theory and film studies. It hypothesizes about the dynamics from which all human beings work out their daily lives.

Cultural studies came to be established as a competent and independent field of study with the opening up of Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies or The Birmingham School at the University of Birmingham in the UK in 1964 under the directorship of Richard Hoggart. Its commencement is connected with the rise of popular culture. Hoggart was assisted by Stuart Hall in directing this centre. Hall took over as the Director of the centre in 1969 after Hoggart’s retirement, and effectively administered till 1979, passing on the directorship to Richard Johnson. Later in 1999, a new Department of Cultural Studies and Sociology (CSS) was formed after the annulment



of The Birmingham School. This department was also abruptly dissolved in 2002, inciting a massive international protest. Hall, Raymond Williams, Paul Willis, Dick Hebdige, Tony Jefferson, Michael Green and Angela Mc Robbie are the main proponents of this field of study.

The term 'cultural studies' evades an exact definition. Even the scope and objectives of this academic discipline cannot be fit into a particular consolidated methodology or a theory. Several theorists have pointed towards this ambiguity. Colin Sparks in "The evolution of cultural studies ..." expresses the difficulty of defining the term precisely. He expresses the impossibility of drawing a sharp line and marking the proper province of cultural studies. He also articulates the futility of having a unified theory or methodology that is typical to cultural studies. He states: "A veritable rag-bag of ideas, methods and concerns from literary criticism, sociology, history, media studies, etc. are lumped together under the convenient label of cultural studies" (14). Simon During in 'Introduction' to his work, *Cultural Studies Reader*, also observes that cultural studies "is not an academic discipline quite like others. It possesses neither a well-defined methodology nor clearly demarcated fields for investigation" (1). Stuart Hall, the famous Jamaican-born cultural theorist, political activist and sociologist in his work, "Cultural studies and its theoretical legacies," gives reasons for the inconclusiveness and indefiniteness of this research field:

Cultural studies has multiple discourses; it has a number of different histories. It is a whole set of formations; it has its own different conjunctures and moments in the past. It included many different kinds of work. It was 'centres' only in quotation marks, in a particular kind of way which I want to define in a moment. It had many trajectories; many people had and have different trajectories through it; it was constructed by a number of different methodologies and theoretical positions, all of them in contention. (99)

The word 'culture' is derived from the Greek word 'cultura' which means 'to cultivate.' Pramod K. Nayar in his work, *An Introduction to Cultural Studies*, elaborates on the meaning of culture as meant in cultural studies. Culture as meant in cultural studies is a mode of cultivating meanings, ideas, behaviours, values, beliefs and attitudes held by a community for generations. These meanings are created and controlled by those in power. So the focus of cultural studies is on



the politics of culture and its history. It relates these ideas, meanings, values and beliefs to social class, nationality, ethnicity and gender.

Nayar defines cultural studies as a research area that focuses on mass or popular culture and everyday life. By popular culture he means everyday culture of the masses comprising of beliefs, practices, values, and artefacts that are shared widely by the members of a community. It constitutes the everyday “food habits, fashion, forms of transport, the music, the reading habits, the spaces they occupy and traverse” (6). Popular culture includes comic books, mass cinema (in opposition to art cinema), graffiti, popular music (in opposition to classical music), the open spaces of the city (in opposition to art galleries), sports, etc. Nayar observes that in past, the term ‘mass culture’ was used in the negative sense. The culture of the wealthy minority section was considered to be the true or the standard culture.

Nayar notes that cultural studies interrogates the economic, spatial, ideological, erotic and political aspects of culture. It seeks to understand how specific objects attain meaning and value in a society or a community. Nayar is of the opinion that culture according to cultural studies is not something natural but is produced by those in power. And cultural studies “is interested in the production and consumption of culture” and “*the production and consumption of culture is linked to power and identity*” (Nayar 6). Nayar asserts that an advanced analysis of cultural artefacts requires a close scrutiny of five basic elements: representation, identity, production, consumption, and regulation. These elements together make ‘the circuit of culture’ (as noted by Paul du Gay et al). He lays out the main objectives of cultural studies:

- studies the languages in and through which meanings are made in a particular culture
- questions how such meanings reflect the power struggle within that culture
- explores how certain meanings are privileged in that culture at the cost of others.

(16)

Cultural studies originated with the publication of some ground breaking works: Richard Hoggart’s *The Uses of Literacy*, Raymond Williams’ *Culture and Society* and *Long Revolution*, and E. P Thompson’s *Making of the English Working Class*. Sparks attributes the origin of this research



field to Williams' repudiation of a particular notion of culture ('high culture'). Sparks observes that the "dominant tradition was openly unashamedly and profoundly anti-democratic" and cultural studies, from its inception, was a champion of democracy" (15).

Hall in his article, "Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms," discerns that the term 'culture' as meant in cultural studies takes its meaning from Williams' two different ways of defining culture as espoused in *Long Revolution*. He elaborates that the first meaning of culture is related to the "sum of the available descriptions through which societies make sense of and reflect their common experiences" (33). This definition, Hall observes, democratizes and socializes the conception of 'culture'. He concludes that the focus of culture has shifted from the 'best that has been thought and said' to the 'common' or 'ordinary' culture. The second definition refers to culture as social practices, deduced from the simple definition by Williams – "culture is a whole way of life" (34). From Williams' ideas about culture, Hall concludes:

'Culture' is not a practice; nor is it simply the descriptive sum of the 'mores and folkways' of societies- as it tended to become in certain kinds of anthropology. It is threaded through all social practices, and is the sum of their inter-relationship. . . . The 'culture' is those patterns of organization, those characteristic forms of human energy which can be discovered as revealing themselves - in 'unexpected identities and correspondences' as well as in 'discontinuities of an unexpected kind' –within or underlying all social practices. (34)

Hall asserts the need to analyse and study the relationship between all these patterns so as to understand the manners in which the interplay between these practices and patterns are lived and experienced as a whole, in any specific period.

Richard Johnson in his essay, "What is Cultural Studies Anyway?" defines cultural studies "as an intellectual and political tradition, in its relations to the academic disciplines, in terms of theoretical paradigms, or by its characteristic objects of study" (78). He asserts the imperativeness for cultural studies to be inter-disciplinary, and sometimes anti-disciplinary in its tendency (78). In Johnson's opinion, "cultural studies is about the historical forms of consciousness or subjectivity, or the subjective forms we live by, or, in a rather perilous compression, perhaps a reduction, the subjective side of social relations" (80). Johnson asserts that cultural studies is inevitably and



deeply involved in relations of power. The main objective of cultural studies' theorists is to decentre the text as an object of study. Johnson elaborates:

The text is no longer studied for its own sake, nor even for the social effects it maybe thought to produce, but rather for the subjective or cultural forms which it realizes and makes available. The text is only a *means* in cultural studies; strictly, perhaps, it is a raw material from which certain forms . . . may be abstracted. But the ultimate object of cultural studies is . . . *the social life of subjective forms* at each moment of their circulation, including their textual embodiments. (97)

During observes that cultural studies affirms otherness and negates meta-discourse. This focus according to him should be "understood in terms of the accelerated globalizing of cultural production and distribution from the 1970s on" (14). Though globalization led to the dissolving of the differences between 'first' and third world countries, it created new "vertical" differences between them and accelerated poverty, urbanization, ecological degradation, and deculturization (14). Cultural studies thus "became the voice of the other, the "marginal" in the academy" (14).

Johnson attributes the emergence of cultural studies to some important historical events. He observes that the first "important moment here was the development of the post-war traditions of social history with their focus on popular culture, or the culture of 'the people' especially in its political forms" (76). Johnson asserts the role of the Communist Party Historians' Group in this regard. He points towards the paradox. The historians were concerned more about understanding the long British transition from feudalism to capitalism and the popular struggles and traditions of dissent associated with it than with the contemporary culture or even with the twentieth century. This work, observes Johnson, became a second matrix for cultural studies (76).

Johnson observes that cultural studies is Marx-influenced. The focus of cultural studies like that of Marxism is on form. It examines the forms inhabited subjectively: language, signs, ideologies, discourses, myths, etc. Johnson brings attention to the three main premises where culture has been influenced by Marxism. The first is related to the close connection of cultural processes "with social relations, especially with class relations and class formations, with sexual divisions with the racial structuring of social relations and with age oppressions as a form of



dependency” (76). The second premise, Johnson notes, is that culture is associated with power and it aids in producing an imbalance in the endowments of individuals and social groups to define and accomplish their needs. The third premise, an outcome of the previous two, “is that culture is neither an autonomous nor an externally determined field, but a site of social differences and struggles” (76).

John Storey in his essay, “Cultural Studies: An Introduction,” also opines that cultural studies is informed by Marxism in two essential ways. Firstly, it is imperative to analyse culture in relation to its social structure and historical contingency in order to understand the meanings of culture. Secondly, cultural studies theorists contend that culture is one of the main sites where divisions on the basis of ethnicity, gender, generation and class, are established and contested. Johnson however points towards a basic difference between the aim of cultural studies and Marxism. He notes that cultural studies analyses social processes from another complimentary point of view. The objective of cultural studies theorists is to “abstract, describe and reconstitute in concrete studies forms through which human beings ‘live’, become conscious, sustain themselves subjectively” (81).

Johnson points towards one major theoretical and methodological division that runs through cultural studies. On the one side, some theorists insist that ‘culture’ must be analysed as a whole in their material context, and on the other hand, others emphasize on the relative independence or effective autonomy of subjective forms and means of signification. Johnson classifies the objectives of cultural studies into three main models. There is ‘production-based studies’ that indicates an attempt to curb or change the most potent means of cultural production, or to employ substitute means through which a counter-hegemonic approach may be followed. Radical political parties are an example of this model. Then there is ‘text-based studies’, that centres on the forms of cultural products and have often shown interest in the possibilities of a transformative cultural practice. For eg, critics, teachers, *avante-garde* practitioners. The third model involves the study of lived cultures. In this they bring to the forefront the various representations reinforced through culture. The emphasis is on upholding the ways of life of subordinate social groups and exposing the agenda of the dominant public forms (107).



John Fiske in his article, “British Cultural Studies and Television,” defines the meaning and scope of Cultural Studies as follows:

The term culture, as used in the phrase ‘cultural studies’, is neither aesthetic nor humanist in emphasis, but political. Culture is not conceived of as the aesthetic ideals of form and beauty found in great art, or in more humanist terms as the voice of the ‘human spirit’ that transcends the boundaries of time and nation to speak to a hypothetical universal man (the gender is deliberate – women play little or no role in this conception of culture). Culture...is a way of living within an industrial society that encompasses all the meanings of that social experience. (115)

The main concern of cultural studies, asserts Fiske is with the generation and circulation of meanings in industrial societies. He opines that a society is not an organic whole but a complicated network of groups. Each of these groups has different interests and is connected to each other in terms of their power association with the dominant classes. Fiske believes that “social relations are understood in terms of social power, in terms of a structure of domination and subordination that is never static but is always the site of contestation and struggle” (116). He is of the view that culture is ideological. He asserts that the dominant class’s endeavour to project meanings as naturally produced has be understood as the consequence of an ideology impressed/inscribe/carved in the social and cultural practices of a class and its members. Thus, the main focus of current work in cultural studies is on culture “as a constant struggle between those with and those without power” (121).

Meaghan Morris in her work, “Banality in Cultural Studies,” notes that the contemporary cultural studies speaks of encouraging cultural democracy. It appreciates difference, and views mass or popular culture “not as a vast banality-machine, but as raw material made available for a variety of popular practices” (156). Morris appropriately states the meaning and aim of cultural studies:

Cultural studies is a humane and optimistic discourse, trying to derive its values from materials and conditions already available to people. On the other hand, it can become an apologetic ‘yes, but ...’ discourse, that most often proceeds from admitting class, racial, and sexual oppression to finding the inevitable saving grace – when its theoretical



presuppositions should require it at least to do both simultaneously, even 'dialectically'.
(160)

Hall in his other work, "Race, Culture, and Communication: Looking Backward and Forwards at Cultural Studies," states that cultural studies exhibits the rapid changes taking in thought, knowledge, argument and debate regarding a society and its own culture. Hall considers it "an activity of intellectual self-reflection" that functions inside as well as outside the academy" as it "insists on the necessity to address the central, urgent, and disturbing questions of a society and a culture in the most rigorous intellectual way . . ." (337). This research area, observes Hall, shows the blurring of the conventional boundaries among the disciplines. It also shows the development of forms of interdisciplinary research that cannot be enclosed within the limits of the existing categories of knowledge.

Over the years, cultural studies has expanded its scope and undergone a great change in its politics. However, it is still concerned with issues related with race, class, ethnicity, inequality, gender, etc.

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Questioning the Problematic Interactions between Parenting and Acculturation in Select South Asian Diasporic Novels

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Abstract: Parenting, in diasporic situation, has always been problematic yet engaging inasmuch as it requires acculturative skills from parents primarily on the one hand and it engages parents in challenging encounters posited by acculturation on the other hand. This article is intended to intervene into the contentious interactions between parenting and acculturation as reflected in Roma Tearne's *Bone China* and Shilpi Somaya Gowda's *The Secret Daughter*, with particular reference to theoretical constructions germane to both parenting and acculturation so as to put forward that parenting is contingent upon one's degree of acculturation in diasporic condition.

Key Words: Parenting; Acculturation; Adaptation; Diaspora.

I

Parenting has always been a coveted yet challenging responsibility that couples of diverse time and space, across the globe, wish to take up to make much of their post-nuptial engagements. Unlike other telling professional engagements, parenting turns out to be a unique one, for it requires unstinting and untiring efforts from parents who, in turn, usually receive no remuneration as such. Although parenting seems to be an exciting experience, it proves to be a tough one at praxis. The notion of parenting gets problematized when parents have to negotiate with all the odds and ends of parenting while dwelling in diaspora space. In other words, the adverse impacts on parenting are supposed to be determined by the degree to which parents strive to get acculturated to diaspora space. Thus, this term paper is intended to get into the problematic interactions between parenting and acculturation as reflected in Roma Tearne's *Bone China* and Shilpi Somaya Gowda's *The Secret Daughter* in order to explore how easy or difficult it is for parents to parent their children while trying to come to terms with acculturation in diaspora space.



II

This segment is planned to provide a relevant and succinct overview of the problematic interactions between parenting and acculturation with particular reference to the salient dimensions of Diaspora. In her phenomenal work *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*, Avtar Brah has pertinently observed: “The word [diaspora] derives from the Greek —dia, ‘through’, and speirein, ‘to scatter’. According to Webster’s Dictionary in the United States, diaspora refers to a ‘dispersion from’ (178). Whereas the notion of acculturation has only been implicated in the above quoted observation of Brah in that being dispersed and displaced from the putative “home”, people have to cross over border of a nation-state to step in another nation-state and this journey is culminated, for the time being, through their resettlements in the new found land, getting over the problems of acculturation; much before Brah, John W. Berry is thought to be one of the earliest critics who had initiated to conceptualize acculturation in foreign land following the increasing rate of migration across the world in 1990s. In his seminal essay entitled “Acculturation and Adaptation in a New Society”, following Redfield et al., Berry observed:

Acculturation has been defined as cultural change that results from continuous, first hand contact between two distinct cultural groups It is important to note that while changes to both groups are implied in the definition, most changes in fact occur in the non-dominant (migrating) group as a result of influence from the dominant (society of settlement). (70-71)

It is quite clear from the observation that acculturation is an interaction between two disparate cultural groups and the culture of the migrating group has to stay subservient to the culture of dominating group in the foreign land. In the same essay, Berry has laid stress on adaptive skills of migrants and has raised the importance to hone these skills to get past of “behavioral shifts” and “acculturative stress”. Berry has further worked out the tenets of acculturation in his subsequent essays. For instance, In “Acculturation: A Conceptual Overview”, Berry has modified his understanding of acculturation.

On the other side, Judit Arends-Tóth and Fons J. R. Van de Vijver in the essay entitled “Issues in the Conceptualization and Assessment of Acculturation” has tried to map out varied theoretical approaches to acculturation and while doing so, they have underscored: “In the social-cognition approach to acculturation, . . . cognitive elements such as expectations, attitudes toward



members of the new culture, cultural identity, perception, attributions, and changes in values as part of the acculturation process have been investigated . . .” (34-35). It implies that several factors are responsible along with one’s adaptability in acculturation. They hold that contextual specificities need to be taken into consideration while an individual or a diasporic group tries to get acculturated to the culture of the foreign land. Acculturation is thus consequent upon either an individual’s or a community’s willingness to come to terms with the dominant cultural practices. They have underscored the telling importance of “acculturation conditions”.

Opposed to the theoretical insights of Tóth et.al, Jean S. Phinney in the essay— “Acculturation is an Independent Variable: Approaches to Studying Acculturation as a Complex Process” argues that the notion of acculturation can hardly be reduced to mere “acculturation conditions” inasmuch as:

Acculturation is a complex process involving multiple changes that take place following contact among individuals and groups from differing cultural backgrounds. It involves changes in many areas, including attitudes, feelings, beliefs, and behaviors. Like acculturation, human development is a multifaceted process involving many changes that take place over time. For both acculturation and development, changes occur at the individual and group levels and are influenced by many individual and contextual factors and their interactions. (79)

Acculturation is, unquestionably, a historically loaded term and has bearings on South Asian context. South Asian migrants are quite used to acculturation and have been trying to cope up with it physically, socio-culturally, mentally and politically.

On the other hand, as far as parenting is concerned, several theoretical configurations have been constructed over a long period of time to address the problematic dimensions of it. One may ask, in this regard, what is it that makes parenting so intriguing a profession? Simply speaking, parenting connotes a *sui generis* engagement between parents and children over a long period of time, and most interestingly, this sort of engagement entails intricacy in parent-child relationship. It is usually supposed that being parents to a child, a couple is to take full care of their child as much as they can, irrespective of all sorts of constraint. Unfortunately, at praxis, parents encounter a number of problems that put their ethically solidarity at jeopardy so far parenting is concerned. In



an interesting article entitled “The Ethics of Parenting”, Diana Baumrind and Ross A. Thompson have foregrounded the notion of ethical parenting and have put it in this way:

Ethical parenting above all is responsible caregiving, requiring of parents enduring investment and commitment throughout their children’s long period of dependency. . . . The ethics of parenting begins, therefore, with the assumption of responsibility for children. (3)

It implies that parenting requires ethical sensibility from parents who are supposed to fulfill certain criteria to bring up their child keeping their individual wishes at bay. But, in reality, parents fail to conform to the requirements of ethical parenting as it has been prescriptively suggested in the above citation. Therefore, the notion of ethical parenting can be called into question following the pertinent observation made by Keith Crnic in the essay— “Everyday Stresses and Parenting”: “Stress has long played an integral role in understanding parenting processes and families in general” (243). The issue of stress further problematizes the concept of parenting thereby leading researchers to mull over the problematic attachment between parents and children. In this regard, one may resort to the attachment theory by John Bowlby to explain the psychological association between parents and child. Once again, the notion of parenting can be made more problematic than ever before by arguing that it is far more difficult job to parent child in diaspora space than that of at the ‘home’ simply because parents can hardly dodge problems pertaining to acculturation. John W. Berry is one of the few critics, towards the turn of the previous century, who attempted to underscore the problematic nexus between acculturation and immigration in the following essay named as “Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation”. In the same essay, Berry has tried to ease out “acculturative stress” of immigrants by suggesting them to follow certain strategies³ to combat acculturation. The insights of Berry have later been worked out by Marc H. Bornstein and Linda R. Cote while trying to trace out the impacts of acculturation on parenting. In the essay— “Parenting Cognitions and Practices in the Acculturative Process”— both of them have come up with the notion of “parenting cognition” which is symptomatic of some functions that parents are supposed to be familiar with before to take on acculturation.

Marc H. Bornstein has consolidated his stand in another seminal article entitled “Cultural Approaches to Parenting” and has firmly asserted that impacts of culture on parenting cannot be avoided and therefore, should not be disparaged. The role of culture in shaping parenting cognitions



among parents is immense and thus one's affiliation to certain culture makes it harder for him/her to strike a balance between two cultures on a foreign land. Bornstein seems to have rightly argued: "Culture helps to construct parents and parenting, and culture is maintained and transmitted by influencing parental cognitions that in turn are thought to shape parenting practices" (213). Yet, one can hardly deny that it is quite challenging job for parents at praxis to fit into a foreign culture, leaving their own cultural affiliations behind. This situation gets aggravated when the issue of identity, race, food, dress, history, to name only a few, come into play in this regard. Certain gaps in acculturation process account for the misery and wretchedness that parents experience. This argument can be affirmed by referring to Dina Birman's essay "Measurement of the "Acculturation Gap" in Immigrant Families and Implications for Parent-Child Relationships" straightway. Birman, too, observed: ". . . the acculturation gap is seen as extending across a variety of life domains and aspects of parent-child relationships" (113). In addition to it, Birman has given an interesting perspective to study the interaction between acculturation and parenting:

Acculturation is a developmental process, as children and adults acculturate to a new culture and retain affiliation with the culture of origin at different rates (Birman & Trickett, 2001).

As a result, acculturation gaps arise between parents and children, and these gaps are thought to be potentially problematic for parent-child relationships. (113)

Acculturation is thus equated to a developmental process and any lapse in this developmental process entails acculturation gap which triggers sharp blows at parenting. One may here think of drawing David L Sam's view on acculturation as it has been propounded in "Adaptation of Children and Adolescents With Immigrant Background: Acculturation or Development?", as a part of developmental process to reinforce the Birman's postulation: "Whereas acculturation can primarily be conceived of as a learning phenomenon, development entails both learning and maturation. This means that some changes in individuals attributed to acculturation may in reality be developmental changes" (99). The interaction between acculturation and parenting becomes more problematic in the case of single parenting inasmuch as a single parent has to negotiate with a number of socio-cultural restrictions while rearing child. Sometimes, it is pejoratively thought that a child born and brought up by a single parent, is likely to give in crimes but this supposition does not



seem to be a reasonable argument at praxis. For instance, Arlene Skolnick and Stacey Rosencranz in the essay “The Harmful Effects of Single-Parent Families Are Exaggerated” have critiqued and refuted the earlier proposition and argued that single parents cannot be accused of the depravity of their grown up children in the society as far as acculturation is concerned: “Instead of attacking the values of single mothers, society should focus on protecting children in families of all sorts from harmful social and economic conditions” (62). In fact, foster parents, too, have to strive to bring up their children overcoming varied hindrances germane to acculturation. The succinct theoretical discussion on problematic interactions between acculturation and parenting can be wrapped up, for the time being, by making an argument that just like acculturation, parenthood is not a fixed position, rather, it can be situated in between being and becoming, and thus, the overlapping trajectories between acculturation and parenting are bound to be problematic as well as inviting. The thrust argument of this segment is therefore explicit: parenting is, to a large extent, contingent upon one’s degree of acculturation to the culture of a nation-state and how both the parents and children respond to their immediate cultural transformations, taking identity politics into account.

III

This segment is designed to provide a succinct sketch of both the novels— Roma Tearne’s *Bone China* and Shilpi Somaya Gowra’s *The Secret Daughter*— thereby intending to facilitate readers to come to terms with the bottom lines of both the tales. Roma Tearne’s *Bone China* is out and out a family saga that is set against the dual backdrop of colonial regime and Sri Lankan Civil War. The Protagonist of the novel is Grace de Silva who is born and brought up in Britain and she has married to Aloysius de Silva who works in British Civil Service when the story begins. Grace’s parents belong to Sri Lanka and had settled down in Britain much before Grace is born. As the tale progresses, Aloysius informs Grace that British military needs to employ their sprawling house for military purposes while waging a war against a neighbouring nation, which explains why, all of them decide to leave for Sri Lanka where Aloysius is appointed to take stock of colonial governance. All the five children of Grace and Aloysius find it hard to come to terms with the cultural milieu in Sri Lanka along with their parents. Then a series of interconnected incidents take



place in this family and finally the novel comes to an end with intense desire of the granddaughter of Grace to return to the land of origin.

On the other hand, Shilpi Somaya Gowra's *The Secret Daughter* explores various problems of parenting faced by foster parents in USA, which is conspicuously pitted against the normative parenting practice in Indian context with special reference to wretched conditions of an orphanage located in Mumbai. The tale simultaneously emphasizes two disparate parenting patterns in different contexts. The story runs as: Krishnan and Somer, a USA couple, decides to come in India to adopt a child when doctor reveals that Somer cannot be pregnant because of some of her gynecological problems. Having landed down in India, they visit an orphanage in Mumbai and adopt a baby girl. After that, they go back to USA and start parenting their adopted daughter Asha. But, when Asha comes to know that she has been adopted, it creates a rift between Asha and them. Neither Asha nor her foster parents can become closer to each other while Asha's stay in USA. They fail to help her get used to the culture of USA in spite of making some serious efforts. Asha then avails a fellowship and takes a decision to visit India where she is actually born to examine the poignant sufferings of orphans in India. Gowra occasionally underscores the problems of acculturation experienced by both Asha and her foster mother who is not a native of Indian. The story is finally brought to a close with the reunion among Asha, her actual parents and her foster parents. The tale, in essence, encapsulates how the issue of acculturation turns out to be an almost irrevocable and invincible reality which does neither let Asha be closer to her foster mother nor the other way round.

IV

This segment is intended to intervene into the problematic yet intriguing interactions between parenting and acculturation as represented in the select novels thereby trying to understand how and to what extent acculturation impacts on parenting. Textual references are planned to be drawn from both the texts simultaneously here in terms of the degree of this term paper's engagement with the problematic interactions between acculturation and parenting. The notion of "home" is unequivocally a contentious issue in Diaspora Studies. The fluid notion of "home" further problematizes one's individual identity because identity is usually determined in terms of



one's association with a particular culture that shapes up his conception of "home", thereby leading us to take into consideration the plural signification of identity. This conflict among home, identity and culture has been brilliantly portrayed in both the novels in consonance with the intricacies of parenting. For instance, in *Bone China*, Grace and her husband, at first, take some time to get used to Sri Lankan cultural ambience because of their sheer inability to stay indifferent to the cultural baggage that they are carrying. It becomes all the more difficult for Grace to get used to the culture of Sri Lanka when she finds lacuna between her expectations and experiences:

Aloysius's news had not come as a surprise. Grace had always known that one day they would have to leave the valley where she had been born In Colombo, she would take charge of her life; manage things herself In Colombo, things will be different, she told herself firmly. When the war was over they would come back. To the house at any rate. Of that she was certain In this way the de Silva family, cast out from the cradle where they had lived for so long, moved to Colombo August was a dangerous month, when heat, reaching unbearable proportions, created an oasis of stillness. Every flutter, every breeze, vanished, leaving an eerie calm She poured a glass of icy water from the fridge, gasping as she drank The heat in Colombo was intolerable. She missed the cool greenness of the hill station where she had been a governess She missed the order and calm of the English children she had taught. (Tearne 15-21)

Acculturation thus seems to Grace a terrible and invincible reality which slowly but surely impacts on her parenting. For instance, Grace starts to pay unequal heed to the problems of all her children. When Jacob, one of her sons, alleges Thornton for indulging in music, Grace readily dismisses his allegation and gives him a clean chit. Being a parent, Grace is quite aware of that she has certain responsibility to her children but she fails to give ethically correct parenting to them following her crumbling marriage and failure to adjust herself to the new culture. For instance, Grace shows unusual inclination to her daughters and consciously or unconsciously starts to keep distance between her sons and herself. For instance, while engaging a fling with Vijay, a Sri Lankan national, being tired of her unhappy conjugal relationship with Aloysius, Grace conceals the fact that she is the mother of three sons along two daughters: "I have two daughters", she had told



Vijay” (Tearne 23). On the other hand, Aloysius has absolutely been an uncaring and irresponsible parent to his children.

In *The Secret Daughter*, Gowra explores two distinct parenting models practiced in different time and space. When Somer, the would-be mother of Asha, comes in India to adopt a child officially, she stands dumbfounded, as it were, experiencing the cultural gaps between India and USA:

On her first morning in Bombay, Somer wakes with an upset stomach. She rolls over to a different position, but it doesn't help. Damn. She tried to be careful at dinner last night with Krishnan's family, but clearly she couldn't handle the spicy food. That wasn't the only thing that made her feel out of place. Everyone else ate with their fingers while she sheepishly asked for a fork. She could only understand part of the dinner conversation because Krishnan's relatives kept lapsing into Gujarati She was stranded, and Krishnan didn't bother to interpret for her. (14)

The cited excerpt conspicuously makes it quite clear that she has to work harder to get acculturated to Indian culture. Interestingly, she cannot be oblivious of her own cultural baggage while staying in India and exacerbates her misery when she goes to posit her 'experience' in India in contrast with her 'expectation'. The following dialogue between Krishnan and Somer can be drawn to substantiate that Somer strives harder to come to terms with Indian cultural ambience:

They kept us waiting an hour, that guy clearly hadn't even read our file, and then he barely even talks to me!” “That's because you're—”. “I'm what?” she snaps at him. “Look, things work differently here. I know how to handle this, just trust me. You can't come here with your American ideas—” (Gowra 62)

In fact, having adopted Usha, later renamed as Asha, Somer rushes back to USA and begins to parent her. The situation gets worsened when Somer comes to know that adoption merely resolves “childlessness, not infertility” (Gowra 99), Somer develops a sort of inhibition within herself to her adopted daughter. She starts to think, “. . . Asha's arrival into their lives brought many things—love, joy, fulfillment— but it did not erase all the pain caused by the miscarriages, nor did it completely eliminate her desire for a biological child” (Gowra 100). Even the skin colour and the



physical appearance of Asha do not correspond to that of her foster mother and thus gradually Asha starts to feel a lack of parental care from Somer conditioned by Somer's failure to safeguard Asha from racial discrimination: "One of Asha's thin brown legs is perched atop a pedal, while other barely touches the ground. Her black pony tail is peeking out from the back of her pale blue ladybug helmet. Somer looks at her daughter, who looks nothing like her daughter (Gowra 100). In fact, Asha has to bear with the bullies hurled at her by her American friends because she looks different: "God, Asha, you don't need eye makeup", one of the girls says "I know, I would kill for eyes like that. They are so exotic. Did you get them from your mom or your dad?" another asks . . ." (Gowra 133). In another occasion, Somer's subjective anguish and wrath for having failed to produce a baby biologically gets reflected through her admonition of Asha for her poor performance in Math and Chemistry. Rough and tough parenting of Somer leads Asha to call into question Somer's real intention behind parenting her: "Why don't you ever tell me about my real parents? You're scared they 'll love me more than you do" (Gowra 136). Somer's uncouth behavior to Asha is lashed out in the following terms by Asha herself:

And why don't you ever take me to India? Every other Indian kid I know goes all the time. What is it Dad— are you ashamed of me? I 'm not good enough for your family?" "I wish you never adopted me. Then I wouldn't be such a huge disappointment to you" I just don't feel like I really belong, to this family (Gowra 137-138).

So far, the interaction between parenting and acculturation is concerned; socio-economic issues cannot be disregarded. In *Bone China*, Tearne shows that it is because of financial constraints, Grace employs her male children to earn for the family: "Since leaving their old home, since he had turned sixteen. Jacob had been working for the Ceylon Tea Board" (Tearne 31). Though Vijay, Grace's illicit paramour, unveils the role of "history" while caressing her in one of their trysts, the sheer silence of Grace on the other end, in a way, upholds and attests to the fact that Grace has been undergoing through tremendous "acculturative stress" triggered by "history", which explains why, Grace's parenting does not live up to the mark: "For all of us' he told Grace, are doomed in our different ways. Both rich and poor, it makes no difference. We are caught, in the wheel of history' (Tearne 45). The issue of Identity politics in the process of acculturation plays a crucial role and is



thought to be vicious to parenting at large. It is Jacob who reminds Thronton, the father of Anna-Meeka, of the significance of identity in relation to parenting: “‘Don’t have too many hopes, men. In this country ambition alone isn’t enough. You need much more than ambition here’. Unable to say what was needed he paused. ‘You have no idea what being a foreigner in Britain is like, men’, he said . . .” (Tearne 196-197). The notion of intergenerational parenting has to be considered in this regard because *Bone China* exposes that the daughter in law of Grace, Savitha, finds it easier to mix up with the foreign culture and consequently, Savitha turns out to be a more capable and caring parent to her daughter Anna-Meeka. The well-adjustment of Anna-Meeka to the culture of London is suggestive of Savitha’s good and positive parenting that she enjoys: Savitha, like a positive parent, advises: “‘It’s too early to say what she’ll become. We’re from another culture; we have to settle first,’ she told Thornton ‘I want her to be happy’, she said slowly. ‘That’s what’s important ‘I want her to sing again’, she said abruptly . . .” (Tearne 198). Many such instances could be drawn from both the novels to substantiate that acculturation certainly impacts on parenting, and in some cases, it alters the usual course of parenting thereby inflicting pain on children.

V

Finally, at the close of this discussion, it can be tenably put forward that one’s degree of acculturation to the cultural heterogeneity of a particular land leaves impact on his/her parenting exercises. Thus, although parenting seems to be a trouble-free and unproblematic act, it proves certainly to be a difficult one for parents while negotiating acculturation.

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The Trial Episode of Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mocking Bird*: A Textual Analysis

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Abstract: In this paper I attempt to look at the famous trial episode of *To Kill a Mocking Bird* from different perspectives. My main intention here is to bring out the significance the novel owes to this episode. Furthermore it is such an episode of which any definite interpretation of meaning is not possible. Our comprehension of the episode is further problematized by the narrative strategy adopted by the novelist where we get to know of various events only through the filtered memory of a girl called Scout. Openness to varied interpretation makes the trial scene all the more engrossing to the readers. My endeavour here is to place this scene within the varied criticisms for a better understanding as well as to open up another thread of interpretation to this.

Key terms: Freud, Psychoanalysis, White-Black, Left-Right.

To Kill a Mocking Bird is one of the best loved stories of Harper Lee. Chicago Tribune hailed it as “---A novel of strong contemporary significance”. However it is needless to say that the novel owes much to its famous trial scene for such significance. Even then, Edgar Schuster is reluctant to consider the trial scene to be the most important theme of the novel. He argues that this scene occupies only fifteen percent of the whole novel and our pre-occupation with the trial scene may render our perception of the novel meagre (506). None the less I hold that the contrary is true; that if we consider several incidents of this novel as petals and the novel a flower, the trial scene is undoubtedly the stock that standing in the middle of the structure beautifully holds it.

The novel opens with a reference to Jem's badly broken arm, which we will learn later to be the outcome of the trial scene. Scout, in a flash back recounts the endeavours of three children to make Radley out of the house and leads us consequently for the trial. A lawyer, Atticus Finch who



happens to be the father of Scout and Jem defends Tom Robinson, a black man charged with the rape of a white girl. Interestingly Robinson was found guilty and shot dead. After his death he has been likened to a mocking bird and this metaphor of the mocking bird links two innocent victims, namely Boo Radley of the first part and Jem of the second part of the novel with Tom Robinson.

The trial of a black man stirred the dull county of Maycomb. Both whites and blacks gathered at the court yard enthusiastically. This portion of the novel presents the racial prejudice more tellingly than elsewhere. The whites enjoyed the front seats, while the balcony was reserved for the blacks. Jem, Scout and Dill, in spite of being white sat amongst the blacks and thus defied one of the codified unwritten laws. Atticus Finch was revealed at his best during this session. He was the defense lawyer and he executed his job excellently; Atticus also brought to the fore the unacknowledged darkness of our psyche which does not dare to recognize equality. However, Mr. Heck Tate was first called to testify and the connotation of “right and left” started gaining a crucial role. Laurie Champion argues that right in the novel suggests virtue, while left suggests inequality (234). Constantly the “right” and “left” kept on contrasting. Building evidence against Bob Ewell, Atticus asks Tate which one of Mayella’s eyes was bruised and he replies, “Her left”. Atticus then asks “Was it her left facing you or her left looking the same way you were?” Tate answers, “Oh yes, ---It was his right eye, Mr. Finch” (Lee, 185).

Again, Mayella’s black right eye contrasts sharply with Tom’s left arm which “hung dead at his side” implying his innocence against Mayella’s inability to see things correctly (Champion, 236). Right connotating morality and left a flaw again gets an upper hand when Atticus proves that Bob Ewell is left handed and the bruises on Mayella’s face was the sole creation of Ewell’s left hand (Champion, 236).

To Kill a Mocking Bird portrays how the actions of individuals are determined by racial considerations. There always persists a sense of hesitation and distrust among them for the other community. So, when Atticus was appointed to defend a black man the white community of Maycomb started to show their contempt. While Atticus and his children have been despised for



being a 'nigger-lover' by the whites, the blacks likes Lulla would not allow Finch children to enter into the church. Mr. Dolphus Raymond, a white by birth, mingles with the blacks and therefore becomes an evil man in common conviction. However during the trial scene when Scout had a brief conversation with him, she found him not so evil, the rumours had made of him. Mr. Dolphus's children are called 'mixed children'. Jem recognized their pitiful state of not being able to be a part of either community which can be identified with the post-colonial experience of rootlessness and fluid or divided identity.

As we know, the colonial discourse often presented the natives or the colonized people as uncivilized anonymous masses, lacking in morals. Here the Blacks are going through the same experience of being colonised. Blacks being amorous in nature and endowed with lust is one of the commonly accepted notions of the Whites. Tom Robinson's charge of raping a girl only strengthens their beliefs. Never the less, therefore Tom had but a very little hope of surviving the trial. Though Atticus defends Tom well and proves his innocence, he cannot efface the deep rooted conviction which the colonial education has so dearly planted. So, the result was inevitable and verdict pre-planned; Tom Robinson was found guilty by the court, and was sent to prison.

Mayella Ewell was a lonely lady. Atticus proved that she had no friends and being the eldest of Bob Ewells children, Mayella had to work hard to manage the household. Tom Robinson had sympathy for her and tried to help her in whatever means possible. So, why did Mayella accuse Tom of rape who happens to be the only beneficent friend of her? The probable answer is her father pressurized her to do so. But psycho-analytical criticism has a different interpretation to provide.

According to Freud when some fear, wish, memory or act do not conform the consented society, we try to cope with it by repressing it that is, eliminating it from the conscious mind. But it does not make it go away; it remains alive in the unconscious and seeks a way back to the conscious mind constantly. This is exactly the case with Mayella. She had committed a crime of tempting a Negro, broke "a rigid and time honoured" code of society. But now she wants to do away with her crime. And the best way to do this, is by eliminating Tom Robinson forever. Tom



Robinson was her daily reminder of what she did. Tom would not let her eliminate the incident from her conscious mind and even if she manages somehow to do so, his presence would instigate a “return to the repressed” from her unconscious. Tom, now must cease to be to make Mayella free of her psychological turmoil.

This was only one side of the tale; there might be a reverse version of it. Actually, as it is a memory tale told by Scout; whatever we perceive, it is only through the mirror of her experience. At first, Scout recounts her own account of how the events were taking place. But as soon as the trial had started, she first of all described the physical appearance of the person to testify and then recorded the words of every individual objectively. Scout also gave her own comments and comprehension thereafter. But surprisingly she violates the norm with Bob Ewell. When Mr. Ewell was called to the witness box, she gave somewhat lengthy description of their filthy ways of living at their habitat. May be it was a strategy of the novelist to acquaint us with the behavior of such folks as Ewells. But this argument would not hold much water, for Scout had already spoken of the manners of different communities, including the Ewells in details at the first half of the novel. So, why did she think of reminding the readers of Ewells’ mannerism again at this point?

To this question, I think it would not be wrong to assume that she did it desperately to taint our judgment of the Ewells. The incorporation of a lengthy description of Ewells’ habit definitely hinders the rational thinking of the readers. Again, this assumption gained further ground when Scout omitted the cross examination section of Tom Robinson. She had to go outside with Dill, so she missed the session and could not record it. We get a hint of Robinson, getting cornered by Mr. Gilmer during this cross examination session. But then we are intentionally kept in void. Why did she do it? Was it simply a strategy to constitute our judgments in Tom’s favour? Or does she actually want us to take a bias opinion of the whole procedure? It would not be wrong either if we go still further or ask whether Tom Robinson really raped Mayella since the court found him guilty and Judge Taylor was known to be a good Judge so far.



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Unveiling the Secret of *Secret Superstar*: A Feminist Approach

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Abstract: In most parts of the world, females have always been the victim of oppressive patriarchy and male chauvinism since ages. This problem has been represented by many people through various forms of creation be it art, literature or films. Films are purportedly the most popular visual medium of entertainment through which a large segment of people can be approached. Like literature, film is also a work of art which mirrors the society; it also depicts the reality of the society though it has some fictionality in it. Being a visual medium of presentation, a film creates an instant, direct and more convincing impression on its audience, fulfilling its dual purpose of entertaining as well as of sensitizing the audience. A lot of movies based on social issues are now being made to create awareness among people about the issues besides entertaining the audience, which is perhaps the foremost purpose behind the making of a movie. Domestic violence is one such important issue which has been taken as the main theme in many movies. Films are considered as cultural artefacts and therefore the directors find it the as one of the best mediums of representing the social and cultural reality of the domestic life of women in most of the Indian households. Advait Chandan's directorial debut, Hindi movie *Secret Superstar* is a realistic film which deals



with the issues of domestic violence and oppressive patriarchy. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the movie *Secret Superstar* from a feminist angle and explore the suppressed desires of a woman's life. Patriarchal sufferings of womenfolk have been dexterously represented in the film by two major characters-- Insia and Najma, the mother and the daughter. The former is forced always to abide by the rules and regulations of the patriarchal society and the latter who even performs her womanly duties faithfully is the victim of domestic violence. These two characters vividly foreshadow the pangs of two generations.

Key Words: Movie, Women, Patriarchy, Domestic-violence, Female-foeticide, Child- Marriage.

Introduction

According to Butalia (1984), Indian Cinema is the single largest medium of communication with the masses, and close to 12 million people watch films every week in cinema houses and theatres (p. 108). When Indian Cinema has such a large audience then it also becomes the moral responsibility of the film directors of realistic movies to make more and more movies related to deeply rooted social evils which that need to be eradicated for the smooth functioning of the society. The film *Secret Superstar*, released on 19th October 2017 and directed by Advait Chandan, is a movie which is based on the theme of patriarchy and domestic violence. Set in a locality named Akota, in Baroda (Gujarat) the movie is the story of a Muslim teenage school going girl Insia Malik, who is deeply interested in singing songs with aspirations to become a singer and her mother Najma who is entrapped in a troubled and violent marriage and is a victim of domestic abuse by her husband Farookh Malik. In the movie, Farookh, the father of Insia, is dominant characters who treats women as inferior and always tries to subjugate them. He thinks that women after their marriage become the sole property of their husbands. They don't have their own individuality and their husbands, being their sole master can treat them in whichever way they deem fit and can do anything to them as they have authority over their wives:



‘Shauhar hoon tumahara- tum meri permission key bina yahan se hil nahi sakti’

(I am your husband; you are not supposed to move from this place without my permission.)

Since the beginning of the movie, the dominance of Farookh can be seen in the family. When Insia asks Najma, her mother for the permission to participate in the Inter School Singing Competition, she replies- ‘le lo par abba ko mat batana’ (participate but don’t tell your father). The statement of the mother signifies the dominance of the father, who does not like Insia’s association with music and singing. When Insia tells her mother if selected for final round, she will have to go to Mumbai for the finale, Najma refuses her by saying- ‘baat baat par tere abbu guitar todne ki baat karte hain’ (Your dad constantly threatens to break the guitar). In the first major violent scene, the tyranny of Farookh can be seen when he becomes infuriated and throws away the food plate just because mistakenly Najma puts less salt in the dal (lentil). He is enraged over her when she begs sorry for her mistake and says:

‘Sorry se pet bhar lun, agar ek baar aur sorry bola to plate nahi tumhe utha k phenk dunga’

(Shall I feed myself with your sorry? If you repeat the word sorry, I’ll throw you out instead of the plate)

Regarding the terror of the father, Anna Vetticad rightly says in the review of the movie that:

Secret Superstar plants the issue unequivocally at the centre of its universe, building up an atmosphere of such terror around Farookh, that every knock on the door signalling his return home becomes a moment of dread, a dread so real that it is almost a separate character in the screenplay. Farookh is a typical, abusive patriarch, who treats his wife and daughter in a humiliating, oppressive and violent way. The domestic violence can be of many types. Mere physical violence is not the only kind of violence; verbal and psychological violence can also be forms of domestic violence. Farookh always taunts his wife for being a failure in life. In one of his dialogues, he says, ‘Anpadh gawar ladkiyo ki shaadi karne me bahut dikkat hoti hai, mai phans gaya hu aur koi nahi phansega’ (It’s very hard to find husband for illiterate girls, I’m stuck but others won’t get trapped) which is an indirect barb to Najma who is not a well-educated lady. By his statement – ‘mai phans gaya hu’ (I am trapped), Farookh ridicules Najma in front of his children and his mother, as if, it’s



he who has been entrapped by marrying Najma, who is a simpleton and thus inferior to him. On the one side, Farookh indirectly says that he is providing education to Insia so that she may be married in a good household to a good husband. On the other side, he also advocates child marriage of his daughter. He wants to marry his fifteen year old teenage daughter, Insia to Nazaq, a Saudi based businessman. The movie hints towards child marriage, which is still prevalent in this modern society, despite various laws and measures taken by the government to abolish it. Even today, in most of the marriages, the girls don't have the freedom to choose husband on their own. In several cases, they are neither consulted nor even asked for their consent. In an oppressive patriarchal setup, it is the father or the male member of a family who decides everything and the girl has to abide by that. Insia couldn't do anything except accepting what is to befall her fate. Her father has declared that he will marry Insia with Nazaq as soon as the family settles in Saudi Arabia. When Insia resists and revolts against her father's plan, Najma's pain comes out in the following words when she says-

'Mere abba ne nikah karaane se pahle mujhse nahi pucha, yahi meri duniya hai aur yahi teri duniya bhi'(My dad had not consulted me before getting me married, this is my story and now yours too.)

Najma's helplessness can be seen from the above dialogue of the movie. There are many women and girls, who fall victim to the patriarchy but their cases often go unnoticed. Patriarchal society usually discriminates between a girl and a boy. A male child is always favoured in a patriarchal society over a female child because of the patriarchal mind-set that boys bring name and fame to the family; they are considered the harbingers of wealth and prosperity and also they carry forward the family's name, generation after generation. On the other hand, girls have to go ultimately to their in-law's home and therefore they cannot bring prosperity, rather they take away wealth from their father's family to their in-laws' in the form of dowry. Farookh, being a patriarch, prefers his son Guddu over Insia. He didn't want Najma to give birth to Insia.

'ladki paida kar ke kya karogi, gira do'

(What will you get by giving birth to a girl? Abort it!)



But Najma struggles to keep Insia alive and flees away from the hospital where she was admitted for abortion. The movie also hints at female foeticide where Farookh wanted Najma to abort the female foetus which was developing in her womb. The pathetic condition of women can be inferred by the dialogue between Insia and her grandmother, where the granny says:

‘arey hum raat din yahi socha karte hain humari ammi ne hume pet me hi kyun nahi maara, humne kya kar liya’

(I wonder all the day & night, why my mother didn't kill me in her womb? What was I born for?)

The constant suppression and abuse by the patriarchal figure Farookh in the family leads to the creation of a counter canon of female figures. The strong relationship between the mother and her daughter, as portrayed in the movie is a good example of this phenomenon. Insia always asks her mother seek divorce from her father because of his tyrannical nature. She attempts to free her mother from the clutches of her father. Insia wants Najma to leave the male dominated household helmed by her cruel father Farookh and therefore, inspite of getting a handsome fee from Shakti Kumar (the music director cum singer who gives her the first break) for her song, she persuades him to arrange a lawyer for her mother's divorce case. Similarly, it is Najma who supports Insia. She secretly allows Insia to follow her passion in spite of her husband's strong dislike. She understands well the need of love, care and freedom in one's life and tries to give her daughter the same which she never had got in her life. Mothers are mostly caring and supportive towards their children. A mother can go to any extent to fulfil the dreams of her children. A mother who has a first-hand experience of patriarchal suppression would never allow her daughter to suffer the same, therefore she will try to advocate her daughter's education and vocation, so that she may stand on her own feet and may not suffer the humiliation, exploitation or patriarchal suppression in her future life. Najma, who is a battered housewife, entrapped in the shackles of a loveless and violent marriage, tries her best to give as much freedom and opportunities to her daughter Insia as she could. She sells her gold necklace to buy a laptop for her daughter. It was the laptop, which helped Insia to become an overnight Internet sensation, Secret Superstar, as she uploaded her singing



videos on You Tube with the help of the laptop. Just because of Farookh's threat, Najma advises Insia to upload her tunes on You Tube wearing burqa and not to disclose her name so that her identity may not be revealed and her conservative, hot tempered father wouldn't come to know about the Secret Superstar. But when Farookh realizes that the laptop has been bought by selling the gold necklace, he brutally beats Najma and compels Insia to throw her laptop down from the second floor of the house. Farookh's action reflects his patriarchal mindset, where he doesn't believe in giving freedom to his daughter to follow her vocation. This also implicitly hints at his rigidity and his indifference towards modern ways of communication that can provide an alternative medium to realize one's goal in life. It is quite pertinent to record here the observation made by Anna Vetticad:

The claustrophobia and extreme fear that Insia experiences every second that Farookh is around or how even the air in their house seems to breathe freely when he is away. Each tiny occurrence within the four walls of that cramped middle-class home has the potential to cause an explosion: a geyser that Najma forgot to switch on, less salt in the dal she cooked. Farookh's response to any slip-up is to bash up his wife. (Vetticad)

Unlike the heroines of Madhur Bhandarkar's films, who despite being bold and empowered, conform to the social norms or end up as a sufferer, Najma and Insia finally assert their grit in the end by transforming drastically from being fragile and submissive to strong and bold characters. Najma, who earlier was a weak and meek character before her dominating and abusive husband, dares to speak at his face at the end of the movie. She revolts against his chauvinism by signing the divorce papers and threatening him to file a police complaint against him, if he physically assaulted her anymore. Her marching out of the airport symbolises her renunciation of the loveless marriage where she was a passive sufferer. She prioritizes her responsibility towards her daughter and not her husband who wants her to conform to the social norms. She shows her maturity by exposing her husband in public and subverting his plans of settling in Saudi Arabia. The signing of divorce paper explicitly reflects a mother's bold decision in favour not only of Insia but of a new generation. Her daring step towards her daughter is a harbinger of change which is on the anvil.



Conclusion

Thus, a serious interpretation of the movie *Secret Superstar* reveals that Insia and Najma are representatives of all women in general. The word secret in the title of the movie *Secret Superstar* is very symbolic. While the word 'secret' on the surface level refers to Insia who becomes a superstar hiding her identity but implicitly the word also refers to the pitiable condition of all women in a patriarchal society which is mostly conservative and not openly known as is the case with Najma in the movie. The purpose of cinema is not only to entertain its audience but also to sensitize them towards the evil practices still extant in the modern society. This movie 'Secret Superstar' not only portrays the realistic picture of women who are the victims of patriarchy and domestic violence but also sensitizes the audiences against various social evils like women abuse, child marriage, female foeticide etc. It gives a strong message by showcasing, the pride and honour that girls can bring to the family, through the character of Insia, who is a talented girl and in the end becomes a famous singer despite many unfavourable circumstances. Najma takes a bold and defiant step by walking out of her suffocating and violent married life, although a fictitious character can still be an inspiration to many other women. The movie ends with a dedication "To Mothers and Motherhood" signifying the dedication to all women who are mothers and who face all kind of suppression and violence throughout their lives but stand strongly against all odds when it comes for the betterment of their children. The trend of Indian cinema is now changing through the production of such movies, where stereotype image of woman as a submissive and docile creature suffering silently, traverses to the image of a new woman who raises her voice against her suffering and emerges victorious.

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Negotiating the Politics of Amnesia and Silence in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *The Last Gift*

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Abstract: Devastating secrets conglomerated with layered silences are at the heart of people when they are alienated from their own family roots, integrated with new people, suffered clashes of culture and history and ultimately become hysterically strange. Amnesia, or forgetting primarily the history and roots, is an attempt to acculturate in a space which is full of inscrutable dilemmas and discrepancies. My paper intends to unravel the varied attempts of both the natives and the immigrants to mingle in new social, cultural and political backdrops by pondering over silence as a trope in the novel of Abdulrazak Gurnah, *The Last Gift*. Situation defuncts and disjoints history, culture, memory and identity so much so that people are forced to suppress their truths. History itself emerges as a silent character in the relationships which is perpetually complicated by the ongoing events of the life. Accommodating past as a part of life intensifies the challenges of living.

Keywords: Amnesia; Memory; Identity; Silence.

I

Medically, amnesia is a disruption and dismantling of the episodic memory, that is, the inability to remember events and experiences. But amnesia—historically, socially, and culturally—is a deliberate attempt or a conscious trope to forget grievous occurrences of life which are past and detrimental to get acculturated and endured in present situation. A produced impairment confines the memory according to the requirements of the people where they either cease to remember a memory or partially recollect it. This paper proposes to excavate the politics and problematic of amnesia and silence in the lives of different characters, especially the protagonist Abbas, in the corpus of Abdulrazak Gurnah's novel, *The Last Gift*. How new cultures, a new nation, a new history shape the life and living of people, how they are forced to forget their past to acculturate in



the new world, and how the past of the parents affects and manifests the lives of children. This is an intention to dissect the traumatic process of forgetting and remembering of history and culture in the backdrop of varied historical circumstances befall in East African lands of Zanzibar and London, simultaneously.

II

Homogenizing¹ is a political and social process of nation building, which is concomitant with different histories—combined, restructured and represented—to form a new history in different situations, thereby forming a history of convenience. In the postcolonial era, a broad classification of the communities of ‘Us’ and ‘Other’² is indoctrinated and proliferated across the globe, where both the communities, equally and seamlessly, contour their histories and cultures to dominate and to get dominated. Ali Behdad, one of the eminent theoreticians, in his seminal book, *A Forgetful Nation: On Immigration and Cultural Identity in the United States*, rightly points out that, forgetting “is a form of disavowal in which one consciously decides to keep certain knowledge at bay” (4). He compares the expansive process of historical forgetting with the Freudian notion of negation, which is “a removal of the repression, though not, of course, an acceptance of what is repressed” (Behdad 4). In the systematic procedure of negation, one may acknowledge and remember an event, but he may either deny its significance or refuse to take responsibility of it. Denial is a split perception of “what constitutes our reality, a perception vacillating between denial and a supplementary acknowledgement” (Behdad 4). Though people have access to reality through their memory, their continuous silence chooses to ignore it.

History, being a non-linear, unpredictable and misbegotten subject, undermines and disowns those ‘remnants of past’ which are individual, and are challenging the mythification process of nation formation. In multicultural lands, like the USA and the UK, immigrants are always identified as a threat to national culture but, in reality, they are essentially contributors to its formation. As national forgetfulness is repudiation for forming culture, individual forgetfulness is for abandoning hardship and anxiety, state of terror and humiliations. James Young and Jana Braziel in their influential book, *Race and the Foundations of Knowledge: Cultural Amnesia in Academy*, illustrates the fact that historical amnesia³ is “. . . a deep unwillingness to face and confront the



inflicted wounds of the past . . . these wounds have been academic, intellectual, and ontological as well as material or physical” (2). They have also associated history and memory as, “entangled ideas, not separate ones with the first belonging ostensibly to public culture and the second to individual psyche . . .” (Brazier 3). Therefore, healing of any wound can be successfully done through remembering, and not through forgetting or historical erasure of public or private memory.

Both the selves of ‘Us’ and ‘Other’ mutually endeavor to evolve their trajectories to build a unified nation. Clive James in his path-breaking work, *Cultural Amnesia: Necessary Memories from History and the Arts*, explores through forty years of labor, the dark corners of the writings of different writers from different parts of the globe. He declares:

Young readers will find some of that story here, and try to convince themselves that they would have behaved differently. But the way to avoid the same error is not through understanding less. It can only be through understanding more. And the beginning of understanding more is to realize that there more than can be understood. (8)

The history, we understand, is not the complete history but it is like the tip of an iceberg, where more is kept underneath, constituting immense intensity and complications. Acknowledging history and taking liability of that history are two different shades of politics. The hegemon, the so called carrier of history, concedes that something has happened but they never accept how that event happened, or who is the perpetrator of that phenomenon. The natives hegemonize the ‘Other’ through interpreting their history in their own terms, but the immigrants also reinterpret and re-contour their history to get assimilated in new land. Behdad firmly points out that, “disavowal can be a more systematic form of denial in which the subject takes a self-righteous position,” which involves a conscious “distortions and misinterpretations of truth” (5).

Memory, as a manifestation, not only affects the mind of an individual, but also metamorphoses subsequent existence. Freud expounds that, “The constant memory of the dead person became the foundation of the hypothesis of other forms of life, and first gave him the idea of life continuing after apparent death” (188). The history ceaselessly gnaws one’s life through its repetitions in flashback, and present happenings. History or gruesome past, as Caruth argues, through the notion of trauma, can be deciphered as a rethinking of references of past which does not



aim at eliminating history, but at resituating it in our present understanding. Freudian idea of history elucidates that contemplation of history through reminiscence of the characters need a continuous rethinking the possibilities of history, as well as, our ethical and political relations to it. Persistent confrontation with violence and humiliation in the past unknowingly etches a mark in our memory.

Memory, through the escalator of nostalgia and remembering, is always evocative of forming and contouring an individual history which is ultimately unattainable. Memory creates an intricate relation between history and survival, where “. . . the return of the traumatizing event appears in many respects like a waking memory . . .” (Caruth 60). Freud insists, only memory can etch “the old features into the new picture; in fact the old materials or forms are removed and replaced by new ones” (179). For Freud, as analyzed by Caruth in her essay, “Recapturing the Past” that, “trauma is not in the repression of an event experienced and its return, but in an inherent latency within the experience itself” (8). Unforgettable traumatic experiences, instead of being suppressed in unconscious, kept latent in memory. Caruth comments that, “The historical power of trauma is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all” (8). The irksome past hurts more when remembered in our hidden consciousness.

Memory has an intricate and invariable link with the identity of an individual, where multiple identities and affiliations of one are superseded by a particular identity. War, inevitably, universalizes a solitary association of an individual that eventually leads to violence and prejudice against him. Stuart Hall theorizes that, identity “is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think” (222) where it is frequently related with different problematic of identity created by traumatic situations and perpetuated through single overpowering identity. Identity is never static or “an already accomplished fact,” instead, identity as a construct is incomplete, and is relentlessly in a process of formation in its cultural, temporal, and spatial associations. He opines that identity does not proceed in a linear “straight, unbroken line,” but operates in a “dialogic relationship” between “the vector of similarity and continuity; and the vector of difference and rupture” (Hall 226). The continuity of past or history, through its different resonances, grounds one in it, and the discontinuity with the event reminds one of its dissociation from it. Continuity and disjunction



persist simultaneously and consecutively which, at large, influences an individual and his multiple affiliations.

Further, the relation of identity and violence with history is conceptualized by Amartya Sen in his prolific book, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*. “One’s sense of identity,” as Sen argues, “can be a source not merely of pride, and joy, but also of strength and confidence” (1). Identity of an individual contributes to the strength of warmth among members of one community, and excludes many people from their plural affiliations. War and violence, not only disintegrates Nation, but also decentralizes inner selves and identities of an individual, a family and a community. The conspicuous endowment of identity instigates violence by “... the imposition of singular and belligerent identities on gullible people, championed by proficient artisans of terror” (Sen 2). The retrieval of memory and history simultaneously foster crisis of identity in one’s life, who is suffering from the trauma of loss, suppression and displacement. Sen also points out that a person has multiple affiliations, and plural associations. One’s identity is required for getting recognition in society or community. But particularizing and prioritizing one identity of an individual over the other, either through the choice of his particular community, or his own, is inescapably conducive of violence. “Plural affiliations”⁴ are inflicted upon with the baggage of one single identity thereby dispensing all the other in the backdrop of varied events of tumult. Sen critiques the very act of universalizing of one identity thereby effacing the others of an individual, or a group, that consequently produces existential crisis.

III

The island of Zanzibar was enslaved by the imperialist power of Britain in 1890 and eventually Zanzibar evolved as a British protectorate. The long history of Anglo-Zanzibar war resulted in gaining independence from British Monarchy in December 1963 as a constitutional monarchy. And a month later, the bloody Zanzibar revolution, has again devastated many lives. Both the war histories of Zanzibar were mostly miserable for the poor, who were either sold in the slave trade, or forced to migrate from their homeland to Britain in search of survival. The novels, later cited in this paper, explicate this miserable struggle of the migrants of Zanzibar in the



backdrop of pernicious revolutions. Sen argues, “Despite our diverse diversities, the world is suddenly seen not a collection of people, but as a federation of religions and civilization” (13). The characters, introduced in the two novels, are suffering the residue of the revolution, though they assume diverse identities and history, they are forced to lug the baggage of being a “nigger.”

Abdulrazak Gurnah, one of the eminent Tanzanian novelists based in the United Kingdom, in one his autobiographical essays, “Writing Place,” declares:

Traveling away from home provides distance and perspective, and a degree of amplitude and liberation. It intensifies recollection, which is the writer’s hinterland. Distance allows the writer uncluttered communion with the inner self, and the result is a free play of the imagination. (28)

One moving away from his/ her homeland does not enunciate that he/she is sloughing off the original history or self because distance bequeaths the capability to amplify and broaden the spectrum of recollection or remembering, thereby consolidating the relation with the original latent self. “Traveling away from home” is an unavoidable phenomenon in the post imperial world, where characters like Abbas, who is significantly and medically silent father of Jamal and Hanna, and Maryam, are continuously struggling to flow with the living of the new land by enveloping all their dismal and catastrophic secrets. Abbas’s mysterious and enigmatic life began when “One day, long before the troubles, he slipped away without saying a word to anyone and never went back. And then another day, forty three years later, he just collapsed . . .” (Gurnah 1) and remained silent without saying any further words. Silence, as a trope, is used by the novelist and the protagonist in the entire gamut of the novel, *The Last Gift*, to weave the inexplicable net of amnesic history. Abbas deliberately stayed silent for forty three years, but the moment he desired to unravel his turbulent corners of his origin, he suffered from double strokes, Aspasia and partial paralysis resulted in losing his voice. Caruth says; “For history to be a history of trauma means that it is referential precisely to the extent that it is not fully perceived as it occurs; or to put it somewhat differently, that a history can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence” (*Unclaimed* 18).



A traumatic history though kept in silence by Abbas but it is fully perceived when he tried to unravel the suppressed secrets.

Abbas was the “sinful traveler fallen ill in a strange land, after a life as useless as a life could be” (Gurnah 9). His eternal silence has a sense of preferred solitude and a feeling of menace, which seem to inflict on him a shameful frowning and anxiety. His silence always makes other feel that there is something which he desperately wants to conceal, and does not incline to take responsibility of it. He is incessantly acting in the new world in the sense that his “abilities and deficiencies will guide . . . , to becoming active participants in a productive society,” (James 9) whether he like that society or not. On the one hand, for Abbas banishing and forgetting history silently is a convenient way out, but on the other hand, Maryam always tried to be perspicuous and intelligible about her past before her children. She even challenges the mystery of Abbas in her mind, and emphatically declares that, “I don’t want to forget them. I don’t want to be like you” (Gurnah 41).

Abbas, suffering from Asplasia and third stroke, wants to reside in solitude and peace with his silence. He lied to Maryam that he could not remember his past days in Zanzibar, but he can “remember many things and . . . remember them every day, however hard . . . try to forget” (Gurnah 243). He is caught out in lies and silences. Behdad says, immigration “is an experience of traveling, of moving away from home to a new territory,” (10) a traumatic cultural, spatial and historical displacement predicated upon the challenges to survive, thereby building a new identity. Abbas has simultaneously lurking for both identity and belonging, and he poignantly introspects that, “. . . how I had lost that place, and at the same time lost my place in the world That’s what it means to be a stranger in another people’s land” (Gurnah 249). His struggle to exist is circumscribed repeatedly by the thoughts of re-presenting the history of his childhood as a happy one, instead of, narrating the truth that how his Muslim society constituting of many religion and race have underlying rage waiting to get surfaced, or how “the rough justice the children of the enslaved planned to inflict on their sultan and on everyone else who mocked and despised them,” (Gurnah 243) or he denied unleashing the hatred they have among them. Though he tried to hide every discriminations and



pangs but as Caruth rightly says, "... the repetition of the traumatic experience in the flashback can itself be retraumatizing..." (*Unclaimed* 63) and his memories of the past does traumatizes him.

He has lived a hooligan life for fifteen years before getting settled with Maryam. He hates his own past, and eventually lost himself in new world. His anger for getting ridiculed and trapped in his first marriage and consequences of Zanzibar war of independence in 1960s have abetted him to suppress his former forty four years. His shame and regret were never away from him. The violence and terror in the atmosphere of Zanzibar have resisted him from going back or returning to his history which he recurrently distorts and defunct. He, easily and guiltlessly, denounces to take the responsibility of abandoning his wife with unborn child. He declares, "I don't know anything about Zanzibar anymore. It is no longer a real place to me" (*Gurnah* 250). He even records his history in a tape recorder so that he will not be forced to confess his history before his children.

Maryam, an orphan from her birth and wife of Abbas, is placed in contrast and contrapuntal to her husband. Though she was left by her original parents just after she was born; though she does not know her original identity, she is continuously facing, accepting and acquainting her past blatantly and clearly before others. She does not feel the shame that her husband feels for his past. But a single long ceaseless silence of her husband about his past has broken her from within. Abbas is a "bigamist" and he has married earlier when he was in Zanzibar and left her earlier wife and unborn child on the doubt that the child she is bearing does not belong to him. This doubt though seems to an instance of irresponsibility on the part of Abbas, his insecurity was rooted in the bitter words thrown upon him by the family members of his earlier wife. He was hiding his shame and terror for long thirty years because he knew that he will be despised.

His guilty silence, forgetting and suppressing of past, about his poor shameful life in Zanzibar have shrugged him for years. But this revelation now makes Maryam doubtful about his husband and she thinks that, "when he said to her, let's go, he was treating her as if she was like him, someone who could just leave. He did not think it would be for life . . ." (*Gurnah* 152). Maryam, being such a strong consolidated character, starts doubting every look of her husband. For any history, as Caruth claims, "is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced" (17). Though she tries to



forget the events and Abbas strives to make her understand his love and loyalty, it fiercely haunts her life, and they experience an unspoken distance. Some history is required to be suppressed to continue with a smooth survival. Zanzibar is more a heart wrenching affliction than a delight for Abbas, and when he attempted to face it everything got dismantled and desolated.

Like her husband, she has also kept a filthy dark secret about her past from their children, that is, about her encounter with Dinesh, the nephew of Vijay and his ravishing effort to rape her. Vijay and Ferooz were her foster parents, who were only condescending on her, and were never like real parents for her. Dinesh consecutively attempted to rape her, to molest her. She has tried to forget this event but she could not. She says, “It is only a man forcing himself on me, and after all these years I should have forgotten about it, like an old scar that fades. But I still feel the humiliation of it, the injustice” (Gurnah 193). She wanted to let her children know her secrets of menace. Further, it is only at the end of the novel, when she got reconciled with her foster parents her half identity got divulged. Her original identity was veiled by her foster parents. A long named “foundling” is daughter of an immigrant polish mother and a black light complexioned father about whose identity nobody is aware of. Maryam is a women who has lived major years of her life without recognizing her actual origin, which is still somewhat obscure. The history though full of trauma, ends in “a happy myth” where her children tried to connect every loose ends of Abbas’s “immigrant family.”

Abbas, being the father, has never thought of sharing his original culture with his children and this silence has created a kind of rift and deprivation in the sense of belongingness in the mind of Jamal and Hanna. Hanna does not know to which place or nation she belongs. When she says “I m British,” (Gurnah 117) her voice fumbles and when Uncle Digby asks her land of origin then her peculiar reaction was that:

“My father is from East Africa,” Anna said, hating Uncle Digby for being an oily old fake and hating herself for being intimidated into a disclosure that she had no faith in. She has almost said *I think* but she managed to suppress that. (Gurnah 116)

She is not even aware of her original identity, which is camouflaged by the silence of her father about his identity, his place of origin, and his past culture. Her identity, as her father’s, is



relentlessly kept in flux. Uncle Digby emphatically declares that, to “keep communities together, host and stranger need to know each other, but we cannot know each other if we don’t know ourselves” (Gurnah 117). She is both strange to herself and to the host land.

Abbas’s identity of being an immigrant and Maryam’s of being a foundling compelled the two children to perceive and contemplate their family as a “strange” one wanting solidarity. Sen argues, “. . . denial of plurality as well as the rejection of choice in matters of identity can produce an astonishingly narrow and misdirected view” (67). The lack of proper identity and sense of belonging have created a kind of rage and irritation in Hanna’s mind. She denies to be called as Hanna instead of Anna, and boldly says that:

My dad is a bigamist and my mum is a foundling. Can you imagine telling anybody that and not sounding like a character out of a comic melodrama? Of course it’s not strange for immigrants men to be bigamists, and foundlings were everywhere in the 1950s. (Gurnah 196)

She not only stereotypes these immigrants from Zanzibar, but also carries a deep seated hatred for “vile immigrant tragedies” (Gurnah 196). Immigrants are always stereotyped as bitter and tyrannical. Hanna has frequently posed to be a British, but she was never accepted so by Nick, her fiancé, and his family. Nick’s family persistently tried to condescend on her and her family, where Nick even called Abbas an “absconder.” For Hanna, their sympathy “was a kindness offered in shame to disguise their distaste,” (Gurnah 228) whereas, for Nick, her family is something which is “in the grip of a hopeless melodrama, acting like immigrants” (Gurnah 235). Their family is encapsulated by bewildering stories and ancient memories of Abbas and Maryam in this “strange land” of Britain.

IV

Thus, though Behdad argues that amnesia or “disavowal can be more systematic form of denial . . . misinterpretations of truth,” (5) Joseph Young and Jana Evans Braziel rightly ponders that, “historical remembrance is present- and future-, as well as past-, oriented; it remembers the



past—however fractured, fragmented, or impartial—as an act of survival in present and for the future” (3). Silence and amnesia are persistently employed by the character of the novel, *The Last Gift*, as ensemble to dwell their life, in the backdrop of their diasporic and colonial life, in and beyond the lands of Zanzibar and London. It is not only the powerful diplomats and nation builders who take recourse to amnesia, but the people from ground level also keep their history silent for continuing and sustaining their lives, and their bonds. The first difference is the former suppresses ‘Other’ whereas the latter tortures and torments themselves to forget and sabotage their pain and humiliation. Furthermore, the former denies taking any responsibility of the loss; on the contrary, the latter terminates their lives in the remorse and infamy for being the perpetrator. The latter may try to suppress history, but does not renounce it. Every individual tries to forget their past but “... the shape of individual lives, the history of the traumatized individual, is nothing other than the determined repetition of the event of destruction” (Caruth 63) and it is difficult to forget or wipe any memory.

Notes

1. Homogenizing of people as a phenomenon can be evaluated with the governmental policy of assimilation in multicultural Nations, like the USA, where varied heterogeneous immigrant communities with different cultural and social background are combined together, thereby avoiding their distinct identities.

2. In phenomenology, the term ‘Other’ is constitutive in their differences from the Self. The condition and quality of ‘Otherness,’ the characteristics of the ‘Other,’ is the state of being different from and alien to the social identity of a person and to the identity of a person and to the identity of the Self. ‘Otherness’ is a person’s nonconformity to the social norms of society, where ‘Other’ is alienated from the centre of society. But the concept of ‘Self’ requires the existence of the ‘Other’ as the counterpart for defining the Self. Friedrich Hegel has introduced the concept of the ‘Other’ as a constituent part of self-consciousness.

3. The conscious process of forgetting or amnesia is even affecting the academic and intellectual world. Knowledge is manifested and interpreted according to the need of the hegemon of the host land.

4. Sen says, “We are all individually involved in identities of various kinds in disparate contexts, in our own respective lives, arising from our background, or associations, or social activities” (23). Especially,



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in a diasporic space, an individual constantly negotiates with multiple affiliations to place himself in the fabric of society.

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Sabar Upore Manush Satya- A Quest For Humanism: A Brief Analysis Of The Thought And Philosophy Of Sant Kabir

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Abstract: Kabir's religious philosophy is simple and free from any rigidity and conventional custom. His noteworthy contribution, apart from the field of literature, is that he was the one, who took the initiative to synthesise Hinduism, Islam and other non-Hindu religions by going beyond the dogmas of the then orthodox society. This endeavour of Kabir to surpass all traditional religious boundaries not only makes him a true precursor of those holy religious sects of India, which have been voicing for humanism rather than communalism, but also brings him closer to the ideals propounded by the great social reformer Sri Chaitanya.

Keywords: Humanism, Sufiism, Buddhiism, Vedanta, Vaishnava.

Among the 'sant' poets of the fifteenth century, Kabir has been provided the highest stature. His noteworthy contribution, apart from the field of literature, is that he was the one, who took the initiative to synthesise Hinduism, Islam and other non-Hindu religions by going beyond the dogmas of the then orthodox society. This endeavour of Kabir to surpass all traditional religious boundaries not only makes him a true precursor of those holy religious sects of India, which have been voicing for humanism rather than communalism, but also brings him closer to the ideals propounded by the great social reformer Sri Chaitanya.

Being a true exponent of the Bhakti tradition, "Kabir refined and clarified the devotional movement of Indian spirituality known as bhakti. He founded Nirguna Bhakti, the practice of loving devotion



to the formless Divine. Prior to Kabir, bhakti had been practised and understood through the lens of Sarguna Bhakti or devotion to the multiple physical forms that the Divine took.” (Das 16)

The impact of several religious cults and their doctrines finds expression in the verses of Kabir. Beginning with old Brahmanic Hinduism, Hindu and Buddhist Tantrism, teachings of Nath yogis and the personal devotionism from South India mixed with imageless God of Islam- all are splendidly juxtaposed in the lyrics of Kabir. Though there is no historical evidence of the fact that Kabir used to consider himself as the synthesizer of Hinduism and Islam, his social philosophy is a sheer manifestation of the synthesis of the two religious doctrines, namely Hinduism and Islam-

I am neither a Hindu nor a Muslim.

I am a five-element puppet in which divine power plays. (Das 15)

Kabir's religious philosophy is simple and free from any rigidity and conventional custom. According to Kabir, life is an interplay of personal soul (Jivatma) and God (Paramatma). It is Kabir's view that 'Jivatma' is always in quest of 'Paramatma' and salvation is the process of making a union of these two divine principles. Besides, Kabir had complete faith in the concept of 'interior religion', according to which one should surrender oneself to The Supreme Lord, who dwelt in the heart.

From Hinduism Kabir borrows the idea of reincarnation and the law of Karma, while Islam enriches him with the outer practices of Indian Sufi ascetics and Sufi mysticism. His social thought and philosophy have not only influenced Muslims and Hindus, but also plays a significant role in the formation of a new religious cult called Sikhism. Though there are no historical evidences that Kabir met with Guru Nanak, for their life spans do not overlap in time, some western scholars, by tracing out the several verses of Kabir in the Sikh scripture, have mistakenly addressed him as the predecessor of Nanak as well as the forerunner of Sikhism (Jayaram):

O Lord Increate, who will serve Thee?



Every votary offers his worship to the God of his own creation:

Each day he receives service—

None seek Him, the Perfect: Brahma, the Indivisible Lord.

They believe in ten Avatars; but no Avatar can be the Infinite

Spirit, for he suffers the results of his deeds:

The Supreme One must be other than this.

The Yogi, the Sanyasi, the Ascetics, are disputing one with
another:

Kabir says, "O brother! he who has seen that radiance of love,
he is saved. (Tagore 16)

Kabir neither did classify himself as Hindu or Muslim, Sufi or Bhakta, nor did he support the religious exclusivism. As Evelyn Underhill in the introduction of the book *Songs of Kabir* writes that in his lyrics a "wide range of mystical emotion is brought into play: from the loftiest abstractions, the most other worldly passion for the Infinite to the most intimate and personal realization of God, expressed in homely metaphors and religious symbols drawn indifferently from Hindu and Mohammedan belief. It is impossible to say of their author that he was Brahman or Sufi, Vedantist or Vaishnavite. He is, as he says about himself, "at once the child of Allah and of Ram." That Supreme Spirit Whom he knew and adored, and to Whose joyous friendship he sought to induct the souls of other men, transcended whilst He included all metaphysical categories, all creedal definitions; yet each contributed something to the description of that Infinite and Simple Totality Who revealed Himself, according to their measure, to the faithful lovers of all creeds" (Tagore 5).

While making an analysis of Kabir's philosophy J. Das, an eminent academician on Kabir, writes that the message of Kabir:

is essentially to know the Self, the eternal Spirit that is the core of our being. We are emanations of the Divine, but we do not realize it. It is our religious/spiritual duty to know who we really are, and remove ourselves from doubt and delusions. Kabir did not tolerate



false piety, hypocrisy, superstition, and the externalities of religions. He exhorted us to awaken to Self-knowledge in this life and be free. We need to realize that we are never separate from God. He taught the equality of all, universal love and brotherhood, regardless of religious, caste, or social status. In these poems you will note that he is always addressing the audience from a point of authority, yet he had no formal education. He spoke of what he realized. Great teachings such as Kabir's are a treasure for our development. They are like a torch lighting the way so we do not stumble on our journey. Kabir's poems are like that torch, showing us the path to Divinity. It is up to us to pay attention. (Das 13-14)

Kabir's collection of poems is accumulated in his greatest work *Bijak*. The anthology contains his universal view of spirituality, which is an amalgamation of the extractions of the decent aspect of the different religious doctrines. His language is vernacular and is simple in nature, like his philosophy. His vocabulary is impregnated with ideas of Karma and incarnation, which he espouses from Brahmanism and Hinduism. He was not a blind pursuer of the philosophies propagated by *Quran* and *Vedas*, rather he was the preacher of the 'Sahaja Path' or the Simple Way, according to which one can obtain the blessings of the Supreme Master by pursuing the 'Sahaja Path' with profound bhakti (Das 15). Here Kabir's idea of 'Sahaja Path' resembles with that of the idea of 'Sahajiya Sadhana' of Sri Chaitanya, the founder of the Gaudiya Vaishnava sect. Sri Chaitanya, like Kabir, was also against any kind of religious rigidity and orthodoxy. He was always of the opinion that mercy of the Supreme Lord could also be achieved by practicing 'Sahajiya Sadhana', that is, by continuously chanting the holy name of Krishna.

Kabir's verses clearly expose his faith in the Vedantic idea of atman. But unlike the earlier Vedantists, he induced logic in his philosophy to its coherent end. As a result of that inclusion, he was easily able to pluck out the Hindu societal caste system and the practice of worshipping of murti (idol) from his doctrines to demonstrate his clear faith in bhakti and Sufi ideas. The major part of Kabir's work was gathered by the fifth Sikh master, Guru Arjun Dev, and forms a part of the holy Sikh scripture *Guru Granth Sahib*.



Kabir's songs and poems are the embodiment of deep wisdom. Instead of bearing the name of any human Guru, whom Kabir blindly admired, his verses reveal his intense love for the 'Sad-Guru' or the true guru. According to Kabir true guru is one, who would work as a medium of interaction between 'Jivatma' and 'Paramatma' by relating the divine experience directly. From several hagiographies, it is known that the Vaishnava saint Ramananda is held to be his guru. (Jayaram) Therefore it is quite natural that he was influenced by the thought and philosophy of Vaishnavism. Here it is noteworthy to mention that it is never possible to analyse Kabir's doctrines under the light of a single philosophical school, yet some of his verses quite clearly suggest his keen attachment with the Vaishnava theology. For instance, if we make an analysis of the following lyric we shall be amazed to find the influence of *Gita*, one of the foundation texts of Vaishnavism. In the song we shall see the brilliant synthesis of 'Jnana Yoga' (Yoga of Spiritual Knowledge), 'Bhakti Yoga' (Yoga of Loving Devotion) and 'Karma Yoga' (Yoga of Action), which stemmed from his own inner realization and identification with the Divine:

I went searching for the beautiful colour of my Beloved,
and then discovered the colour manifesting everywhere.
Even as I searched for it,
I too had been coloured by its beautiful hue. (Das 15)

Apart from that, the emphasis on the idea of 'Sabda', which is considered to be one of the important doctrines of Kabir, is actually a borrowing from the thought and philosophy of Vaishnavism. However, it is true that while in Vaishnava teaching the word 'Sabda' connotes divine inspiration and the word of the teacher, in Kabir's view it is purely oral, with nothing committed to writing.

According to Evelyn Underhill; "The poetry of mysticism might be defined on the one hand as a temperamental reaction to the vision of Reality: on the other, as a form of prophecy. As it is the special vocation of the mystical consciousness to mediate between two orders, going out in loving adoration towards God and coming home to tell the secrets of Eternity to other men; so the artistic



self-expression of this consciousness has also a double character. It is love-poetry, but love-poetry which is often written with a missionary intention. Kabîr's songs are of this kind: out-births at once of rapture and of charity. Written in the popular Hindi, not in the literary tongue, they were deliberately addressed—like the vernacular poetry of Jacopone da Todî and Richard Rolle—to the people rather than to the professionally religious class; and all must be struck by the constant employment in them of imagery drawn from the common life, the universal experience. It is by the simplest metaphors, by constant appeals to needs, passions, relations which all men understand--the bridegroom and bride, the guru and disciple, the pilgrim, the farmer, the migrant bird--that he drives home his intense conviction of the reality of the soul's intercourse with the Transcendent. There are in his universe no fences between the "natural" and "supernatural" worlds; everything is a part of the creative Play of God, and therefore--even in its humblest details—capable of revealing the Player's mind” (Tagore 5).

Underhill further writes about Kabir in the introduction of the book *Song of Kabir* that despite having a wide and rapturous vision of the universe Kabir never loses touch with the common life, his feet are firmly planted upon earth; his lofty and passionate apprehensions are perpetually controlled by the activity of a sane and vigorous intellect, by the alert commonsense so often found in persons of real mystical genius. The constant insistence on simplicity and directness, the hatred of all abstractions and philosophizing, the ruthless criticism of external religion:

these are amongst his most marked characteristics. God is the Root whence all manifestations, "material" and "spiritual," alike proceed; and God is the only need of man--"happiness shall be yours when you come to the Root." Hence to those who keep their eye on the "one thing needful," denominations, creeds, ceremonies, the conclusions of philosophy, the disciplines of asceticism, are matters of comparative indifference. They represent merely the different angles from which the soul may approach that simple union with Brahma which is its goal; and are useful only insofar as they contribute to this consummation. So thorough-going is Kabîr's eclecticism that he seems by turns Vedântist



and Vaishnavite, Pantheist and Transcendentalist, Brahmin and Sûfî. In the effort to tell the truth about that ineffable apprehension, so vast and yet so near, which controls his life, he seizes and twines together--as he might have woven together contrasting threads upon his loom--symbols and ideas drawn from the most violent and conflicting philosophies and faiths. (Tagore 10)

In his influential book *Kabir the Great Mystic* Isaac Ezekiel writes: “Kabir’s songs seek nobody’s approbation. They seek no sanction, ask for no approval, search for no popularity, invite no commendation, and crave no compliment. They stand independent of these considerations, and they constitute the most uninhibited literature, the freest of free writing ever produced by a saint . . . Banter, ridicule, sarcasm, wit and humour—these are the weapons he wields! Nor does he hesitate to hit straight-from-the-shoulder, hitting hard, ceaselessly and without stop, till the face of false piety and hypocrisy is battered out of shape and exposed to the view of the general public for general laughter” (Das 17).

Kabir holds a place of great importance in the religious history of India. He was an exponent of Nirguna Bhakti. As J. Das writes in the Introduction of his book *Kabir: Songs of the Divine* – “Kabir refined and clarified the devotional movement of Indian spirituality known as bhakti. He founded Nirguna Bhakti, the practice of loving devotion to the formless Divine. Prior to Kabir, bhakti had been practised and understood through the lens of Sarguna Bhakti or devotion to the multiple physical forms that the Divine took.” (Das 16)

According to Gertrude Emerson Sen, Kabir was not only a saint but a “stern reformer, hating religious cant and hypocrisy, as can be gauged from his terse and often caustic verses which are still sung all over Uttar Pradesh and Punjab.” He further says:

His (Kabir’s) rejection of rituals and image worship might well have been inspired by the tenets of orthodox Islam, and his ridicule of caste might as easily have sprung from the underlying Islamic doctrine of social democracy. But when he attacked fasts and ablutions and pilgrimages as useless performances and found the outward insignia of religion just so



much foolishness, he attacked both orthodox Islam and orthodox Hinduism. Added to this he proclaimed that Allah and Rama were names of one and the same God, that he was to be found neither in the temple nor in Mosque, neither in Banaras nor in Mecca, but only in the heart of his devotees. (Sen)

Kabir laid great emphasis on the idea of Bhakti for he believed that it is through bhakti one's soul can obtain 'Moksha'. As if echoing the teachings of his great contemporary Sri Chaitanya, Kabir propounded the message that without having complete devotion or bhakti, it was not possible for the soul to surpass the complexities of the mundane world. As he said "Neither austerities, nor works of any kind are necessary to obtain Bhakti (fervent devotion) and perpetual mediation on the Supreme—His names of Hari, Ram, Govind being ever on the lips and in the heart. The highest end is absorption in the Supreme and reunion with Him from whom all proceeded, and who exists in all" (Purnima).

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Exploring the Trajectories of Devotion to a Personal God in Selected Compositions of Bhakti Saints and Sufis of Medieval India – A Comparative Study

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Abstract: The Medieval Indian period witnessed the emergence of bhakti saints and widespread impact of the Sufis in the creation of a mystical environment. They disseminated the idea of achieving mysticism through the creation of an intimate relationship with god. This paper is aimed to reveal that how the idea of a personal form of god can be seen present in the poetry of certain Bhakti and Sufi saints of medieval India by analyzing their selected compositions. This analysis will lead to the identification of a major point of convergence in the philosophy of the Bhakti and Sufi saint-poets and also determines a mutual influence on each other.

Keywords: Bhakti and Sufi Saints, Personal God, Mysticism.

Achieving mysticism requires one to realize god or the divine which culminates into a transcendental experience. This realization of god can be achieved through multifarious paths of devotion. According to Hindu mysticism, the sentiments of devotion can be represented through the term 'Bhakti'. The idea of 'Bhakti' involves love for god and loved by god. "The ultimate goal of Bhakti is to maintain close communion with the deity" (Robertson 9). The intimacy with god is to be attained by physical and psychological submission to god. The sentiments involved with the process of physical and psychological union with god gives metaphysical experiences to the devotees. According to the philosophy of Bhakti, a devotee can remain devoted towards god by being a lover (*madhurya-bhav*), as a parent nurturing the child, (*vatsalya-bhav*), as a friend (*sakhya-bhav*) and as a slave (*dasya-bhav*). These different routes of bhakti cater towards forming an



intimate relationship with god. Semantically, the term 'Bhakti' originates from the Sanskrit root 'Bhaj', "which means 'to share in', 'to belong to', or 'to worship'. The sense of participation of the devotee from mind and body is essential to gain accordance with the divine and the sense of sharing imply the importance of sharing or distributing love to all human beings who are equal in the eyes of god. Bhakti is generally used in a broad sense: the objects of bhakti are divine or human figures, both individually and communally. Thus, the religious commitment of bhakti has a theistic structure, and its forms are many and diverse. It can be traced back to a few classical Upanishads and to a large section of epics, including the *Bhagavadgita*, which culminates in a vision of the divine" (Sawai 25).

The concept of 'Bhakti' evolves from the Vedic sources. It took its birth in the *Bhagavad Gita* and started expanding its orbit with recurrent translations of *Bhagavad Gita* in regional languages during the phase of medieval India and summarization of stories of the legendary love between Radha and Krishna and with his *gopis* in *Bhagavata Purana*, *GitaGovinda* and many other texts comprising stories of *Raaslila* of Krishna in the medieval period of India, propagating the notion of Krishna as a lover god and development of intimate attachment with god. Such devotional literature of medieval India re-introduced the concept of bhakti and it grew in its full strength through the saint-poets of medieval India. The resurgence and empowerment of the path of devotion started occurring through Krishna bhakti saints who talked about their intimate attachment with Krishna from the perspective of a lover or a bride of Krishna such as Meerabai, Surdas, Chaitanya, Rahim and many more. Attaining a close and intimate relationship with god was a dominant attribute of devotion among medieval Indian Krishna-bhakti saints. A Krishna-bhakta considering himself/herself lover and bride of lord Krishna or maybe one of the *gopis* of *Braj*, became the most prevalent route to achieve mysticism or transcendental experience of union with the divine among the cult of *Krishnaites*. Bridal mysticism represents sentiments related to *madhurya-bhava* which is an appropriate medium to develop intimate relationship with god. Meerabai, a Krishna-bhakta of 16th century, articulates her sentiments of love for Krishna. For instance,



Sister, I had a dream that I wed
the lord of those who live in need:
Five hundred sixty thousand people came
and the lord of Braj was the groom.
In dream they set up a wedding arch;
in dream he grasped my hand;
in dream he led me around the wedding fire
and I became unshakably his bride.
Mira's been granted her mounting-lifting Lord:
from living past lives, a prize. (Hawley 125-126)

Meerabai's emotions as a bride of Krishna communicate her close bond with her god which she realized in moments of transcendence. Verses articulating experiences of mysticism as a bride of Krishna explains that she chose a very personal and intimate way towards realizing god in Krishna, the Hindu deity. Krishna-*bhaktas* also used to experience erotic longing as a lover of Krishna. Krishna eroticism in *Krishnaites* exposes their close communion with god, as a female lover, as the gender of longing for union with the beloved. From a composition by Rahim (1556-1627), it can be noted that he transgressed himself into a female lover of Krishna, awaiting union.

All around us, clouds burst.
Yet with every drop, sister,
this parched body aches
and craves for Krishna. (Subramaniam 13)

In this above verse, Rahim conveys his sentiments of love for his god or Krishna similar to the sentiments of Radha, who longs for Krishna's presence. (Quote something on Radhaism). Such ways of feminine devotionism is also acute in compositions of Surdas who belonged to 15th century. For instance,



My eyes have become so greedy – they lust for his juice;
They refuse to be satisfied, drinking in the beauty
of his lotus face, the sweetness of his words.
Day and night they fashion their picture of him
and never blink a moment for rest.
What an ocean of radiance! But where's it going to fit
in this cramped little closet of a heart?
And now with raw estrangement its waters surge so high
that the eyes vomit in pain:
Sur says, the Lord of Braj – the doctor – has gone.

Who can I send to Mathura to fetch him here again? (Hawley 169)

Sentiments of Krishna-eroticism project the dominant idea of bhakti that is to develop intimacy or personal association with god or the divine. The sense of corporeal longing in Krishna-*bhaktas* states their emotions for Krishna as a bride/*gopi* or maybe Radha. The desire of physical union with Krishna becomes an important route towards experiencing spiritual transcendence for them.

The idea of bhakti is imbued with diverse emotions of love and devotion towards the divine, a person, a deity or an object. For the medieval Indian bhakti saints, realizing the divine through transcendental experiences involved their close association with Krishna, Hari, Rama or addressing their love to the one force behind every creation. Kabir's verses also communicate experience of mysticism and romantic love for the divine through his personal or intimate relationship with Rama. For instance,

Like a sharp arrow
Is the love of Rama.
Only someone struck by it
Knows the pain. (Subramaniam 3)



“Kabir’s Ram is situated in the inner self and he is also situated in the social world. According to Kabir, this understanding of Ram’s presence in the social world is the root of true wisdom and devotional feeling” (Aggarwal 61). *Madhurya-bhava* is profound in this composition depicting intimate bond between a devotee and his/her personal concept of god. Interpretation of such compositions of medieval Indian bhakti saints makes it explicit that they selected the path of loving god and to be loved by god, the path of bhakti, laden with emotions of *madhurya-bhava* representing feminine devotionism.

As discussed earlier that bhakti has other sentiments of devotion such as *dasya-bhava*, medieval Indian bhakti saints adopted such routes apart from *madhurya-bhava* to express their love for Krishna, Hari or Rama or the divine. A composition by Meerabai represents her sentiments of *dasya-bhava* for Krishna, the lover god.

Dark One, listen compassionately

To me, for I am your slave.

The hope of seeing you has made me lose my mind

And my body is besieged by your absence. (Hawley 123)

Meerabai’s love for her god involved *madhurya-bhava* as well as *dasya-bhava* which reveal her intense love and devotion to Krishna/Hari. In certain verses, Meerabai explains her physical and psychological state of separation from Krishna. This above composition is one such instance of longing for union with her beloved god. It can be said that Meerabai has also articulated her sentiments similar to Radha, who is perpetually longing for Krishna. It can be comprehended that eroticism for Krishna indicate that medieval Indian Bhakti saints were focussed in experiencing god in a personal way, forming an intimate relationship with god through contemplation, which was the ultimate medium for them to attain mystical experiences. Experiencing romantic love for Krishna/Hari by the Bhakti saints refer to their ecstatic experiences of realizing god or union with god through the most intimate or personal relation with the divine as “romantic love is the most



exalted experience in life and the impassioned adoration of god is the most important road to salvation” (Mukhopadyay 6).

The concept of bridal mysticism is profound in Sufism. Sufism or ‘*tassawuf*’ entails spiritual union with god and its one of the most important doctrine is ‘*fanaa*’, converging with god. The convergence into god requires realizing the divine’s omniscient presence in the universe, in the souls of all living beings including humans. To become aware of the internal and external presence of god, in the self and outside (also conveyed by bhakti philosophy), Sufism requires one to participate in ‘*fanaa*’ which requires self-oblivion or self-annihilation. ‘*Fanna*’ brings consciousness of the divine in one’s soul only after the devotee discards all connections with pride and anger which blinds him/her from attaining the consciousness of god within. “Sufism is Islamic mysticism and the term Sufi, *wali-allah* (protégé of God), dervish and *faqir* are often used with reference to Muslim mystics who endeavour to attain communion with God through the practice of meditation and concentration and by leading a very austere life marked by self-abnegation and high moral values” (Taneja 2).

The non-orthodox Sufis did not constrain their thoughts specifically under Islam but underwent through modification by Buddhism, Jainism and other religious schools dealing with attaining mystical experiences in different ways. According to professor Hedayatulaah “the Sufis spread a network of propagation throughout India. Their spiritual policy was ‘*sulh-i-kul*’ (peace with all) and conversion was considered to be the most virtuous work” (Hedayatulaah 39). Sufism lay on the path of complete devotion and faithfully recalling god which would succumb one to the feel a close bond with god. The relation with god based on devotion and love was also common to the bhakti saints for embarking on the path of mysticism. The fundamental concepts of mysticism lie in surrendering oneself to god. The mystical path towards god needs one to show unselfish love and devotion towards god which can be observed both in Sufism and Bhakti-cult.

Realizing the divine’s omniscient presence is well expressed by Sarmad (d. AD 1661), a mystic who came to India from Iran and inspired Dara Sikoh, eldest son of Shah Jahan and brother



of Aurangzeb. One of his compositions represents his inner thoughts of realizing god through contemplation or delving into his inner-self.

Your alluring ways are seen everywhere.

The message of Your Love is everywhere.

I am Your lover, for this reason alone:

You hide behind the veil and yet are everywhere. (Jamal 284)

It can be observed that Sarmad, a Sufi mystic is expressing his love for the omniscient god as a lover similar to the approaches of bhakti saints. Shah Niaz (AD 1742-1834), a Sufi saint hailing from Punjab, articulated his personal ways of realizing god similar to Sarmad, who was his predecessor. In this following poem by Shah Niaz, it can be noted that he described his sentiments for the divine god as a lover, a friend and in multiple ways which delivered him transcendental experiences.

I saw my beloved in every guise,

Sometimes hidden, apparent,

Sometimes as a possibility,

Others as a certainty,

Sometimes as passing,

Sometimes eternal,

Sometimes he called out, "Am I not?"

Sometimes a slave, others a lord,

Sometimes he was indifferent, distant, sometimes like a close friend,

Sometimes he appeared as a king on his throne,

Sometimes a beggar without a home.

Sometimes he was a puritan and chaste,

Sometimes a drunk in tavern sat,

Sometimes he was a dancer or a singer,

Sometimes an instrument playing a tune,

Sometimes he came in the guise of a beloved,



Enticing, beautiful and proud.

Sometimes like the lover, Niaz,

I saw him wretched and forlorn! (Jamal 324)

It can be noted in medieval Indian Sufis like Sarmad and Shah Niaz, realization of god occurred through the route of love. As a lover or as a friend, these Sufis meditated about god, adhering to the way of realizing god in personal ways. This above composition reveals that Shah Niaz perceived god in multiple ways and associated the divine in multiple forms. In another poem, he described his experiences towards his quest to know god through Saqi, a great Sufi mystic who was his inspiration.

I drank from the Saqi's wine filled eyes,

Bid goodbye to name and fame,

Reason and sanity the ultimate price!

Cast my purity, my chastity,

At that beloved idol's feet;

My religion is love

Drunkenness, passion sweet.

To serve the pir, my guide,

Is my duty and my pride;

I am but a mere slave

Amongst his many attendant slaves! (Jamal 323)

Shah Niaz communicates his intense love for his beloved Saqi by regarding himself as his slave. A similarity can be observed in the devotional sentiments between Krishna-*bhakta*, Meerabai and Shah Niaz, as *madhurya-bhava* and *dasya-bhava*, both catering towards the creation of an intimate relationship with god, can be seen functioning in them. The bhakti-saints envisioned god in external beings and such similarity in devotional philosophy can be observed in the above verse by Shah Niaz who experiences mysticism through his *pir* and guide, Saqi. As Bhakti saints aimed for



union with god through contemplative practices, Sufi saints also endeavoured to attain union with god which is about realizing god in inner self. Sultan Bahu of 17th century was another Sufi saint from Punjab was quite popular due to his unorthodox ways of questioning institutionalized religions. In the following poem, he speaks about his only motive to unite with god through inner realization.

I am no accomplished scholar,
Nor a judge, nor doctor of law;
My heart neither hell desires,
Nor my soul to heaven aspires.
I do not fast as required,
Nor I am the pure, praying kind.
All I want is union with god,
I care not for the false or true. (Jamal 289)

It is apparent that he actively seeks god in his interior self not in ritualistic practices prescribed in religions. Devotion towards god among Sufis and Bhakti saints of medieval India catered to realizing god in own personal ways (may be as a friend, a lover, a slave or as a parent nurturing god) and such ways evoke mystical experiences in the devotees. It needs to be recalled that the philosophy of devotion among Bhakti saints and Sufis of medieval India involved the concept of realizing god or the divine in a person, a deity or in the supreme power of nature, defining the attributes of devotion to a personal god.

Shah Ni'matullah's lines depict realizing god or spiritual experience by delving within. For example, "Drinking rapturous wine, talking about love – beware/ of seeing God in my eyes, and my eyes are His. (Rasti 51)" He was a Sufi poet of Syria belonging to 14th to 15th century, inspiring other mystics through his philosophy of mysticism. Rumi, is another influential and significant name among Sufi mystics. His messages about mysticism were extremely popular among medieval



Indian Sufis. One of his compositions is presented below as an instance depicting his love for god as a lover.

Over the firmament at dawn, my moon-faced Beloved appeared.
Descending from heaven, He became concerned about me.
Like a falcon who suddenly dives to take a bird as its prey,
the Beloved took me away and began turning the firmament around.
When I looked at myself, I couldn't see me,
because my body had become like a spirit by the Beloved's grace. (Rasti 65)

God as beloved and one's lover as a god are two faces of devotion towards god. Regarding one's lover as a god or a deity or the divine as god, essentially involves spiritual experiences. A spiritually awakened mind of a devotee can perceive god through multifarious ways of devotion. Be it Meerabai's love for Krishna as a lover, as a slave or Shah Niaz's love for Saqi as a fiend or a devotee, an intimate attachment with the beloved is essential to attain mystical experiences. Be it Sarmad's love for the eternal god or Rahim's and Surdas's passion for Krishna, the path of love is the most ultimate route towards knowing the divine.

Muhammad Hedayatullah observes that "under the influence of Sufis, the features of Bhakti religion present in the *Gita* and other Hindu religious literature, were augmented, revitalized and stimulated, and thus awakened the consciousness of the masses about the existence of a loving god who takes care of his sincere devotees" (Hedayatullah 52). The propagation of mystical thoughts in the bhakti saints was accompanied by Sufism along with philosophies of mysticism of liberal Hindu *yogis*. There are historical observations that the Sufis after arriving on the coastal areas of South India started propagating Islam and the contact between the Sufis and *Saivites* (*shiva* worshippers of South India) must have occurred. The Sufis started mingling with different schools of religion of Medieval India which initiated them to frame out their ways of attaining mysticism. They established contacts between the *yogis* and the enormous knowledge of Hindu scriptures explaining divine unity. Al-Biruni, a famous historian has written down the ideas of *Bhagavad Gita* and Bhakti



which indicates that there was a rise in the Indo-Islamic contacts on the level of culture. Abbas Rizvi in his book *A History of Sufism in India* provides information about some essential contacts which are significant in the grounds of analyzing the mutual influence of the two segments of devotional doctrines. Translations of Hindu classics and religious epics like the Upanishads by Muslim mystics serve as instances of their interest in acquiring spiritual knowledge, such as in “the 13th century Persian adaptation of a Sanskrit classic on Hindu yoga philosophy entitled *Amritkund*. The title of its adaptation is *Hauz-ul-Hayat*” (Siddiqui 37).

From 14th century onwards there were many Sufi poets who chose Hindustani languages as a medium of their expression. This attempt made their ideas wide spread among the Indian masses. The ideas of Sufi mysticism were becoming immensely popular and the Hindu mystics were getting acquainted with such ideas. Abbas Rizvi mentions that Sufi poets preached their mystical thoughts by choosing “Indian themes in Hindi and other regional languages offered them wide opportunities to express” (Rizvi 363). This directly suggests that the Sufis were in a quest to understand the philosophy of Indian mysticism which fore grounded their way of mysticism. Those Sufi poets who selected Hindustani dialects of communication did not neglect the Indian philosophy because they studied and analyzed major mystical school of thoughts of India which reveal the mutual influence between the liberal Islamic mystics and tolerant Hindu saints. Abbas Rizvi gives several instances of such mutual influences between Sufi and Indian mystics. There were Bengali Sufi poets who wrote in Persian and Hindi languages. Sufi poetry written in regional medieval Indian languages gave a new direction towards Indian mysticism. This indicates that the foreign languages were also learnt and selected as a medium of communication by the Indian mystics and poets as well (Guru Nanak knew Persian and Sanskrit). The expression of mystical thoughts, monotheism, devotion, unflinching love and equality practiced by the Sufis and Indian mystics terminated the boundaries of language and culture. Their path of attaining unification with god did not succumb to any class/caste prejudices, domination of philosophical ideas and linguistic superiority. This understanding further leads to derive that due to the similar approaches towards mysticism they contributed in each others’ ways of attaining mysticism.



Conclusion: It can be inferred that this path of love and devotion is common among the medieval Indian bhakti saints and Sufis for mystical experiences. The trajectories of devotion are multiple and such paths are created through personally realizing god. The personal realization of god refers to individual quest towards knowing god through intimate relationships. The philosophy of Bhakti and Sufism, both are endowed with notions of loving god as a lover and realizing god through other forms of intimate relationships. Both require a devotee to concentrate on one's inner self for transcending into the mystical world.

The comparative analysis of the compositions of certain bhakti saints and Sufis of medieval India presents a strong analogy in their philosophy of mysticism. Profound love for god and individual realizations of god propagated by the bhakti saints and Sufis challenged institutionalized religious practices. In Medieval India, these two schools of mysticism ran along spreading brotherhood and equality. Due to the creation of a mystical environment through the messages of Sufis and bhakti saints, during the medieval Indian period, it can be said that mystics belonging to Hinduism and Islam must have influenced each other through their philosophies of devotion and love for the divine. It can not be denied that there were no communal disturbances between the people belonging to Hindu and Muslim communities but due to the widespread growth of Sufi fraternities like *Chishti*, *Naqshbandi* and many more Sufi orders and popularity of bhakti saints, especially the *Krishnaites*, formation of a mystical culture was possible during the medieval period in India.

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Dialogue between Silent Woman and Silent Nature:

An Ecofeminist Reading of Tagore's "Subha"

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Abstract: Tagore's conception and portrayal of nature is so vast and all-encompassing that it would be futile to capture it within few words. Like innumerable rewards towards Tagore, the great nature lover my article is just another tribute to his lifelong meditation on nature. Tagore offers before his readers Nature with its multidimensional forms with all its sensitivity and brilliance. He was so much engrossed in Nature and imbibed the purity of Nature in core of his heart only to reflect the Truth of Nature through each and every genre of art (poems, paintings, plays, novels, short stories, songs etc). Tagore perceives Nature in her multifaceted characters like mother, daughter, beloved etc. Outside Bengal Tagore is mainly recognized for his poetry and as only Noble Laureate for Literature in India but his short stories are as enchanting and enthralling as his poetry and songs. Through his short stories Tagore portrays the then socio-cultural background and age old practices which hinder the progress of society with his dexterous sagacity and empathetic quality. He not only meditates upon Nature outside but nature within which makes his writings all the more profound and complex. Assimilation of Nature within oneself is represented in the eponymous character of Tagore's short story "Subha" silently and saliently. Within the short dimension of a short story Tagore reflectively represents a dumb girl's connection with Nature. Language of Nature and language of Subha gets mingled in a silent way. Nature is so imbued in Subha that it seems Nature speaks to her and also speaks for her. Universal union of silent language can be found in the interaction of Subha and her Mother Nature. Nature becomes ally and confederate to Subha. The silent girl's language finds its form in multifaceted nature of the magnanimous Nature. Synthesis of sound and soundlessness finds its expression in Subha's sign, signal, sob and sigh towards the universe. The sensitivity of Nature and selfless love of silent world can hold the



universe. The strength of solitude reigns supreme in the silent world of Nature and Woman. The entire story reverberates with the theme that pure love needs no language and the universal love which links all creatures is beyond any language.

Keywords: Tagore, Ecofeminism, Nature, Woman.

The Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore's conception and portrayal of nature in his entire canon is so vast and all-encompassing that it would be futile to capture it within a few words. My article, by focusing on a single short story of Tagore, is an attempt to offer a tribute to this great nature-lover's lifelong meditation on Nature. Tagore offers before his readers Nature with its multidimensional forms - with all its sensitivity and brilliance. His writings are deeply engrossed with Nature and the entire canon imbibes the purity of Nature only to reflect the Truth of Nature through each and every genre of art (poems, paintings, plays, novels, short stories, songs etc). Tagore perceives Nature in her multifaceted characters like mother, daughter, beloved etc.

Tagore is mainly recognized for his poetry and as only Noble Laureate for Literature in India but his short stories are as enchanting and enthralling as his poetry and songs. Through his scintillating short stories Tagore portrays the then socio-cultural background and age old practices which hinder the progress of society with his dexterous sagacity and empathetic quality. He not only meditates upon the outward Nature but upon that Nature which lies within each and every living and non-living beings. The assimilation of Nature within oneself is represented in the eponymous character of Tagore's short story "Subha" silently and saliently. Within the short, apt and compact dimension of a short story Tagore reflectively represents a dumb girl's strong connection with Nature. The story is situated in the village named Chandipur. Banikantha has three daughters - Sukeshini (a girl with beautiful hair), Suhashini (a girl with sweet smile) and Subhashini (a girl who talks sweetly). Ironically Subhashini (she is called Subha for short) unfortunately turns out to be dumb. Subha's two other sisters get married with dowry but Subha's deformity hangs like a curse upon her parents. By bringing in the issue of marriage Tagore aptly points out the heinous customs of child marriage and dowry system in the then crippled society. People around Subha are



so insensitive that they discuss their perturbation regarding Subha's speechlessness before her. They cannot even think that a person without speech can have a heart to feel. Subha's father loves more than his other daughters but her mother takes Subha's inability to speak as a blemish on her motherhood. Subha does not get absolute love and sympathy from her biological mother but she gets the purity of love from her Mother earth. By taking recourse to Ranjay Pratap Singh's essay "Environment and Vedic Literature", we can aptly say that Vedic literature rightly propounds the concept that Mother Earth (*Bhumi*) and Father Sky (*Dyau*) nourish all the creatures as their children.

Throughout the story Subha is identified with Nature. Subha's eyelashes are compared with long leaves and her thin lips are like tiny leaves. In this way effortlessly Tagore connects Subha physically and figuratively with Nature. Human language needs translation and other assistance to express one's thoughts but a dumb girl like Subha needs no language as her face and large bright black eyes divulge everything. The mind imprints its innermost thoughts on the face. To express oneself one must not have the medium of language because silence has its own way of expression which is much more vocal than language itself. Expressions on Subha's face are endlessly compared with different elements of Nature like a dim setting moon or ever-sparkling thunder. Nature has her own diversified strong as well as demure elements like human expressions and emotions to demonstrate herself as a living being. Subha's wordless and companionless existence relates her with the clear endless sky as well as with the shadowy silent noontide with all the vigour of its calmness.

Being in tune with the age-old comparison, Tagore here compares the river with a girl and a girl's behavior with different objects of Nature. In Indian culture the concept of river is always associated with women, which can be found in the depiction and portrayal of India's most of the rivers like Ganga, Yamuna, Krishna, Kaveri etc as goddesses. The river which runs by the village Chandipur is compared with a tireless modest girl of a middleclass family who knows her boundary well. The river has a connection with the two villages on its bank. It indicates man's sheer



dependency on Nature. The busy benevolent river serves the humankind in its own cheerful way. Subha's integration of Nature within herself is indicated by her spending time by the river bank whenever she gets time. The renowned critic in the field of ecocriticism Kate Soper in her essay "Naturalized Woman and Feminized Nature" has rightly pointed out that Nature has been represented as 'a woman in two rather differing senses': 'she' can easily be identified with the 'body of laws, principles and processes' that is the 'object of scientific scrutiny and experimentation'. In addition, 'she' can also be read in terms of "nature conceived as spatial territory, as the land or earth which is tamed or tilled in agriculture (and with this we may associate a tendency to feminize nature viewed simply as landscape-trees, woodlands, hills, rivers, streams, etc. are frequently personified as female or figure in similes comparing them to parts of the female body)" (141). Language of Nature and language of Subha gets mingled in a silent way. Nature is so imbued in Subha that it seems Nature speaks to her and also speaks for her. The variegated objects of Nature like the murmuring river, song of a boatman, chirping of birds, rustling of leaves all come to a universal union to form a language which the so-called dumb Nature and the dumb girl can understand. At this critical juncture, it would be relevant to mention Ranjay Pratap Singh's observation in the celebrated essay titled "Environment and Vedic Literature": "Indian folk culture does not attach human sentiments only to earth, water, air, sky, fire, sun, etc., but also extends them to rivers, ponds, hills, animals, trees, and plants as well" (110). Nature becomes ally and confederate to Subha. The silent girl's language finds its form in multifaceted nature of the magnanimous Nature. Synthesis of sound and soundlessness finds its expression in Subha's sign, signal, sob and sigh towards the universe. Confrontation between silent Nature and silent woman tends to be intense in noontide when the clamorous world gets drowsy. The amalgamation of nugatory nature of human world and the vast universe finds its form in the silent conversation between Subha and compassionate cosmos.

Language is too futile a medium to communicate with Nature and its objects can be grasped from the friendship of Subha and her two cows named Sarbashi and Panguli. They never hear their names from her mouth but, being too sensitive, they can understand the language of love, fondling,



derision of another silent creature of the universe. This bonding between human and non-human being aptly demonstrates the power of evocation and utterance which silence possess within itself. At this moot point, it would be apt to recount Val Plumwood's quote from Warwick Fox's essay "Deep Ecology: A New Philosophy of Our Time?": "We can make no firm ontological divide in the field of existence ... there is no bifurcation of reality between the human and non-human realms ... to the extent that we perceive boundaries, we fall short of deep ecological consciousness" (Elliot 158). Silence has its own resonance and reverberation. Tagore has minutely observed the language of compassion which reigns in this silent world where Subha finds a shelter of assurance and warmth of love which the human world with their power of speech fails to offer. Sensitivity in the world of solitude reigns supreme. Apart from two cows, Subha has a cat which needs her warm lap to sleep on. The caring nature of Subha aligns her more with the Nature.

Among the speaking human beings Subha has one friend named Pratap, who is also regarded as worthless by his family and neighbours. His hobby is to catch fishes by the riverside. Their friendship blossoms in the dotting Nature. Nature turns out to be a safe solicitous and sensitive shelter for Subha. Vapid verbosity of human beings versus silent sensitivity of Nature becomes clear in Subha's futile interaction with the world. Pythagoras' proverbial observation is indeed true that Silence is better than unmeaning words. Tagore has indispensably relates Subha's blossoming phase of adolescent with Different objects of Nature. The inevitable awareness of adolescent lashes on the coast of Subha's heart like turbulent tides. Confrontation of an earnest speechless girl with the earnest full moon night makes the woman-Nature bonding stronger. The desire of Subha's heart as if wants to reach the endless cosmos. Subha absorbs Nature into herself in delightful as well as deplorable times. The writer compares Subha with a wounded doe when Subha gets the news of her own marriage from Pratap. The comparison between Nature and Subha goes on side by side. Before taking leave from her two cows, her true friends for all day she fondles them and looks at them with eyes full of words which the denizens of the silent world can read. Subha's parting scene from her cows inevitably reminds us of Shakuntala's parting scene from her deers in the forest. The bonding between Nature and woman is solely dependent on pure love. The night before leaving for Kolkata



Subha lies on the ground by hugging it as if she is begging the Mother Earth to hold her tightly and not to leave her. The concept of '*Vasudhaiva kutumbakam*' is reflected in Subha's acceptance of Mother Earth (*Vasudha*) as her only relation. This instance of urging of a silent child before a silent parent raises the value and depth of their selfless love which connects us to the unending universe.

As Tagore is deeply enlightened with the thoughts of *Vedas Puranas* and *Upanishads*, he envisions the unbreakable connection between universe and man. As Srivastava rightly observes: "Acceptance of sentimental relations between man and environment is a hall mark of Vedic concept ... Feeling of love and attachment towards environment, expression of belief, gratitude and sacrifice in special circumstances for environmental conservation are true human sentiments" (108).

Subha's mother decks her ostensibly with jewellery but as she is the very daughter of Mother Nature all jewelleries become unbecoming on her. The role of patriarchy is crystal clear in every system of society. It becomes all the more prominent when the would-be bridegroom is compared with God and Subha is compared with a sacrificial animal. The vulnerable quality of Nature and Woman is unambiguously demonstrated by this comparison. Subha's parents arrange her marriage by covering the truth but the truthful girl Subha's tears want to divulge it. The shameful deception of the speaking world emerges with its vapid vulgarity before the vibrant veracity of the silent world. The cultural critic Patrick D. Murphy has rightly observed in the essay "Ecofeminist Dialogues":

An ecofeminist dialogics requires this effort to render the other, primarily constituted by androcentrism as women and nature (and actually as the two intertwined: nature-as-woman and woman-as -nature), as speaking subject within patriarchy in order to subvert that patriarchy not only by decentering it but also by proposing other centres... (Coupe 196)

After discovering the truth of Subha's dumb husband again gets married to a woman with words. It is evident here that the language of the silent world whether it be Nature or Woman cannot be deciphered by the speaking world. To comprehend the depth of silence one has to be compassionate and rich within heart. Tagore has created a beautiful dialogue between Nature and



Woman as well as between two different silent zones inhabited by so-called speaking and non-speaking creatures with assiduity and dexterity. Murphy has rightly pointed out:

If emotion and instinct arise from historical natural influences upon the evolution of the species, then their impact on our behavior, their entry into consciousness, are a form by which the nonhuman world speaks to us through signs that our conscious renders verbally. To deny emotion as feminine and/or instinct as primitive nature is to reserve the role of speaking subject only for the ego and to deny a voice to the other, which is in reality a part of ourselves. (Coupe 196)

Tagore has created a wonderful world of silence with so many signs within it. Subha finds friend, mother, nurturer, nourisher, empathiser in Nature. Silence here in this story emerges as a true friend who never betrays. Silence becomes a mode of dialogue and a great art of conversation between two silent speakers - Nature and Woman.

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Claustrophobic Tension: A Nauseous Outburst in Edward Albee's *The Zoo Story*

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Abstract: This paper is an endeavour to make a study of the tension between the society and the individual self in the celebrated play *The Zoo Story* by Edward Albee; and this tension, at the end of the play, behoves a sickness like nausea which brings the death of the main protagonist Jerry to get rid of the claustrophobic existence in an absurd world that seems like a zoo. Herein, the play represents a society, which indicates the topsy-turvy condition of 1950s America where the post-war disillusionment and the McCarthyism were occurred, as a form of macabre ideology of larger social self through which the little self of Jerry, is dominated. Jerry, being a denizen of purposeless absurd world, tries to make a relation between this larger self and his little self; but again and again all has gone in fiasco. He is alienated not only with other people but also with animals; and victimized by deadening loneliness like a 'lone wolf'. Jerry tries to find a real meaning of life and wants to escape from 'death-in-life' condition of living but repeatedly, he is hurled in an alienation of no exit. At last, the paper shows that alienation becomes a nauseous disease for Jerry; and in an outburst of it, he commits suicide which is very much philosophical.

Keywords – Nausea, Claustrophobic, McCarthyism, Lone wolf.

Introduction

In his epoch-making work *Don Juan*, Canto-IV, Lord Byron was so loquacious to utter through the mouth of Don Juan that – “But the fact is that I have nothing planned / Unless it were to be a moment merry” (Byron 3). Edward Albee is one of those sui-generis dramatists who, by shuffling the nauseous sweetness of success and by abdicating the thought of profit and loss,



moulds drama open-heartedly with his own pleasure by capturing the contemporary moment of America. Extolled or denounced, exploratory or imitative, optimistic or nihilistic, he is questionably the major playwright to whom the whole world was elastic enough to give the stature of brilliant literary dramatist like Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller. That is why, Harold Clurman, in a *New York Times* article on November, 1966, states that during his lectures in foreign he was asked about his opinion of Edward Albee who aroused the greatest interest in America. His answer was so apropos and beyond a few generalization, it was that – “Albee is 38; I shall be able to offer you a more considered judgement when he is 58!” (qtd. in Rudisill 1). So, the point is that Albee was an ingenious playwright in the process of evolution. And, his actual critical awards attest his reputation in 1963 when he was awarded the *New York Drama Critics' Circle Award* for the best play of the year; the *Outer Circle Award* for Outstanding American Playwright of a Broadway play and also several awards. But his dream reached its culminating point of success when his paradoxical position in American Culture was summed up by the Kennedy Centre's honours ceremony of 1996, at which he was lauded by President Clinton – “Tonight our nation – born in rebellion – pays tribute to you, Edward Albee. In your rebellion the American theatre was reborn” (qtd. in Bottoms 1).

Once Friedrich Nietzsche declared that Art is the great stimulus to life and somehow Nietzsche's declaration became the aphorism of Edward Albee's artistic creed which reflects very overtly the ethos of 1950s American life. At a time when American modern society was thrown into a stream of progressive degradation and when the entire atmosphere is surcharged with disillusion and disintegration, Albee came forward to elucidate in his dramas the sordid paraphernalia of contemporary life with its spiritual ennui, boredom and hectic despondency. The disgusting and catastrophic European Phenomena namely the ‘Second World War’ caused havoc by providing illimitable insult to the human dignity, purity, morality and spirituality. The people became self convicted by showing their existential crisis, psychological imbalance, moral dilemma and their indecisive action through their absurd performances that ultimately gone in futility. The contemporary American lethal world of Albee suffered much from such or above conditions that



made the contemporary people entrapped within a world that created much pain, agonies, disillusionment and self-negotiation. Disillusionment became an undiagnosed cancer whose cells are always engaged in a continuous enhancement, it metastasized from one to another. And the American disillusionment, fragmentation of self and quest for identity are ignited again by the political fears of the McCarthy era. However, Edward Albee also started writing at this very moment when the United States were undergoing a shock awakening from bad dreams of this 1950's political fears of the McCarthy era – that “Scoundrel time” (qtd. in Koreneva 1) as Lillian Hellman put it. Though it is very much difficult to measure it as a joy of spiritual liberation, it will not be wrong to call it a great disillusionment with reality. ‘McCarthyism’ is the practice of making unfair allegations or using unfair investigative techniques, especially in order to restrict dissent or political criticism. The term refers to U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy and has its origins in the period of the United States known as the Second Red Scare, lasting roughly from 1947 to 1956, just before the two years of the publication of Edward Albee’s *The Zoo Story*. It characterized by heightened political repression as well as a campaign spreading fear of influence on American institutions and of espionage by Soviet agents. During this era, thousands of Americans were accused of being communists or communist sympathizers and became the subject of aggressive investigations and questioning before government or private-industry panels, committees and agencies. Even, it is difficult to estimate the number of victims of ‘McCarthy’. The number imprisoned is in the hundreds, and some ten or twelve thousand lost their jobs. All meaning, all hope, all reason of life have seemed as nothingness which attacked the very demure concept of American dream which was rooted in the second sentence of the “Declaration of Independence” (1776) which states that “All Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness” (qtd. in Elias 3). But, this happiness becomes uncertain and dream remains only as a dream because it has lost its affinity with crude reality. And, in this topsy-turvy and gruesome situation, Edward Albee had caught and expressed the essence of the change of the American life by representing the collapse of the American dream more profoundly and fully than any other American playwrights of



that time. Thus, his first play *The Zoo Story* seems as the best product of that particular time for it reflects the horrible vagueness and the bleak despair of modern American man who finds himself in a universe where living has become meaningless and nonsensical as empty chatter.

Just before turning thirty, Albee decided to prove himself by taking few weeks to write his first play, *The Zoo Story*, a short drama that was first performed in 1959 in Germany at the experimental branch of the Schiller Theatre of West Berlin. Early the next year, it was paired at the Provincetown Playhouse in a double bill with Samuel Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*; and the two plays ran for nineteen months. The play was read by friends of Albee and circulated unsuccessfully from New York, to Florence, to Zurich, to Frankfurt, and finally to Berlin for its belated world premiere. The play consists of one act only, and it contains two characters, Jerry and Peter. The play begins with Peter who is sitting on the bench in the Central Park of New York, reading his morning newspaper. And, when Jerry approaches, Peter would prefer not to talk and Jerry is trying to establish some real contact with Peter by asking personal questions about his having more children, Peter withdraws from the conversation, furious that Jerry might have spotted a chink in his armour.

Jerry: And you're not going to have any more kids, are you?

Peter: (a bit distantly) No, No more. (Then back and irksome)

Why did you say that? How would you know that? (3)

So, it is apropos to convey that the play is a quest for communication of Jerry with the society. Like so many voices suppressed and ignored by 1950s attitudes, Jerry has a desire to tell his own story. The newspaper *Darmstadter Echo* once stated a bit of prophetic view that "the monologue of a desperate man, imploringly looking for human contact and friendship, is an experiment and perhaps a discovery for the theatre" (qtd. in Rudisill 40). This view is very much inevitable for Albee in representing Jerry as a victim of the disillusionment of 1950's America. Like Estragon and Vladimir of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, Jerry, a New York vagabond, also becomes a patient of 'Aphasia' which means an inability to comprehend and formulate language because of mental disorder. For a human it's very important to communicate and share their happiness, grief and



ideas, but Jerry does not get sufficient opportunity to communicate with fellow humans. Being a completely isolated individual, he sees the world as a zoo where everyone is separated with each other. He admits that – “But every once in a while I like to talk to somebody, really talk; like to get to know somebody, know all about him” (3).

Thus, Jerry becomes the perfect replica of the people of modern America as well as modern world. And, the untold story in the play is that the life in a zoo is analogous to the life of the people in 1950s America as well as the post-war world where communication is not possible, mutual empathy does not exist and people are unable to come to terms with their true condition. For this reason, Martin Esslin was so eloquent to say that Albee's personal vision of the world in *The Zoo Story* becomes an image of the difficulty of communication between human beings in our world. And for this lack or difficulty of communication with the big societal self, Jerry's inner little self is trapped within it. It tries again and again to come out from the cocoon but there is no outside of it, all is within. The little self of Jerry is captured within an American society which seems like Dante's “Inferno” and it is enclosed within the claustrophobic hell of Jean- Paul Sartre's *Huis Clos* which indicates that – there is no exit.

In increasingly frantic attempts, to establish a connection with Peter and make him responsive of the sterility of his existence, Jerry narrates the allegorical ‘story of Jerry and the Dog’. His failure to communicate with any human being started his attempts with the dog. As he explains, “it's just that if you can't deal with people, you have to make a start somewhere. WITH ANIMALS!” (10). When the landlady's dog rushed to attack him, Jerry, at first, liked the dog because the animal paid him some attention. Jerry decided to establish a friendly relationship with the dog, so he offered him six ‘perfectly good’ hamburgers. The dog devoured all of them. Jerry continued offering such food to the dog for five days more but there was no change in dog's attitude. He was as usual—“snarl, sniff; move; faster; stare; gobble; RAAGGGHHH; smile; snarl; BAM” (8). So, finally he decided to kill the dog. One day he offered the dog one hamburger with ‘a murderous portion of rat poison’. The dog fell ill and the landlady, being scared, ‘snivelled and implored’ him to pray for the



animal. Jerry did not actually intend to kill the dog. He exposed this real intention to Peter: "... I didn't want the dog to die. I didn't, and not just because I'd poisoned him. I'm afraid that I must tell you I wanted the dog to live so that I could see what our new relationship might come to" (9).

The dog survived and as Jerry expected, a new relationship between him and the dog emerged. Jerry was happy in his new relationship with the dog as he discovered that it was an understanding, a compromise that all his life he sought with humans. And, from this incident, Jerry learned that neither 'kindness' nor 'cruelty' can independently create any effective connection, but when they are combined, they could work as a 'teaching emotion'. In that McCarthyism time, there was only cruelty, human kindness had lost its ground; and the lack of communication was evoked in every individual self as it is seen in Jerry and for this reason, he wants to make a relation with the Dog rather than the society. That is why, in an interview, Albee admits, "I suppose the dog story in *The Zoo Story*, to a certain extent, is a microcosm of the play by the fact that people are not communicating, ultimately failing and trying and failing" (qtd. in Mann 34).

In *Politics*, Aristotle recognizes that "human beings are essentially social: the life of a person is lived in common with other people, and the institution of that common life is the city or polis" (qtd. in Bloom 89). So, a person who is unable to share in common life with the people of a "polis" is ostracised in alienation. Moreover, this "alienation", according to Harold Bloom, "originally meant estrangement, in the sense Celia applies it in *As You Like It* when she takes on the name of Aliena, 'the stranger', for her sojourn in Arden with Rosalind, whose assumed name is Ganymede" (Bloom XV). But, alienation in the time of post-war world in general and in the time of 1950s America in particular took in the meaning of existential dread which is conspicuously exhibited in this drama through the character of Jerry. Jerry's communication with other people will give his existence; but Jerry cannot do it properly. His identity is in an existential crisis which throws him in isolation. Even, for this lack of proper and timely communication with other people Jerry's childhood was marred with bitter experiences which engendered his frustration and alienation. His mother left the family 'on an adulterous turn' when Jerry was ten and a half years old. After a few weeks, his father



was killed by a city omnibus. Jerry, being an orphan, moved in with his mother's sister. This lady also died on the stairs of their apartment on the afternoon of his high school graduation. 'Nemesis' came down in Jerry's life. His own tragic life-story seemed to himself, "a terribly middle-European joke" (5). Thus, all these facts created a New York vagabond named Jerry who at a certain age discovered himself all alone, confined in his own 'cage' like a room isolated from other people of the civilized world. However, Jerry lived in a brownstone rooming house on the upper West side of New York City, between Columbus Avenue and Central Park, in a poor neighbourhood. He does not know much about his neighbours, and he does not know all of them. Even, his neighbours also feel themselves isolated and lonely though they live among a crowd. Jerry says that the people in the apartment have strange behaviours. The colored queen, for example, always wears a Japanese kimono and has a strange habit of plucking his eyebrow, the woman, who is living on the third floor, cries all the time behind the locked door. Even, the landlady is also very strange for she always tries to seduce Jerry in the entrance hall. These strange behaviours reflect the people's anxiety and despair; these suggest that they have already completed their life but death still now does not come to them. They are living in a 'death-in-life' condition which is a characteristic of alienation in modern society. For this reason, Jerry couldn't enjoy a healthy social relationship with his neighbours in the rooming house. This also had severe negative impacts on his mind. According to Matthew Roudane, who quoted a 1974 interview with Albee in his *Understanding Edward Albee*, the playwright mentioned that he got the idea for *The Zoo Story* while working for Western Union: "I was always delivering telegrams to people in rooming houses. I met [the models for] all those people in the play in rooming houses. Jerry, the hero, is still around" (Roudane 30). So, there is not an iota of doubt to convey that Jerry, being an inhabitant of this modern 1950s America, becomes a 'lone wolf' i.e. an existential trait which indicates a person who has a silent conversation which is replete with endless crisis.

In 1938, Samuel Beckett was stabbed on the street of Paris and nearly died. After he rejected the solicitations of a pimp who went by the name of Prudent, the man attacked Beckett with a knife. The wound was serious – Beckett ended up with a perforated lung – but he later



dropped the charges against Prudent, partly because he liked the man's response when Beckett asked him why he had stabbed him: "Je ne sais pas, Monsieur. Je m' excuse" i.e. "I do not know, sir. I'm sorry" (qtd. in Guha 140). Beckett found such an answer fascinating and it becomes the skeleton of his existential works which probe the seeming purposelessness of existence. Why are we here? What's the point in living? What is the purpose of anything? All these questions become very much cabalistic in moulding Beckett's purposeless world where self is entrapped as animals are entrapped in a zoo. And, this Beckett's stance, which is taken to be pessimistic by many critics, has become an example for many young writers. Albee is one of them among his American followers. In an interview, Albee confirms Beckett's influence:

Sam Beckett invented twentieth-century drama and made all sorts of amazing things both possible and impossible for the rest of us. Possible because he opened up so many doors and windows for what could be done, and impossible because we all realized we couldn't do it as well as he did (qtd. in Kucuk 22).

Thus, inspired by Beckett's existential themes, Albee handles specific issues in connection with the society, and he believes that they are inseparable. So, he manages to create, as critic Paolucci says, a "new dramatic balance of public issues and private tensions" (qtd. in Kucuk 23). And, this "new dramatic balance" is clearly reverberated in *The Zoo Story* by interpreting the purposeless condition of Jerry in the jungle of the New York City. Jerry, being a "Being or Dasein" of Heidegger, can't create his essence that is his own value and meaning of his life. In this perspective, the French philosopher Sartre was so eloquent to argue that all existential thought is summed up in the phrase 'existence precedes essence' which he draws from Heidegger's following statement: "The essence of Dasein lies in its existence" (qtd. in Kucuk 29). Through this claim, Sartre segregates his view from an established principle of metaphysics that 'essence precedes existence'. Sartre writes in his work *Existentialism is a Humanism* that man first of all exists, confronts himself, surges up in the world—and defines himself afterwards. The essence of something is whatever makes it what it is. But, Sartre's view means that human beings exist — are born and are conscious of their lives — before they really are anything. No crucial, necessary ingredient defines what a human being is.



Human beings quite literally start as nothing. Christopher Panza and Gregory Gale, in their book *Existentialism For Dummies*, elucidate Sartre's notion very neatly with the instance of a 'watch'. According to their analysis, a watch has a set function, it exists to tell time. If something didn't tell you the time, you wouldn't call it a watch. So, telling time is a necessary feature of being a watch; that's what makes it what it is. This function already exists in the mind of the watchmaker before he actually creates any given watch. The watch's essence — what it is to be a watch — precedes its actual existence because that essence, that purpose, was in the mind of the designer before the watch came into being. But, in the case of human beings, it is complex. Sartre dramatically claims that if God doesn't exist, this order is reversed for human beings. Because God didn't design us, we weren't created with a plan in mind, as the watch was. Unlike the watch, we weren't meant to serve a set function. When we're born, we're simply there, with no reason or meaning. No designer had any essence in mind, so we exist before that existence has any meaning, purpose, or definition. That's why, existence precedes essence. A human being is essentially a creature that creates its own essence. And, it is true to say that this view is also applicable for Albee's protagonist Jerry. But, in the drama, Jerry's isolated existence can't precede his essence because of his lack of communication with the society which seems to him as a zoo where his self is thrown to suffer. This 'thrownness', a term coined by Heidegger, means the facticity of its [Dasein's] being delivered over and it is the cause of the anxiety of Jerry's life. For Jerry both society and the entire human condition are absurd and as frustrating as his image of the zoo. His little self is tortured again and again by the larger self of society. Frantically, he is searching the way to get rid of this tedious society but there is no way to be free as Friedrich Nietzsche said in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* that – "You have your way. I have my way. As for the right way, the correct way, and the only way, it does not exist" (qtd. in Harvey 21). And, because of this no exit condition, Jerry is haunted by anxiety that gives him nauseous feeling and its result is his suicide.

Therefore, it is important not to forget that man's inability to comprehend the significance of his own existence is revealed in his feelings or moods of anxiety because it emerges from nothingness. And, Albee's characters seem to lead a life which is based upon the absurdity of the modern



America and the consequent is meaningless and futility of human action. Like the two tramps Vladimir and Estragon of Beckett, Albee's character Jerry realises the absolute truth that – 'Nothing to be done'; and by doing nothing, Jerry feels a void in his life that leads him to anxiety. Herein, Albee portrays the nothingness that lies underneath the modern life, and his character is inevitably anxious when he has to recognize this void at the centre. In the drama, Jerry is ill at ease from the start, and the stage directions that inform the way he tells the story of the dog and himself clarify his anxiety. Again, another story, which involves Jerry's life at the rooming house he lives in, tells of the alienation and the lack of communication he experiences from the society. His anxiety, while he is telling these stories, stems from the fact that he perceives the absurdity of his life and nullity of his existence. And, according to Sartre, the human being feels 'nausea' thinking of his own existence which is bullyragged by anxiety. Sartre defines it as "a pure apprehension of the self as a factual existence" (qtd. in Kucuk 57). It is an insipid taste, and the human being cannot get away from it.

Conclusion

'Nausea' is a medical term which means a sensation of unease and discomfort in the upper stomach with an involuntary urge to vomit, but a person can have nausea without vomiting. Again, an espial on the etymology of the word 'nausea' shows that it has been derived from the Greek word 'nausia' which means 'feeling sick'. But, Jean-Paul Sartre illustrates this term from the existential perspective in his novel *Nausea*. The novel describes a character named Antoine Roquentin who, like Jerry, is seen as an individual sufferer from depression and the nausea itself is one of the symptoms of his condition. Both of them are victims of larger ideological, social, and existential forces that have brought them to the brink of insanity. As Roquentin's nausea arises from his near complete detachment from other people, Jerry's nausea emerges from his isolation and lack of communication in the 1950s modern America. And, this nauseous feeling irritates Jerry through the whole drama. As a result, Jerry commits suicide to make his little self free from this absurd and nauseous condition. Thus, by committing suicide, Jerry



shows that life in the New York City is not worth living; it is a choice that implicitly declares that life is too much. His suicide offers the basic way out of nausea, the immediate termination of the self from the labyrinth of the larger self. That is why, Albee at age forty-three could say in a *New York Times* interview: "I had an awareness of death when I was 15, but I turned 36 or 37 before I became aware that I, Edward Albee, was going to die. The realization did not fill me with dread. I simply became aware of the fact that this is the only time around for me" (qtd. in Vos 7). Jerry, like his creator, realises the necessity of his death and he has done it as his creator felt.

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Feminine Ethos in the Selected Poems of Kamala Das

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Abstract: The present paper attempts to highlight the feminist ethos in the poetry of Kamala Das. She was a bilingual writer who wrote both in English and Malayalam. She represents whole Indian women in general and herself in particular, whose actual value and symbolic value has been marginalized by man. The present paper aims to highlight the feminine sensibility in her poems. She looks very determined to revolt against the conventional society's definition of womanhood. This paper explores the emotional emptiness and sterility of her married life and the intensity of misery of the wife who surrenders to her husband who is repulsive, and with whom she has no emotional contact at all. Her poetry shows her hatred against dominance of one on another. From the past history of the world, female has been the marginalized and subordinated by the dominant power of male. Kamala Das as a bold writer uses the satirical style or the explicit mode of poetry writing in exploring the issues of Gender, caste, class and tradition. This paper also attempts to highlight Kamala Das's way of portraying women yearning for love and sex in the male dominated society. Her poetry is full of frustration, and resentment she experienced as a girl, wife and mother.

Keywords: Feminism, woman, patriarchy, subjugation and love.

Feminism is a movement that shares a common goal to define, and achieve personal and social equality of sexes. The subjugation and oppression of woman by male authority has been the central theme to discuss in feminism. Indian writings in English gained a platform rapidly and started writing poem's and novels in order to question the prominent old patriarchal norms of the society. Kamala Das stands among the pioneers in the field of poetry to explore the world of woman in India. Her way of narrating every aspect of human relationship is wonderful. She is frank in narrating the incidents and situations with a touch of open heartedness. Her female characters are



shown as struggling with the customs and traditions that tie them in their freedoms and rights. She served the humanity and extend her helping hand to the poorest of the poor.

Kamala Das or Kamala suraya known by her pen name Madhavikutty and Kamala was one of the leading Malayalam authors from Kerela. She wrote many short stories and poetry collections. She was also nominated for the Nobel Prize along with Dorris Lessing and Nadine Gordimer. Her major poetry collections include – *The Descendants*, *The Old Playhouse*, and *The Summer in Calcutta*. In her poetry collections the major theme remains of love, betrayal, anguish and frankness. Her poetry is praised for its fierce originality, bold images, exploration of female sexuality, and intensely personal voice. Her poetry is full of feminist imagery focusing on critiques of marriage, motherhood, women's relationship to their bodies and control of their sexuality. There are some women writers who dare to write from women's point using the language which are also induced with patriarchal ego. They represent women as they are. Kamala Das straight forwardly express her experience of being a women. She has written as a woman that one can identify herself. She dares to challenge the tradition that silence females in the society. Her poetry is full of expression of her frustration, and failures in a male dominated world and also shows how she tried to maintain her individuality and feminine identity. As Betty Friedan's states that:

Some women prefer to be treated like a person, not like a woman. They prefer to be independent, stand on their own two feet and generally don't care for concessions that imply that they are inferior, weak or that they need special attention and can't take care of themselves. (Friedan 440)

Kamala Das had an unhappy, dissatisfied life right from her birth. She was a victim to patriarchal prejudices and discriminations that were common of that time. She converted into Islam in 1999 by taking a new name Kamala Suraya. As a woman she herself works out and chooses feminist literature to express the shared experiences of women's oppression. The central strain in many of her poems were, the strong desire for freedom, including the freedom to rebel against the male dominated authority. She experienced the bitterness of sexism and patriarchy from



her childhood. Her parents always considered her as a burden and was married at an early age to a relative. She was thus compelled to become a premature wife and mother. She thus complains about her life in one of her poems as;

I was sent away, to protect a family's
Honour, to save a few cowards, to defend some
Abstractions, sent to another city to be a relatives wife. (Das lines 5-8).

Kamala Das has a very frustrating experience of her married life. Her relationship with her husband is nothing but the frustrating experience because of not having any mutual understanding and love for each other's needs. They feel like strangers to each other. Their empty hearts show emotional sterility, barrenness, meaninglessness of life. In her poem *Freaks*, Kamala Das searches for true relationship with her lover. She expresses the grief for lack of sexual passions. There is only hunger but no love for each other. This shows that her poetry begins from the darker end. Her male partner is totally insensitive to her emotional desires. She says;

I am a freak, it's only
To save my face, I flaunt at
Times, a grand, flamboyant lust (Das lines 18-20).

The woman characters in her poems play various roles as the unfulfilled wife, mistress to lusty man, silent suffering women. Her poetry exhibits that Kamala Das is conscious about the social problems around her. She comments on social injustices and the inequality towards women in her poetry. In the poem *Introduction* we find the resentment and refusal of Kamala Das as;

Dress in sarees, be girl or be wife,
They cried. Be embroiderer, be cook,
Be a quarreler with servants. Fit in. Oh,
Don't sit on walls or peep in
Through our lace draped windows (Das lines 33-38).

Kamala Das is a rebel against the male dominant authority and spokesman of feminine sensibility. It is through her poetry that we get the sense of self that had struggled a lot in order to maintain



relation between emotional and sexual needs. Her poetry deals with the unfulfilled love and sex that she experienced in her life. Her frustration that she experienced in her life can be expressed in the following lines from *The Looking Glass* as;

Gift him all,
Gift him what makes you woman, the scent of
Long hair, the musk of sweat between the breasts,
The warm shock of menstrual blood, and all your
Endless female hungers (Das lines 12-15).

Her poetry is frank and straight forward expression of feminine sensibility. Through her poetry she searches for the essential women. She violates the traditional norms of society in order to secure women to a position where she will be given significance and respect. It is the revolt of feminine sensitiveness against male centered ego that takes the dominative role. She writes from the depth of her own experience. She exposes the sterility of society where woman is denied from basic rights and spiritual gratifications. She remains the pioneer by her bold confessions to the woman poets in modern Indian English poetry. In the poem *The Sunshine Cat* Kamala Das portrays the image of sex and note of betrayal to go together. She expressed the betrayal in love and physical exploitation of the women in it. She describes the plight of a woman who has become a victim to the lust of many men. The poem itself begins with a colloquial speech rhythm and conversational tone. She calls her husband as a coward, who never loved her but only satisfies his desires. He locks her in a room full of books, where only a streak of light could pass. She explains this in her poem *The Sunshine Cat* in a very loud manner as ;

... Her husband shut her
In every morning; locked her in a room full of books
With a streak of sunshine lying near the door, like
A yellow cat, to keep her company, but soon,
Winter came and one day while locking her in, he...



He returned to take her out, she was a cold and

Half dead woman, now of no use at all to men (Das lines 14-18).

The works of Das are centrally preoccupied with sexuality and female pleasures that breaks out of a hetero normative matrix. The conflict between passivity and rebellion against the male emerges as a major theme in her poetry. She is intensely conscious of herself as a woman. Her vision is vitally particularized by the women's point of view. In her poetry she has dealt with private humiliations and sufferings which are the stock themes of confessional poetry. The crucial factor in all her poetry is the perfect way of treating the intimate experience without having any trace of pathos. Indian critics have found in her poems the voice of the new liberated women without realizing that she never speaks on the behalf of anybody, but herself. Kamala Das in her poetry concerns herself as victim. Yearning for love and sex became the main theme in her poetry. All her quests for love end in the disaster of lust. As Simone De Beauvoir pointed out in her acclaimed book *The Second Sex*. "Women aren't wrong at all when they reject the rules of life that have been introduced into the world, in as much as it is the men who have made these without them" (Beauvior 11).

Kamala Das is a poet of moods and she writes about so many things that momentarily arrest her alienations; example seasons, children, seashores, morning trees, phone calls, problems of composition, the ferns and the maggots, the swamps and the blue birds. These things show that Kamala Das emerge from hell well- chosen themes now and then, and thereby create an impression of diversity and variety. Her poetry is honest and human as she is. The narrowness of her range is thus widened and the monotony caused by frequent reversions to the same subject and mood partly removed.

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The 'New' World?: Space, Religion And The Identity Of Hester Prynne In Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*

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Abstract: In her review of Sian Silyn Roberts's book *Gothic Subjects: Transformation of Individualism in American Fiction, 1790-1861*, Bridget. M Marshall, notes that literary depictions of the gothic and gothic spaces help create and foster a sense of community within a new World inhabited by different individual entities. Thus with respect to such depictions, one can assume that individualism in early American fiction was inextricably associated with communitarian fashioning which accounts for the sense of lost identity in a character like Hester Prynne in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. However, as I attempt to suggest, such a view fails to take into account the individual agency of the character concerned and the focalization that the third-person narrator attempts to undertake. Thus the contradictory impulses of Hester in the text forecast a sense of authorial attempt to play within existing discourse of identity in New England (which is historically rooted in a religious ethic different from that prevailing in 'old England'). Thus while Hester chooses to wear the red badge and subscribe to the Puritan ideal of redemption through suffering, she also does not hesitate to advise the old minister to live a life of the redeemed preacher in the very land they have left behind them, thereby questioning the very definitive impact of religion upon the identity of the individual in a certain geopolitical space. Interestingly, such an idea of conflating the existing, predominant oppositions (or, binaries to use a 'structuralist' term) in the discourse of religious identity was very much present in the writings of Puritans themselves. In this respect, Margerie Kempe who wished to live a saintly life in a celibate marital relationship (thereby conflating the prevalent discourse in England whereby marriage *qua* sexuality stood in opposition to sainthood *qua* celibacy) presents us with a good example. In other words, as I suggest, Hawthorne directs us time and again to the fact that the idea of subversion is an effective tool deployed in many cases for the purpose of establishing what Raymond Williams has effectively



called 'emergent discourse', and is cast off upon its establishment, creating a new set of predominant binaries (in the case of New England, this 'creates' a geopolitical entity altogether) and therefore a 'closed text', whose concealment Hester and even her daughter Pearl seek to expose. This will in turn help contest the fact that the idea of an united 'national' consciousness or identity was the mainstay of authorial intention in the period we are looking at.

Keywords: New world, space, religion, emergent discourse, *The Scarlett Letter*.

In her review of Sian Silyn Roberts's book *Gothic Subjects: Transformation of Individualism in American Fiction, 1790-1861*, Bridget. M Marshall, notes that literary depictions of the gothic and gothic spaces help create and foster a sense of community within a new World inhabited by different individual entities. Thus with respect to such depictions, one can assume that individualism in early American fiction was inextricably associated with communitarian fashioning which accounts for the sense of lost identity in a character like Hester Prynne in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. However, as I attempt to suggest, such a view fails to take into account the individual agency of the character concerned and the focalization that the third-person narrator attempts to undertake. Thus the contradictory impulses of Hester in the text forecast a sense of authorial attempt to play within existing discourse of identity in New England (which is historically rooted in a religious ethic different from that prevailing in 'old England'). Thus while Hester chooses to wear the red badge and subscribe to the Puritan ideal of redemption through suffering, she also does not hesitate to advise the old minister to live a life of the redeemed preacher in the very land they have left behind them, thereby questioning the very definitive impact of religion upon the identity of the individual in a certain geopolitical space. Interestingly, such an idea of conflating the existing, predominant oppositions (or, binaries to use a 'structuralist' term) in the discourse of religious identity was very much present in the writings of Puritans themselves. In this respect, Margerie Kempe who wished to live a saintly life in a celibate marital relationship (thereby conflating the prevalent discourse in England whereby marriage *qua* sexuality stood in opposition to sainthood *qua* celibacy) presents us with a good example.



In other words, as I attempt to show in this paper, Hawthorne directs us time and again to the fact that the idea of subversion is an effective tool deployed in many cases for the purpose of establishing what Raymond Williams has effectively called 'emergent discourse', and is cast off upon its establishment, creating a new set of predominant binaries (in the case of New England, this 'creates' a geopolitical entity altogether) and therefore a 'closed text', whose concealment Hester and even her daughter Pearl seek to expose. This will in turn help contest the fact that the idea of a united 'national' consciousness or identity was the mainstay of authorial intention in the period we are looking at.

The notion of the Puritanical family in the novel functions in order to depict Hester's own situation with respect to it. As Amanda Porterfield points out in her book *Female Piety in Puritan New England*, the idea of a pious marriage rested on the notion of submission of the wife and children to the husband who in turn was required or expected to be the upright moral shepherd of his flock (read family), thus symbolizing a Divine Earthly responsibility. Puritan pastors therefore led family lives, unlike their Catholic counterparts whom they distanced themselves from (both spatially and intellectually) vis-à-vis a number of issues including this. Hester's unwillingness to expose the misconduct of her husband displays a certain sense of fidelity which in Puritanical discourse would only be rendered an 'excess', for it denotes fidelity to someone who has not been able to keep upright the virtue of God bestowed on him. At the same time, she raises her daughter in the absence of the father, thereby posing a veritable challenge to the Puritanical construction of family life itself. Although she does so, it must be recalled that no stone is left unturned by Hester to 'educate' Pearl in accordance with the predominant ideas on piety, religiosity and civility- a proof of this is very well encountered in her visit to the Governor, where any passing remark on the futility of Pearl's education strikes a deep chord of anxiety in Hester. In fact, all that is deemed unacceptable and unseemly in Pearl's nonchalant disposition become matters of grave concern for Hester. Thus she situates herself in a rather quaint and ambivalent position with respect to the normative codes of behaviour. This ambiguity is related to a sense of individuality (which in the case of Hester Prynne stems not from a sense of adventure but from a deep-seated sense of



necessity when she is left with no one but her fatherless child in the wide world), which might threaten to disrupt the impervious and rigid code of Puritan religious manuals. This sense of individualism again seems to be most articulate in cases and instances where her sympathy and affection are best highlighted. In her conversation with Dimmesdale, the New England Minister, she asserts that if the latter finds it hard to reconcile his private urgency of confession with the public role he has to display, he might as well leave for the old Europe they have left behind to preach the word of God. What might seem, in the course of narration, to be merely an impulsive response from Hester entails serious consequences and implications for the space of 'New England' which is in the process of construction, at least in the historical moment of the setting of the text. In his private diary entitled, *The Diary of an Old New England Minister*, Francis A. Christie, records his observation of one Arthur Bentley, a minister in New England, who supposedly "...entertained [emphasis mine] two Catholic Indian chiefs of the Penobscot tribe, and at parting gave them from his cabinet a crucifix, two mass books, and plaster images". This mode of 'entertaining' the Other is conspicuously followed by the gifting of certain items that constitute the quintessential elements of religious identity. Thus, this symbolizes the indoctrination of the Other as the precondition for the subsequent acceptance of him/her in the ambit of the Self's own fold. Thus the annihilation of an identity which is a potential threat to the shared elements of a homogeneous identity comprising thereby a geopolitical space comprises the backbone of religious proselytization and constitutes one of the major roles played by religious identity in the New World. Measured in these terms, Hester's seemingly innocuous proposal threatens not simply a specified religious code but also the fundamental essence of a collective spatial (and by relation, 'national') identity that embodies an emblematic compromise of the Self for the whole. The inextricable association between nation-building and religious identity is perhaps best evidenced in the fact that Roger Chillingworth's despicable association with the Native American medicinal procedures and techniques his being leads to his being designated as 'evil' and 'infernal'. The introduction to the character of Hester Prynne is coloured in the hues of authorial sympathy. One needs only to notice the meticulous choice of words in the following paragraph to affirm the same:



To say the truth, there was much need of professional assistance, not merely for Hester herself but still more urgently for the child...It now writhed in convulsions of pain,...of the moral agony which Hester Prynne had borne throughout the day. (Chapter IV, 'The Interview')

The sympathy, I would like to argue, is generated precisely from the fact that while the individual will in Hester Prynne pines for a certain idea of acceptance and liberation, there is no agency to be exercised on her own part. Thus we do not see a picture of the eternal rebel in her. Bereft of such stereotypical attributes, she is instead presented to us as a woman who has to desperately satiate herself only with momentary fits of provocative impulse. In a way, the fact that one's social circumstances can weigh down one's self-assertive claims (even when such claims are meant to redress guilt) has a biographical pinch. Hawthorne's own troubled remembrance of his ancestral past is, in a sense, a cause of his sympathy for the protagonist. Both of them can lay claim to piety or morality but the past continues to haunt them. Although critics like Richard Harter Fogle argue that Hester's reception of authorial sympathy must be judged alongside the presentation of her as a character unable to fully absolve herself, they fail to notice that the aforementioned biographical connection coupled with Hester's own subversive gestures (as elucidated earlier) also suggests a certain degree of resistance to a socio-religious order which attempted to completely foreclose the possibility of individual agency through the creation of 'closed texts'. On Hawthorne's part this amounts to his taking responsibility for the past and announcing his resentment for its hideousness. The Customs House, old and dilapidated as it is, becomes the archetype for this link between the past and the present, and between the author of the Preface and the characters of the plot. Hester's attitude to everything she metonymically asserts as her own Self assumes the burden of guilt. The most explicit manifestation of this occurs in her observation of Pearl:

Day after day she looked fearfully into the child's expanding nature, ever dreading to detect some dark and wild peculiarity that should correspond with the guiltiness to which she owed her being. (Chapter VI, 'Pearl')



This is a pertinent example of the interpellation of female subjects in Puritan New England. Amanda Porterfield, in her description of the testimonial witnesses and accounts of women in the Salem witch trials, speaks about the ideas of right and wrong that had been internalized by women in their attendance of mass sermons and so on. The fact that Hawthorne does not fail to depict Hester as being within the throes of such interpellative apparatuses, but also depicts the fallibility of such devices of control through Hester's sporadic and intermittent subversions, makes her quite a nuanced character.

The conversation between Hester and Pearl about the implications of the scarlet letter is a crucial instance of role-reversal in the novel. On Hester's insistence that there are things that a child should not know, Pearl remains utterly dissatisfied and cannot cease to be curious to know its true identity. The will to know its connotation is suggestive of an untameable curiosity- an instance of individualism pitted against social control. Interestingly, Hester herself cannot abide by this idea of self-compromise when she transgresses the conventional social and religious morals of family life or even exposes the lack of individual choice in the conception of 'national' consciousness in her discourse with Dimmesdale. In this respect, her identification with Pearl receives authorial sanction. In every respect, Pearl is a child of the forest- in the words of Richard Fogle she belongs to the category of "Nature" in which exists the level of the 'subhuman' who is rendered so on account of his/her being more in consort with the heart rather than with the head. According to him both Dimmesdale and Pearl belong to the same category for they avoid the danger of the head which lies in its attempt to be superhuman and therefore demonize. In other words, Fogle actually posits the will to power in the interstices of the intellectual cult of Puritanism.

In Hester's case however there is no possibility of placing her in any category as such, putatively because she has already made her journey through experience and the vigour of self-assertion is no longer a Romantic issue with her. Dimmesdale's easy association between Pearl's facial contortions and outcries expressive of disgust and Mistress Hibbin's 'preternatural' beauty shows how easily identifiable a subject she is. She is easily recognized as a child gone astray, and



on whom the disciplinary effect of power can be most expediently deployed. The importance of pedagogy in Puritanism can therefore be accounted for, and an instance of this is made evident in the diary entry of Arthur Bentley, as recorded by Francis Christie. The different landscapes presented in the novel share a very conspicuous presence within it. Each has a certain demarcation and assumes its significance only in terms of difference. This is brought out in Hester's warning to Pearl that one should not talk in the 'marketplace of what happens to us in the forest'. She is actually warning Pearl not to reveal her clandestine rendezvous with the Minister in the forest. In this arrangement of spaces lies an uneasy ambiguity. While it is necessary for the settlers of New England to demarcate a space of Christian civility from the pagan wilderness, there is no easy way to get rid of the latter. Thus the inclusion of the pagan Other is possible through the process of Selving of the Other. Thus on the one hand the wilderness must be 'cleared' and the religious/cultural traces effaced. The most incisive resistance to this effort happens to come from those characters in the text who willingly take up the customs of the other, subsequently inhabiting its space (the forest), and being characteristically excluded from the so-called collective space. Mrs. Hibbins is one of them. Her presence in the marketplace, or for that matter, in any locale that is one amongst the demarcated spaces of Christian civility is always supplemented by the mention of the remains of the forest that cling to her dress. This symbolically testifies the intermingling of spaces that are supposed to remain separate and distinct. Thus the character of Mrs. Hibbins is a full-proof indication of the threat posed to the project of Christianization- a project that finds its mention at various junctures in the journal entry of Arthur Bentley. What follows thereof is the subsequent exclusion of Mrs. Hibbins from the cultural, religious milieu of those who are on God's own side while she is said to be in consort with the Devil. It is therefore significant in this context to mention that the witch trials in Salem were actually sparked off through the trial of one of the first suspects- a Native American maid named Thitchaba.

Hester, on the other hand, is not as easily located within this binarized version of domination and resistance. Her presence in the market place and elsewhere is in fact desired for a very specific reason which is integral to the reproduction of modes of consent to the dominant



ideology of Puritanism- it is meant to serve as an example for those who might show signs of transgression or infidelity. In fact, the trial at the beginning of the novel gives us this reason for her life being spared. However it is this presence itself that brings the prevailing discourse to its limits. The transformation of Arthur Dimmesdale is what underpins the limit of its logic. Amanda Porterfield makes a very specific mention of the strong will to power immanent in the gaps or silences of the Puritan logic when she writes:

The emphasis on the soul's inferiority to God disguised the subjective nature of Puritan desires for power while facilitating their exercise. God represented the power Puritans dreamed of wielding while the saint's humility represented the self-deprecation that effectively regulated Puritan desires for power and mediated its self-controlled exercise. (Porterfield 32)

Hester's presence in the marketplace and her role in the transformation of the preacher also expose the gaps in a discourse that rests on the foundation of mortal fallibility. While confessions made to pastors are integral to Puritan customs and are justified on grounds of man's bearing of the Original Sin, the confession of the preacher himself is quite an unprecedented act. The utter silence that prevails following Dimmesdale's public confession is the element that reveals the unsaid in the Puritan discourse on mortal fallibility. While it is taken for granted that the path to redemption is the ragged avenue of sufferings which must be endured owing to the post-lapsarian inevitability of Sin, it nonetheless remains valid only with certain conditions. These are, not to mention, conditions that arise on account of the socio-political conditions of the space in which they are implemented. The socio-political conditions of the text and the temporal context of the novel make it almost impossible for pastors-cum-legislators to behave like others, and their uprightness must lie unscathed if the collective mobilization of the masses is to be ensured. A threat to this is likely to arise from the exercise of individual agency, as is the case with Hester and Dimmesdale. Thus, Hester's actions point specifically to an impulse of individualism that is uncalled for in her milieu. As Slavoj Zizek argues, every social condition runs not only in accordance with explicit rules but



also through certain implicit procedures for following them. These are implicit rules that Hester exposes, but one would not go too far to say that she has been 'allowed' to do so (roaming freely

and having her life spared are two instances to prove the same). The unprecedented nature of her actions results from a mis-identification of her benign acquiescence to the explicit rules of Puritan conduct, as is revealed through her interaction with the wider social world in the novel and in the ways in which she manoeuvres her perceptions, giving others the impression that her punishment is justified.

Hester Prynne therefore is pitted against social forces and conditions whose relationship with her exists not simply in terms of resistance or difference. It is this vacillation that projects her subversive image. Again it is not to say that there is a conscious agency in her that propels her to act in ways that are unseemly, for she is fully aware of the guilt-ridden façade of herself and is in fact complicit with it. However the spontaneity of her most subversive utterances and actions points to the authorial tendency to conform to a degree of social realism, which is however not distanced from a personal memory of the past. What is thereby exposed is of course part of the Puritan discourse itself, but it is ultimately the darker underbelly of a code of conduct that was in itself a challenge to authoritarian religious discourses in Europe. Hawthorne, with his nineteenth-century hindsight of the past therefore expedites upon such a discourse to show how its once-diffident facet had to be subjugated to the avaricious will to dominate and control, and the individual in the novel exposes this through her travails on the thorny road of survival and existence.

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Away from Homeland: Exploring the Diasporic Sensibility in Select Short Stories of Jhumpa Lahiri

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Abstract: Jhumpa Lahiri is, no doubt, one of the leading contemporary Indian writers in English. Born to immigrant Bengali parents in London, she grew up in U.S.A. The immigrant feelings that she inherited from her parents ostensibly shaped her mind and helped establish her fame as an important Indian English author. Her first collection of short stories *Interpreter of Maladies* that came out in 1999 won the much-coveted Pulitzer Prize in 2000, thus securing a safe place for her in the history of Indian English literature. Her fame was strengthened by later works like the novels *The Namesake* (2003) and *The Lowland* (2013), and another collection of short stories *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008). Her short stories in the first collection chiefly centre round the feelings and experiences of the immigrant Indians who are caught between the tradition that they have inherited and the alien culture that they confront every day. However, the term 'Indian Diaspora' refers to the Indians who have left their motherland and settled in a foreign land. It also refers to the people of Indian origin who are born and brought up in a foreign land. Diasporic sensibility consists in a number of feelings like rootlessness, loneliness, alienation, cultural clashes, identity crisis, homesickness, nostalgia and so on. The present paper seeks to explore the diasporic sensibility in select short stories of Jhumpa Lahiri from her first collection.

Keywords: Diaspora, rootlessness, cultural conflicts, homesickness, identity crisis.

Introduction

The present age is the era of globalisation. The term 'diaspora' generally refers to those people who have left their homeland to settle in other countries. Etymologically, the term 'diaspora'



derived from the Greek word 'diaspirein' which means "to scatter about or disperse". Originally, it was used to mention the dispersion of the Jews in the Fifth century B.C. In the field of literature, this term has become a topic of much discussion in recent times. The term 'diaspora' is "generally thought in terms of 'homelessness', a sense of trauma and exile", as Ian Buchanan puts it (Buchanan 132). A diasporic writer is one who lives in some other country, far away from one's original homeland. Such a writer is usually found to treat issues like loneliness, alienation, rootlessness, displacement, cultural conflicts, identity crisis, past memories, assimilation, nostalgia, cultural hybridity and so on. It is interesting to note that the elements of diaspora form an integral part of post-colonial literature. However, a diasporic writer feels inclined to focus on the lives of expatriates, immigrants, exiles and refugees. While going through the history of Indian English literature, one inevitably comes across a large number of diasporic writers who have made significant contribution to the post-Independence Indian literature in English. The first generation of diasporic women writers include Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Bharati Mukherjee who explored the themes like nostalgia, rootlessness, alienation etc. Of the second generation of diasporic writers, mention may be made of V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Rothinton Mistry, Jhumpa Lahiri and Kiran Desai. Their writings also foreground the themes of rootlessness, alienation, loneliness, displacement, cultural-clashes, nostalgia, identity crisis and the like.

Jhumpa Lahiri is indisputably one of the greatest Indian English authors in contemporary times. She forms an important part of the Indian diaspora. She was born in London to immigrant Bengali parents. When she was just two years old, her family moved to U.S.A. Hence, she is usually referred to as an Indo-American writer. She started her career as an author with her first collection of short stories *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999). This book fetched the author the prestigious Pulitzer Prize in 2000. The stories contained in this collection deal with the variegated experiences of Indians in exile, who keep oscillating between their ancestral culture and the alien culture that they face every day. Her name and fame again spread far and wide in 2003 when she published her first novel *The Namesake*. Her other works include a short story collection



Unaccustomed Earth (2008) and a novel *The Lowland* (2013). Lahiri is a writer whose works serve to illustrate the diasporic issues like rootlessness, loneliness, alienation, homesickness, past memories, cultural conflicts, identity crisis, nostalgia and so on.

In the title story “Interpreter of Maladies”, Lahiri lays bare the variegated experiences and feelings of an American family of Indian origin that have come to visit India. Their taxi driver-cum-tour guide Mr Kapasi takes them to different important places of India. Mrs Das, the unhappy wife of the unfeeling scholar Mr Das, unlocks her heart and reveals her long-kept secret to Mr Kapasi in the hope of getting some remedy for her guilt-ridden psyche. It is through this lady that the diasporic issues like alienation, loneliness, identity crisis, cultural-clashes, rootlessness and nostalgia have been explored in the story. The story opens with Mr and Mrs Das bickering about “who should take Tina to the toilet”. At the very outset, it is crystal clear that the couple have fallen prey to conjugal disharmony and emotional estrangement. However, we learn that they are on their way to the Sun Temple at Konarak. The Das couple have two sons - Ronny and Bobby, and a daughter - Tina. The cultural clash is first felt in their appearances, for they look like Indians but dress like foreigners. While conversing with the middle-aged tour guide Mr Kapasi, Mr Das points out that he and his wife Mina were both born and brought up in America. At present, their parents live in Assansol, India. They have already retired. So, the young couple visit them “every couple of years”. Later on, Mr Das also reveals that he teaches Science in a school at Brunswick, New Jersey situated in America. Strangely enough, the parents and their children remain alienated from one another on the emotional level in the car. It also comes to light that Mr Kapasi guides the tourists on two days – Fridays and Saturdays. On other days, he works as an interpreter at a doctor’s chamber. He interprets the words of the Gujarati patients to the doctor because the doctor does not know Gujarati. As Mrs Das showers compliments upon Mr Kapasi’s job as an interpreter, the tour guide starts fantasizing about her. He is captivated and intoxicated by her voice and praise. Mrs Das also shows an unusual interest in Mr Kapasi, thus prompting him to visualise his future correspondence and intimacy with this charming lady. After a few hours, they reach the Sun Temple at Konarak. Interestingly enough, the erotic pictures on the temple induce in Mr Kapasi a strong urge to



embrace Mrs Das. While driving back, Mr Kapasi suggests visiting the hills at Udaygiri and khandagiri so that he may enjoy Mrs Das' company for some more time. The family give their consent to visit the hills. As they reach the hills, Mrs Das prefers to stay in the car on the ground that her legs are tired. So, Mr Das begins to climb the hills with his children. Left alone, Mrs Das reveals her long-concealed secret to Mr Kapasi. The secret is that her son Bobby was fathered by a friend of her husband. Now she shares her past memories with Mr Kapasi. She relates how her parents left no stone unturned to bring about a romantic affair between her and Mr Das in their adolescence. They got married at a young age. After the birth of their first son Ronny, life grew dull and boring. As her husband always remained busy with his teaching, she had to shoulder the responsibility to bring up her son. More often than not, she fell victim to exhaustion. Consequently, she had to decline the invitations of her friends. Gradually, her friends and acquaintances stopped calling her. As a result, she was subjected to complete loneliness and alienation. A dull and monotonous life continued to plague her. One day a Punjabi friend of her husband came to stay with them for a week for some job interview in that area. On receiving the welcome news of his success, the friend got so excited that he could not but make love to Mrs Das in the absence of her husband. The lady, however, made no protest. Her second son Bobby was thus conceived on a sofa in an afternoon. Throughout the story, Mrs Das gives vent to her feelings of boredom, loneliness, alienation and, of course, her feelings of nostalgia. It is interesting to note that all these feelings form an integral part of the diasporic sensibility. Though she was born and brought up in America, she shares the Indian sensibility regarding the sanctity in marriage. She continues to suffer from a guilty conscience for her act of adultery:

... I feel terrible looking at my children, and at Raj, always terrible. I have terrible urges, Mr Kapasi, to throw things away. One day I had the urge to throw everything I own out the window, ... (Lahiri: *Interpreter of Maladies*: 65)

It is of paramount importance to note that Mrs Das is oscillating between the Indian tradition she has inherited from her parents and the western culture she encounters every day. Again, her behaviour towards her husband and her children points to the disturbed psyche of an immigrant



living far away from the homeland. Another important aspect of diaspora is found in the fact that the Das couple cannot help feeling an irresistible longing for their homeland, i.e. India. Despite their birth and upbringing in an alien land, they are eager to know their roots and ancestral home. Thus, nostalgia and homesickness, two vital traits of diasporic sensibility, are quite unmistakable here.

“A Temporary Matter”, another short story in Lahiri’s collection *Interpreter of Maladies*, centres round the feelings of emotional estrangement and loneliness that continue to plague an Indian married couple – Shukumar and Shobha – living in Boston. Their emotional estrangement was occasioned by the birth of their still-born baby. However, the story opens with a notice informing the young couple of a power-cut that will continue for five days from 8 pm to 9 pm. On each of these five nights, they exchange confessions with each other during the power-cut in order to come to terms with the loss of their baby and bridge the gap between them. Despite living abroad, they inevitably feel drawn to their original homeland, i.e. India. Interestingly enough, Shukumar also writes his dissertation on “agrarian revolts in India”. Thus, the story sheds ample light on the diasporic issues like loneliness, alienation, rootlessness, homesickness and nostalgia. Again, an unbridgeable gap is quite evident between the husband and the wife; “... he and Shobha have become experts at avoiding each other in their three-bedroom house, spending as much time on separate floors as possible” (4).

That they have fallen victim to the feelings of loneliness and despair is thus unmistakable. Shukumar again feels sick for his homeland. He feels sorry about the fact that the time he spent in India is less than that spent by his wife in the homeland. He cannot but wish that he had spent more time in India. This throws a great deal light on an immigrant’s feelings of homesickness and his desperate search for his own roots. Moreover, one can easily understand that the male protagonist is caught between the culture of his homeland and that of the host country. In other words, cultural conflict and identity crisis, two important aspects of the diasporic sensibility, reign supreme in Shukumar’s mind. He admits that he did not feel attracted to India during his boyhood. It is only



after the death of his father that he began to feel drawn to his homeland. He cannot escape feeling envious of his wife who spent much more time in India than he did. Now, he wishes that “he had his own childhood story in India”. While exchanging confessions, they also share their past memories. Shukumar, for instance, recalls the sweet memory of his first meeting with Shobha at a lecture hall in Cambridge. He recollects how a group of Bengali poets were presenting recitals and how the audience reacted. He remembers how he was pleased to find a beautiful lady, i.e. Shobha sitting next to him. The story thus teems with diasporic issues such as nostalgia, homesickness, alienation, loneliness, rootlessness, cultural clashes, identity crisis and the like.

In the story “When Mr Pirzada Came to Dine”, Lahiri has projected such issues as rootlessness and homesickness through Mr Pirzada. Again, the author explores the themes of identity crisis and cultural conflict through Lilia. Originally, Mr Pirzada came from Dacca, now the capital of Bangladesh. He has seven daughters who live with their mother in Dacca. Despite living abroad, he always feels worried about his family who are far away from him. Each and every week, he writes letters to his wife and sends comic books to his daughters though the postal system in Dacca has almost collapsed. Now, he is staying in America as he has been awarded a grant “from the government of Pakistan to study the foliage of New England”. He comes to the house of Lilia to have his dinner and watch the evening news. It must also be noted that Lilia’s parents, who have emigrated from India to America, continue to face some problems like cultural conflicts and alienation. Through Lilia’s reminiscence, we are made aware that her parents keep on complaining about the absence of their native culture in the foreign land. The Supermarket does not carry mustard oil; doctors do not make house calls; neighbours do not come without invitation. It is a pity that all these Indian practices are absent from the alien land. Thus, it goes without saying that the cultural clashes go on plaguing the immigrants. In addition to that, Lilia falls prey to identity crisis and discrimination at her school. Though her mother is quite confident about her proper upbringing in America, Lilia does face a number of problems in the foreign land. One day she voluntarily and jovially disguised herself as a witch for the Halloween. At that time, the natives humiliated her by calling her “an Indian Witch”. Moreover, she is now regarded as an ‘Orient’ by the natives. It



brings to the fore the bitter truth that an immigrant can never become a normal citizen in an alien land no matter how much he or she tries to absorb the culture of the host country. Lilia is thus reminded time and again that she belongs to another country and that she is a mere stranger to the natives. Hence, one has every reason to assert that the present story is replete with the diasporic feelings like rootlessness, alienation, loneliness, identity crisis, cultural conflicts and so on and so forth.

The story “Mrs Sens’s” deals with the life of an Indian couple Mr and Mrs Sen who live in America. The story also centres round Mrs Sen’s work as a baby-sitter to eleven year-old Eliot. Mr Sen teaches Mathematics at the university. Mrs Sen has started taking care of Eliot after his school is over. Eliot’s father lives far away and his mother remains busy with her office work throughout the day. So, when the school is over, Eliot comes to Mrs Sen’s apartment and spends time with her. Throughout the story, the narrator has portrayed how Mrs Sen behaves like a typical Indian woman. More importantly, she tries her level best to learn how to drive a car, lest she should lose her job as a baby-sitter. However, during her conversation with Eliot, she often lays bare her feelings of homesickness and nostalgia, and her desperate attempt to keep in touch with her own roots. She often shares her past memories with Eliot. There is no doubt that she is a complete stranger here. Naturally, she has been subjected to the feelings of loneliness, alienation and displacement. Her home-sickness often makes her reminisce about her homeland, her relatives and her parents. In addition to that, she is being tormented by cultural conflicts. She complains that no one will come to help her if she faces any problem or meets with a mishap in her apartment. But in India, if a person simply raises his voice and shouts for help, the entire neighbourhood will come to help him. Thus, she points to the unbridgeable gap between the indian culture and the American culture. While talking about driving, she grows so emotional that she asks Eliot, “Could I drive all the way to Calcutta?” Once again, feelings of homesickness overpower her. There is no denying the fact that she is going through the pangs of alienation, loneliness and boredom. Time and again, she cannot but reminisce about her homeland. While speaking of the driver’s seat in the car in America, she refers to India to point out that drivers in India sit on the right side. Of the two things that make her



happy, one is, of course, the arrival of a letter from her family. The letter perhaps helps relieve her of the pangs of alienation, identity crisis, cultural clashes and homesickness. The other thing that proves to be a source of happiness to Mrs Sen is fish from the seaside. The fish possibly helps her keep in touch with her roots on the emotional plane. It seems to fuel her passion for the homeland. She recollects how she grew up eating fish twice daily in India. She cannot refrain from talking about the land of her origin. She adds that “in Calcutta people ate fish first thing in the morning, last thing before bed, as a snack after school if they were lucky” (123). One day Mrs Sen plays a tape of an Indian raga. Again, she relives the moment of her farewell at her home by playing a cassette of “people talking in her language”. Thus, she often feels sick for home and tries in each and every possible way to connect to her homeland through her memories or reminiscence. A strong sense of nostalgia always reigns supreme in her mind. The story ends with Mrs Sen crying for her mistake in driving the car, and Eliot departing from her apartment with his mother forever. In a word, the present story deftly addresses the diasporic issues like alienation, loneliness, rootlessness, nostalgia, cultural conflicts, past memories, identity crisis etc.

Conclusion

Thus, one must point out that the short stories of Jhumpa Lahiri are not only charming to the general readers but also rich in variegated issues and ideas. One of the issues is diasporic sensibility that has been discussed above. The stories unquestionably move the readers emotionally and psychologically. Her imagination is so powerful that we are made to visualise each and every minute detail that she wants us to observe. In that sense, the stories offer a rich feast to the readers. However, it has already been pointed out that most of her stories show the immigrant Indians and their problems which are more emotional than physical. These people can neither forget their native culture completely nor accept the alien culture. As a result, they constantly suffer from cultural conflicts, identity crisis, rootlessness, alienation, loneliness, homesickness, past memories and the like. All these feelings constitute the diasporic sensibility which is too strong in Lahiri’s stories to forget.



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The Role of English Language in the Era of Intercultural Communication and Globalization

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Abstract: Language and culture are inseparable parts of a community. Both are interdependent and have their roots in each other. In the late 1950s, a new phenomenon in the field of communication was brought under light named Intercultural Communication. Intercultural communication is communication between or among people from different socio-cultural backgrounds who do not share a common language or culture. This concept has a lot to do with Globalization. The present paper shows the relationship between Intercultural communication and Globalization and also how language and culture influence each other. The aim of the present paper is to highlight the importance of English language in the field of Intercultural Communication and Globalization in the present scenario. The paper tends to show the outcomes and problems in the filed of Intercultural communication and also how English language can act as a lingua-franca and make the idea of the world being a Global Village true.

Key Words: Intercultural communication, globalization, culture, English language, lingua-franca.

Man is essentially a multiethnic being. Today, almost each and every human being is a part of some one or the other community. A community is basically a group of people who belong to a common geographical location, with a similar or dissimilar cultural background and are indulged in unrelenting conversation. Through communities human beings get indulged in the process of socialization and socialization has conversation at its root. Conversation is a process between two or more people in order to exchange ideas and thoughts by the dint of a system called language. To converse and communicate a common sign system is required. The system should be understood by all the people who use it and this sign system is called Language. Language is more than semantic



and syntactic structures or a systematic arrangement of spoken or written words. It is the fundamental medium of communication among the members of a society. In a society language and its need becomes even stronger because it becomes the most indispensable part of communication process. Society attains self-awareness through communication. The people of a community consciously or subconsciously reflect their culture and ethnicity in their communicative patterns. When a person speaks or talks he manifests his cultural background as words have a deep association with the social norms and culture in which these are being used. Almost every word has certain history, belief and the culture of their origin and must be used accordingly. If we go back to the roots of history, it becomes quite clear communication has been an inseparable part of culture. Language is largely formed by culture and in turn culture gets affected by linguistic aspects of communication process. The traditions, laws and norms of a culture clearly manifest in the language spoken by the speakers of that specific culture and language in turn affects that culture massively. Our assumptions and thoughts, expressed through language and concepts, are greatly influenced by our surroundings and these surroundings have a significant role to play in the formation of culture. Language and culture are interdependent and deeply related to each other. Language is generally seen as verbalism of a culture and a vehicle that carries off culture and its knots. It enables a person to make him socially adaptable. Through language a person communicates with other people of society and makes his needs meet. Language is defined in many ways and on the basis of its functions, language is described as a system that is discretionary and human beings use it to communicate their ideas, thoughts, morals and values. There is an ambient bond between the language and the culture of a society. Both share a profound relationship. To understand and take into account both one cannot do without a simultaneous and parallel knowledge of these two important constitutive parts of communication.

Culture may reflect in body language, customs, superstitions, and even expressions of friendliness. Though these may vary in various social groups still it cannot be denied that the effect of culture on the patterns and usages of a language is deep and persuasive. In this context, culture refers to the lifestyle of a community: the way its members behave, their beliefs, their values and,



most importantly, the way they communicate. Language mediates between the individual and the community.

In a culture, a language is more than mere marks in black ink on a white paper or just a chain of well-organized spoken or written words, making sense. It has both semantic and syntactic associations, with the culture of the community in which it is being spoken. Generally, the origin of words is deep in the roots of a culture and not just words but the way a person speaks and conveys his thoughts has a stamp of the culture which he belongs too. His selection of words, accent and non-verbal behavior and all those things which are related with communication always have an impression of culture and its ways on it. People from different cultures have their ways and patterns of communication which clearly reflect their social background and other cultural elements. When people from different cultures converge to communicate their thoughts, ideas or feelings and even if they simply talk with each-other, this is called intercultural communication. Intercultural communication has paved a path named Globalization at a massive scale. In the past two decades, the world has witnessed a rapid development of globalization and this quick emergence of globalization has changed and affected human life in all ways. There are changes in each and every aspect like culture, language, economics, technology and others. The manner in which the above-mentioned things were used earlier has quite changed, with this growing phenomenon.

Today, the world has become that edge where myriad cultures converge. Globalization, although, is an economic and business oriented concept yet today it has become a wider phenomenon which goes above the economic sphere. It is basically a process by which people, businesses and different governments of various countries interact and this integration is called globalization. It is driven by investment and international companies and is supported by information technology. This process has impact on many different cultures, environment, economic development, prosperity and political systems in societies of the world. But as the word globalization itself indicates, people across the globe, today, meet not just for business, economic, commercial or political purposes, but also for sharing their cultures, norms, morals, ideas and values. The term 'globalization' means the diffusion of ideas, values, cultures and morals across the globe. So it becomes both a social and an economic phenomenon. At present, the universe has as



many cultures, languages and ethnicities as there are shades in a rainbow. Not in the world, but even in a continent or a single country, at every 10-20 kilometers, we may find varied cultures and languages practiced by people. Globalization is the increase in the relations among people, culture and economy. It is contributing to economic growth in different countries. The term can also refer to the transnational circulation of ideas, languages, and popular culture. The last two decades can aptly be called the decades of Globalization. The economic, cultural and social reach of various services is increasing internationally, with every passing day. An entirely spic and span global phenomenon, 'one world or no world' has knocked at the door of this world. There is hardly anything now that falls in the category of being local. Everything has become global, whether these are problems or facilities. Though the term globalization came into the limelight and thrived the most during the 1970s, it is said that this trait is ancient and is followed by the English language. Every conscious human being seeks his/her ideas and thoughts to be communicable across the cosmos and in the era of universal interdependence, a global language is required to make this connection denser and more effective. It can obviously not be denied that the need for an efficient way of communication across the world is not dependent on our willingness and is an unavoidable fact.

Today, the impact of globalization is such that not just in the field of business across the globe that multicultural workforce is found but even in one and the same country interaction with people coming off different cultural backgrounds has become very common. So, to fulfill our day to day requirements of communication efficacious intercultural communication skills are the need of the hour. The more cultures and varied communities converge, the smaller the world turns to be. People, now days, have been working in multicultural workplaces. Both globalization and intercultural communication have wiped out communication and cultural frontiers. The present globalized world is marked with a kind of oneness, in which people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds come in contact and communicate their ideas, norms, values and concepts. This communication is simply the result of increased proximity in myriad areas like, business, commerce, science, education, tourism and entertainment. All these reasons are somewhat



individualistic. There are many other reasons like migration from one country to another. Moreover, there are political associations and communities that often bring the leaders or representatives of different countries on the same platform. In all the above-mentioned contacts, people come together and communicate according to the needs that are to be catered of culture to. The discipline which studies communication in various social groups and cultures and shows the influence of cultures affecting communication and its patterns is called Intercultural Communication. It is used to speak about the vast range of communication procedures and issues that come naturally in an organization or social scenario made up of individuals belonging to varied social religious, educational, social or ethnic backgrounds. It tries to understand how people from various cultures and nations act, perceive and communicate the world surrounding them. The field of intercultural communication affirms that culture is responsible for the way people interpret, encode and transmit messages.

In the global environment, communication competency is one of biggest challenges ever faced by the world and its people. When there is no language in common, differences and misunderstandings are obvious. But, even if people share the same language to communicate, there are still chances of being misunderstood and misinterpreted. The reason is varying ethical and cultural values. In the business sector, for more than a decade, there have been cases of miscommunication and consequently, poor performance of the related organization or company. It is very important to understand the influence of globalization on Intercultural communication and vice-versa. As mentioned above, the global oneness of the universe has boosted the importance of smearing the prevailing cultural boundaries. The act of blurring predominant cultural borders is not smooth and easy. The most important role is played by communication and with the rise of the concept of globalization. Communication is affected by a number of elements. Human language and behavior patterns have a lot to influence the process of communication. If the behavior of people from other cultures may appear unusual to us, the same way they too may find us queer at some one of the other point while conversing. Undoubtedly, same expression may have different values conferred upon by the respective speakers of the language in different cultures. The divergence in interactive patterns is deeply related with a culture its norms, values and traditions.



The root cause of barriers in Intercultural communication is cultural shock, a foreign way of living which is not acquainted with others. The solution to this can be found in various ways. Acculturation is one of them. This process can be seen as cultural accommodation i.e. to know, adjust and learn a new culture. Moreover another simple solution to the problem of miscommunication in varying cultural backdrops can be found in facilitating different speakers and communicators a common language. This common language can be referred to as a global language or a lingua-franca. The role of being a lingua-franca or a global language is being played by English on a massive scale worldwide. This rapid rise in globalization has triggered the use of English as an international language and in his, 'The Role of English Language in the Context of Intercultural Communication', Ingrid Madarova comes up with the idea that:

Within the concept of English as a language used for international and intercultural communication, it is consequently important to consider the inseparable role of culture in a language as the cause of the shift from the cultural aspect in English as a foreign/second language into the intercultural aspects in English as an international language including consideration of its possible impact on teaching English as an international language. (Madarova 1)

English has come up as the most popular lingua-franca among the people of various countries who do not have any language in common to share their ideas. The importance and role of English is explicitly visible through its use as the official language of various international organizations. English is the most reliable working language of organizations. Even the leading universities of the world use English language as their official language. This proves that the knowledge of English is the core requirement for a professional institute or organization, in any domain, to be successful. English has become a language that unlocks the doors of all round development on the international stage.

Thanks to the development of Internet and services like E-mail, World Wide Web and others, the use of English language is very much enhanced. There is hardly any country in the world



where English language is not being used in one or the other way. Overall, it will not be an exaggeration to say that we are living in the age of English Language. The use of English terms in other languages is very frequent and again it would not be an overstatement to say that if someone is not familiar with English language today, s/he is living on the other side of an opaque veil from where s/he cannot look through and contact with the rest of the world. Today, English is not just a language, connecting the borders, but one which makes people work and act locally, socially and globally.

People have been using English to communicate with those from different cultures and even with people in their own culture. This has made the language Global English. Though the language used by various people has the same form, it has different natures. These differences manifest the culture, norms, values and surroundings of the concerned group. Using any language is based on the knowledge of the language itself, so is the case with English. So, while using a language, it is necessary for the user to have the knowledge of every layer of theoretical and practical understanding as it is used in the social world. The use of a language is centered on its social nature. Meaning is a dual phenomenon that is formed by the users, i.e., the listeners and the receivers of it. Adding to it, the environment and surroundings in which the language is developed and is being spoken has crucial impact on it, which indicates that meaning is a social phenomenon. The process of linguistic knowledge and learning a language has already been acquired by the learner as he has a command over his mother tongue. So, when one begins to learn another language, he/she already has a good hold over the linguistic patterns and usages of a language and when someone learns English, he/she can boost the knowledge of both the languages through comparisons and the level of understanding.

The learning of a language involves these stages -

1. The knowledge of the whole system of the language
2. The knowledge of the words and vocabulary and usages in social context



3. The knowledge of organizing the text.

The knowledge of the above fields creates a communicable environment for speech engagement. The systemic knowledge contains the knowledge of the whole system, i.e., the stages of linguistic organizations that are constructed by the native speakers of the language, which makes the use of that language more flexible. And, people are free to form sentences and understand on the basis of their levels of knowledge of the related language. In it, a person already knows that the formation of meanings enfold in the constitution of cohesive measures.

After it comes the knowledge of the vocabulary and the words relating these to their social and conventional use. In it, a person has to look into the text for getting an accurate meaning from a coherent understanding of the whole.

The final type includes the knowledge of the organization of the information in a way a native speaker uses it. One must have the skills to put information in correct and understandable order for making it comprehensive to the receiver. It is somewhat related to the domain of conversation, which will be referent to a certain area, topic or a way of putting words in the perfect order. The chief aim of all these levels is to present a way in which English can be learned to march ahead and indulge in the process of communication in a globalist's world. In 'A Dictionary of Language' David Crystal wrote about English becoming 'Diglossic' (Crystal 142).

'Diglossia' denotes the two varieties of a language. While one variety of English will be used by the locals as their language of identity and will be called the low variety, the other type will be used to express intelligence and knowledge, and will be referred to as the high variety.



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A successful intercultural communication requires settlement of a situation, norms, traditions, values and roles of other cultures. Negotiation is all that is needed at its best. Both the listener and the speaker must be able to negotiate without expecting the other one to do the same. If it is done, a better way to understand and comprehend the other person from different culture will be unveiled. This mid way can somewhere lead to the construction of a 'third culture' in which there is a silent agreement and respect for both the cultures prevail and lesser chances of misunderstanding and miscommunication comes forward. Acculturation has again a significant role to play in the process of formation of 'third culture' through negotiation. Lingua- Franca like English beyond affectation of national and regional stereotypes can help carrying off successful Intercultural communication.

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Saskatchewan Sky

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Poet

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Saskatchewan
sky,
just a preview of love,
chip off
an edge of
prairie
chip an edge off
winter-
and opening
multiple eyes
toward spring.
They-lovers, find themselves
near evening bush fire-
great seal fish and open lake,
cuddle together-
so wonderful there-
where she comes from,
where did she go to
from here.



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Majestic Scars

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Center of celebration and seal of covenant

Love measurer of Groom and pride of bride

Teaser of the young and freezer of the jealous

Means of joy and matter of visits

Hymns were sung, instruments bang

Witnesses gathered to hear the proclamation

Opened then my eyes to read into me

Turn not the mirrors of man but Almighty

A wonder of self spectacle with charm and pomp

My throat struck with heart broken

My cheeks bathed in falls of gratitude

Automated thanks paid to my master.

I was described back roughest, hardest child of dark world

Famous of worth nothing, notorious weapon to punish



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My groan reached the creator to make me differ off all
Held me neck tight and cut my side to feel me death
Judged him I merciless destroyer and mismatched creator
Habitual death went on with the serial cuts
Last shock but not least to find my multiple faces
Glimmering light pearce into the watchers soul
Palace is my place pattron is my Dane
He made me white to day and light to night
Unknown all the labor of bleeding hands to see me honored of all.



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The Mistress of the Damned

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“...my heart’s queen and the mistress of my bed

There purring with the rest at my distress

And sometimes tossing them a stale caress.”

-Les Fleurs du Mal, Baudelaire.

“For I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee bright,

Who art as black as hell, as dark as night.”

-Sonnets, Shakespeare.

I

For three nights the arms clashed,
and the flames crackled,
and the screams rose and filled the air:
death-shrieks that like some unholy vapour
made the earth moist and dark,
oozy and unsavoury;
or, like carrion-eaters in one fell swoop
tore through the petrified souls of men.

Then did the Palace fall to its foes.



By some grim and clandestine plot,
(the knowledge of which came through obscure channels)
that ever joined the defiled bed
to the treacherous friendship
in a sinful union whose consummation,
like the coupling of serpents, was both
hideous and haunting to the common mind,
as all betrayals are,
I was dethroned.
“Little mercy is there where Hate reigns supreme”-
so I was told and kindly left to die
in exile.

II

For three years I wandered
over realms little known or not known at all,
bore all Weathers as they came and went-
moist and hot and cold-
and climbed rugged mountains,
or, sailed through mists and tempests
to wild and luscious islands
with one deadly intent:
to harness the elixir of vengeance-
the perfect weapon to wrought death.
From quick-scathing daggers to slow-simmering poisons:
I mastered them all, and yet
found none that may embody to its full
my great resentment
till I was intuitively led to the object



of my desire.

Knowledge it was that I sought.

III

For three days I observed them,
the inhabitants of the land
that, hitherto alien to common knowledge,
was yet presented to me
providentially.

It was a vile land
that produced nature's worst savages,
villainous and depraved in the extreme,
but duly religious to a scary goddess.

On the Sabbath day, they assembled
on a narrow valley, the face of which was scarred
by the approach of a river whose
labyrinthine course ran shallow into a roofless cave.
It was a mystic place.

As their rituals proceeded,
the water in the cave grew restless,
and imperfectly mirrored
a dim and obnoxious sky
adorned by a sickly untimely moon.
Then, as all voices rose in unison,
the Cave echoed:

“Hail to thee Goddess: Mistress of the Damned!”



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Curious to my bones, I drew near
and saw, while a smile crept into my face
and a crooked sense of power tingled my brain,
the familiar face of my mistress.

And now my victory was complete.
For what could be more overpowering
than either life, or death, or even both assorted,
but the dark secret knowledge of the godhead?



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Yearning for My Soul mate

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You've been like a butterfly

The more I try to catch you,

The more away you fly,

The moment I give up,

I find you abode on my shoulders.

Entrapped in your love is so am I,

Suffering from endless plights and pains,

Kept you pure, but got myself stained.

My joy and peace is in you,

For every moment of desire

Is coloured by your thought



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Pull away the curtains and come to me,

Spellbound my heart and let this Journey start.

Before You I was a poet.

In longing of you my Beloved...

I am learning to be a Poem.



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Poor Poet

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I laid down lonely as a grass weed
Into the darkening bushes
Are affected bit by bit
Where herbivore thickly draws its breath,
Anonymously thriving weeds
Are taking nourishes from
Softened ground;
Neither nature creates its name
Nor an earth recognizes its fame,
Still it is growing silently;
I am the one amongst them,
Fate that exists will be the same,
None appreciates my thought
All crushed my body and knees,
Wishing to blubbering but can't do that,
Merely rolling tears across my face,
Still I served the heavy sigh, but
My black ink is only my escort
It perceives my tongue
While digging into papers.



The Predicament of the Solitary Reaper (Reply to “The Solitary Reaper” by William Wordsworth)

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The poem, “The Predicament of the Solitary Reaper” is a poetic reply to “The Solitary Reaper” by William Wordsworth, as a continuation in which she is in a tragic condition of being gang-raped by a group of anonymous men, where the poet who is her lover, stays calm and unresponsive to her cry in the same way how the world responds to similar cases as in the recent history.

Bewildered she stands alone there
With her reaping grains scattered out
Like her raped veins broken away
In the storm of lust loaded men!
Taking her clothes away, they roared
To bare her helpless voice of pain;
Burst the brutal thoughts of the hour's joke,
Invaded her virginity.

Neither a chanting Nightingale
Nor a thrilling voiced Cuckoo-bird,
Not anymore a welcome note
Along the Arabian sands;
Never in the Hebrides to break the silence
Will she sing melancholy more;
Cracked will it catch your ears that
Invaded her virginity.



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She sings the plaintive cry again
Of a battle she fought to lose
All her dreams and days in forlorn,
Unhappy, unfair to all Gods;
Familiar matter of today
But not tomorrow to repeat
A natural sorrow, loss and pain
That has been, and not anymore.

Before ending her song of loss
She expected you nearby her
Bending towards her lips to kiss,
To restore all her said lost pride
With your own love, unlike others
She stood watching you move away
Calm and still on the hill
Alone to cut her veins like grains.



Cards house

Xia Fang
University of Macau

Its façades are pieces of mirror
piling high up into the sky
reflecting glittering light
from other sun spangled buildings

pounding club music throbs
along with your heartbeat
every passing face a duplicate

The Lucky Wheel spins
clanked metallicity
a woman player's venting is heard
sounds like a man's shrill cries at a football match
the cleaner pauses to look in
at the edge of the cloud-haloed circle of players

Ersatz gong with digital ping
rows of gaming tables resemble the open-air market
except that no shouting or bargaining is needed
but concentration, win or lose
a flip of the card
greedy in pursuit or cutting their losses
tied to the table by intensity



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Chamomile tea steams up
blurs with held breath
you play your card
one more complication

stakes light
but still too heavy
for life.



Inanimate?

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A beaming middle aged couple enters a mobile store. The man is dark and bulky with a sharp look (like out of a classic Bengali film), the woman much younger, the innocent, happy committed kind. They ask for a mobile which has both the features of type and touch to suit the needs of the man. The couple happily select a black and white Nokia with a 2.5 inch touchscreen and a keypad. The salesman congratulate them on having bought a good set. They leave beaming (a feature not common in middle aged couples).

In the cab, the woman proudly takes control of the situation. She gushes saying “They took us for a husband and wife”. The man smiles “I like it”. She promises to help load all his contacts into the new phone and his favourite songs as well. In his flat she immediately puts the mobile on charge and reads the instructions. They lie together happy in their embrace.

The next day the woman comes and immediately sets about the arduous task of saving his contacts from one phone to another and also a song in Bengali.. “Aamar bhitor o bahire ontore ontore. Achho tumi...hridoy jure.. .’(You permeate my whole being ...within and without’) symbolizing their love. The man comes and understands how the camera functions and sets about taking her pics. She is all over him, wears his specs and poses. They make love and take some very intimate pics. They are happy in their own world, they make a world of their own.

The mobile becomes a part of their lives, a small device but because they had purchased it together, had extended their intimacy into it, it contained bits of them it had become a sort of baby. They checked each other’s mobile freely, but every time the man got a call from his female friends when they were together, either in bed or travelling, the woman would be perturbed. He was managing the other women in his life to give her that special place. She knew there was no



alternative so she took it though with a grain of salt. She just couldn't do without him, he filled all the pores of her body and mind ..."Aamar bhitor o bahire....'.

Science says the whole cosmos is in a state of flux. All animate, inanimate things change over time. Humans have evolved and so have their inventions. One day the mobile had some fault, it wasn't functioning properly. The man was too busy to go to the service centre, so he asked another woman, a subordinate to get it checked. She got it repaired. He didn't like paying for repairs again and again, he made her give up her spare set as she had got herself a new mobile. She obliged him and he made her feel special. Meanwhile his beloved who was being possessive about the mobile because she had attached all her emotions to it, suffered. She had reservations about the other woman having to do anything with 'their' mobile. She was pained to see their 'baby' easily replaced by someone's used set in the most abrupt manner. All her complaints, expressions of anger and pain fell on deaf ears; she was rebuked for misbehaving. She was told it was his mobile and none of her business whosoever repaired it or whose set he used. He oozed from all the pores of her being, she was animated about the mobile and her feelings for it. The sight of it in another's hand and her mobile in his burnt her heart. Every time the phone rang ...and sometimes the two phones rang simultaneously she felt stupefied. She had left a part of her being in the mobile. He had the memory card removed and all their stored intimacy vanished with it. The world of their own crumbled. One day he said "I am mine" to contradict and nullify his earlier lovey lovey committed "I am yours". The girl was shattered. An inanimate object, a device had once given her such joy, it had animated her life. The device broke down; its owner found a new set. A new set would not have hurt but a used set brought along many associations, it had a discourse of its own. It had established its actual owner in the centre and pushed the woman fancying his mobile to be 'theirs', to the edges. It changed all equations in their relationship and eventually as the used mobile got replaced by a new smartphone probably gifted by this other woman their relationship too changed forever.

Our girl learnt her lessons- initially crying, howling, foaming and fuming to calm and stoic acceptance of facts and the knowledge that one mustn't take people's words literally. She gradually learnt the ways of the world- a thing belongs only to the person who pays for it, all other claims of



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ownership and association are superficial and temporary. She has counselled herself well and doesn't pry to see which set he is using, against which pic he has saved her number, what songs are there etc. She knows whatever or whoever might be there might be deleted any moment. Things and devices are inanimate but do they remain so when human touch and care imbue, personify and identify them with their love, resistance or indifference they at some point of time shared with these things? People preserve the belongings of their near and dear ones as they are tokens of their memories. Memories of joy, laughter, sorrow, belonging and pain ...memories which cannot be erased... "Aamar bhitor o bahire ontore ontore...achho tumi...hridoy jure..."(You permeate my whole being...within and without...you fill my heart..).



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A Blood-hued Dawn

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Sleep eluded Sumati. Ramulu had informed her that some work needed to be done at the Master's house; he would stay there only to return in the morning. The Master possessed about a hundred richshaws which he leased out to people in Cuttack; Ramulu had got hold of one of those. Earlier he used to pull the rickshaw only during the daytime, but now, with the Master's grace, he pulled the rickshaw both during the day and night. He paid six rupees towards the rent but kept the entire night's earnings with him. The Master, in recognition of his honesty and hardwork, didn't demand any rent for the night shift.

Sumati, before coming to Ramulu's house, was a daily wage earner. Now, she devoted all her time to her family. Throughout the day she engaged herself in different activities for the comfort of Ramulu and for the improvement of her one-roomed hut. She kept herself busy in various chores such as cleaning the house, carrying water from the tap, and cooking. Ramulu left home early after eating *pakhala*, to return only at sundown. When evening fell, she would bow her head and pay her obeissance at the base of the sacred Tulsi plant placed on a platform. In the mean time, the fatigued Ramulu would return and sit on the verandah. He would unwind the knot of the package and pour on the ground fresh vegetables, dal, rice etc. procured from the market. He would tie his day's earnings in one corner of Sumati's saree. With her husband's earnings in her possession, Sumati's mind would soar to the seventh heaven. Soon after, they would find themselves lost in mundane affairs of daily life. Ramulu would depart once again when night descended.



Night always made Sumati feel restless. Sleep eluded her eyes. She would grow apprehensive at the thought of spending the night alone in the hut. She had told Ramulu many times, “Why are you pulling the rickshaw at night? We can somehow manage ourselves with the earnings of the day shift. I really feel scared at night. I can’t sleep at all. Henceforth, don’t go out at night.” Pressing Sumati’s soft cheeks fondly, Ramulu would answer, “If I don’t go, what would happen to the new member going to enter our lives in a few days from now. What would happen if we don’t save something for him?...” Sumati would blush and seek shelter in Ramulu’s bosom. Besides, the Master also lent a helping hand at the time of their trouble. Where was the harm if they could save some money?

Sumati would console herself.

Night deepened. Sleep eluded Sumati’s eyes. Sumati had nothing to do except changing sides on the bed. Ramulu had already informed that he wouldn’t return. Sumati didn’t feel like cooking anything. She ate the leftover food adding some water to it, alongwith an onion and some salt. It would be dawn by the time Ramulu returned. Sumati kept herself busy thinking about the yet-to-be-born child. Ramulu was telling her that day ... “I wish it were a boy...” Sumati felt cheerful within. Sleep came to her eyes. She started dreaming with her eyes shut.

Suddenly she heard a knock on the door. Was it Ramulu? But he had informed her earlier that he wouldn’t return at night. Who was calling her, then, at this hour of night? Sumati wiped her sleepy eyes clean and listened carefully to the knocking sound again. She felt as if someone was whispering her name. No, this wasn’t Ramulu’s voice. Raising the wick of the lantern, and arranging the saree, she looked outside through the crack on the door and found, to her surprise, the Master of Ramulu. Rambabu! What brought him here at the dead of night? Was Ramulu in trouble? While pulling the rickshaw throughout the night, did he have any ...? Oh! Why such ominous thoughts clouded her mind? Not being able to discern the situation, she opened the door. Rambabu stood in front of her. Before she could prostrate before him, Rambabu had already entered the hut. “Master ... What brings you here? ... at this hour of the night... Ramulu...” Rambabu wasn’t even



in the condition to answer so many questions. His face smelt of liquor. He walked unsteadily, towards the bed. Sumati's blood froze; words didn't emerge from her mouth. She couldn't think what to do. Rambabu spoke continuously, "Ramulu won't come to you tonight, Suma. I made him drink a lot of *Handia*. Make me happy for the night. I'll construct a house for you; I'll fill your coffers; I'll buy a gold chain for your child; I'll buy you gold bangles." While babbling like this, Rambabu slowly proceeded towards her. Sumati felt confused. She didn't know what to do. She grabbed the vegetable cutter lying within her reach and hurled it at Rambabu's head. Rambabu clutched at the cutter; his hand was badly cut. He fell on the floor with a bang. "You, bloody rascal old man. Get out of my house. If you dare enter my house another day ...I'll show you what I can do." Rambabu regained consciousness. Night was about to end. Rambabu walked through the open door. Drops of blood lay on the ground ... the bed lay untidy... Sumati fell on the floor, screaming loudly.

The delicate rays of the early morning sun entered the low thatched house of Sumati. By the time Sumati came back to her senses, it was morning. Sumati remembered God... "Hasn't Ramulu come back till now? Why does God punish a simple, innocent person like him? So what, if we are poor? Why shouldn't we have God's grace?"

Sumati started hating the very notion of God. Her mind was filled with thoughts of revenge. If the Master came back to take revenge on her, she would face him boldly. An uncommon desire for revenge burned fiercely within her. Let Ramulu come back; she would tell him everything. Sitting at his feet, she would entreat him, convince him not to go out at night leaving her alone... She will tell him, "We don't need money; we need self respect. You needn't pull the rickshaw at night. We can spend our time gracefully. If needed, I can also earn some money working at someone's house."

Sumati stepped out of the hut sluggishly. And lo! Someone was sleeping on the verandah. It's Ramulu... Sumati was taken aback. Ramulu's face still smelt of *handia*. He was the man of her heart... taking advantage of his simplicity the Master dared to do what he did yesterday. Tears



welled up in Sumati's eyes. If Ramulu misunderstood her; if he misinterpreted her words ... what would she do? Where would she go? ... Sumati's head reeled. A wild storm gathered in her mind.

She dragged Ramulu to her bed; she sprinkled water on his face. She moved her fingers gently over his hands and legs; she fanned him with a hand fan. Ramulu, after sometime, twisted and turned; tried to get up but failed in his attempt and fell asleep once again.

Sumati made some hot red tea for him. She asked him to get up and sit. Ramulu twisted his body once again, yawned and got up. He said, "Sumati... Our Master is excellent. He gave me food and drink yesterday. I wish you could just go and pay a visit..." Ramulu laughed loudly. "The Master gave me a lot of *handia* to drink yesterday and I don't know when I reached home... walking."

Sumati was losing patience. She couldn't control herself. She said, "Master came here yesterday. He offered to make me a queen if I satisfied him." Ramulu made fun of her by saying, "Oh! You agreed to the proposal." Sumati lost patience and narrated the entire incident of the previous night from beginning to end.

Ramulu was fully awake now. He became extremely agitated. He roared, "Rascal! that's why he made me terribly drunk with *handia*." Sumati pleaded with him, "Let's shift from here. Search for another Master. You needn't pull the rickshaw during the night. If needed I'll work in someone's house." Ramulu wasn't in a state to listen to anything. Fetching the axe from the roof and putting it on his shoulder, he stepped at once out of the house.

Sumati grew worried. Ramababu had high connections. He was surrounded by many goons. "If something happens to Ramulu ... Oh my God! What did I do?"

Sumati struck her head on the wall.

The day was getting warmer. Rambabu was seeing off the rickshaws, with a bandaged hand. Before he could reach Ramulu, Ramulu threw the axe aiming at his head. Before Rambabu could



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ready himself to prevent the blow, he was struck on his head fiercely. A gush of blood ran through the shop. Rambabau lay unconscious on the floor... Ramulu gave out a cry of victory, a cry of satisfaction at having avenged the wrong. He might be jailed; he might be hanged to death. He wasn't sad... he wasn't repentant... Ramulu looked back. A crowd had gathered... police had arrived. Ramulu raised his hand in supplication to the Lord before climbing into the police jeep.



Tribute to Selfless Heart

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It's the time of University exam. She got AUR (Anna University Representative) duty to the nearby college for a week. She had to start early and reach the place before the exam. She quit morning breakfast and ate lunch in external college. She was sensitive to food habits. It's the time for her to submit her Ph.D. synopsis. She was tensed with her work for not completing on time. Her tongue got irritated and its tip got reddened. She was not in the position to take leave so she thought she could get an appointment with the doctor after a week. Her bad luck sustained that she heard her college was filed for NBA accreditation. No one would allow taking leave up to the time of accreditation work get over. Another ten days rolled away by starting 7.30 am and reaching back only by eight or nine at night.

She procrastinated to visit the doctor her tongue ulcer turned to cancer. It gave too much irritation, her own teeth became her enemy it bit her tongue repeatedly while she was coughing. She explained her situation to the head of the department and got permission to take a day off. She went to the hospital for consultation. There the kind-hearted dental doctor says her wound looks intense and it may be the initial stage of cancer. The doctor was considerate that she was only thirty-five who is in the teaching profession. She explained all the things to the patient and to her husband clearly and asked her to take the biopsy on that day itself.

She was blessed to have such a caring husband who works in the same profession understands her situation. The doctor informed they would get the report after a week. She asked to ring and confirm the result. In the next week, they rushed to the hospital and she was asked to wait. She made her sit comfortably and asked her chief to explain the report. They both counseled her by



saying; cancer is not the disease which would kill people. Proper medication would cure the patients in an initial stage.

The chief explained everything what would be the consequences of the operation or if we forfeited without treatment the sustainability of lifespan is only for few months. First, this news shocked her and she was hesitant to know how she could she get the disease. She never had any bad habits and she never consumed beetle in her lifetime. She started crying by thinking about her condition. They consoled and send her to oncology department. She started weeping without seeing anyone's face. Sometimes, God would come in the human form and give the prediction in our worst state. There appeared an unknown man asked about the reason for her crying. She wept and said she got squamous cell carcinoma (tongue cancer). He said early dedication would always cure any disease so there is no need to bother about that. She and her husband met a chief oncologist. He is in a hurry to visit America to attend the conference. He checked the patient and said he would do the operation within a month.

Some threatened the operation had a change of getting the situation worse. They got hesitant to go for the operation. They informed to meet the doctor by next week and returned with the sad note. She wept a lot and informed to her brother who is working as a Physiotherapist. He consulted with so many doctors and they advised to go directly to Adiyar cancer institute. This disease made her realize what the value of the human life is and how people played there in the life of innocent. One of her family friends advised her to meet the local doctor for the general suggestion.

They went to that hospital. He checked her and said the teeth on that right side are to be removed and there are two types of treatment. One is chemotherapy and the other is operation. He simply asked to check the blood, sugar and to take CT scan. At the time of taking blood itself, the man who worked there warned the couple to beware of him. So they said to the doctor that they would meet him in the following week. Her husband's close friend informed him there was the homeopathy doctor who is good in curing diseases. With a lot of faith, he took her to him. His hospital is like a small home and he gave some medicine which would suppress her disease a little.



He talked with faith and confidence that initial inferences of any infirmities are easily curable. He sowed the seed of confidence by his examples and made the couple to visit him repeatedly. That doctor introduced another who is the teacher of him and he would help him to learn a lot in medicine. To save her life her husband took her to that doctor too. He is the one who gave a book by saying he is doing research by curing the people by giving the medicine which would be prepared by flowers, and he created a mirage all our problems get over by reading the books and taking the pills he provided them. Though they are educated they foolishly paid money and bought the medicine and ate it. Within two doses her irritation got agitated and finally ran to Adiyar cancer institute.

It is located in-between Gandhi Mandapam and NIT campus Chennai. We never thought about such a big hospital in the heart of the city. That hospital is doing selfless service and made many families to lead their happy life with their loved one. The procedure to enter is a little bit confusing in the first but it is the only best cancer center around Tamilnadu. If the patient first time goes there, they have to register their name. The concerned doctor will examine the patient. After checking the intensity of the disease they will counsel the patient which is the correct treatment to procure for their disease. It's her turn she patiently explained her health condition to VV doctor. He took special care and informed to operate her as early as possible to avoid spreading the disease. He promised that this operation would never affect her teaching career and she may have the full possibility to continue her profession.

The day of operation came, the final test before an operation was done. She had a severe cold and cough. The doctor examined and informed that she was not fit for an operation because a continuous cough may affect her throat. Then the operation was postponed after a week though she was strong this disease little bit shakes her heart. In childhood days before her marriage, she went with her mother to see horoscope through handprints. At that time astrologer informed that she will get the baby little bit later and she would face some disease related to sunburn and she will get cure surely after that. These recollections consoled her slightly.



Her husband, brother, and sister stand for her before operation theatre. The hospital is not new to her why because she already approached several gynecologists for baby and once she pitiously admitted hospital for her miscarriage. After that incident, this is the second big one which is happening in her life. All her jewels were removed for operation including her Thali. It is the holy chain which would never take out from the neck of women till her death in Indian tradition. It is very holy and spiritual for married women like the wedding ring. She doesn't know where she was entering. After having anesthesia her memory faded slowly.

Next, to the operation, she regained her consciousness. While taking back to ICU her husband and brother eagerly waiting to see her. With little consciousness, she waved her hand to them and gets back to it. She was a little bit uncomfortable with the urine pad and she struggled hard to convey them to remove it. She had her operation on her tongue and all her thirty-two nodes were removed from her neck. She was not known whether she could come back as the vital lady to her job and she can speak effectively again as an English teacher.

Everyone thinks the ICU is the place where the serious patients are to be kept without consciousness. In reality, it is not like that. That world is entirely different from which no one could imagine without experiencing that. After the first day, she got conscious. She woke up by seeing some passionate sisters cleaning her with the towel and wearing the new dress. Then she regained her conscious and slightly asked to sit there on the bed. A group of doctors approached every patient and checked the history of them in the early 4. 30 am. She was operated in tongue and throat got struck by the cold. One of the doctors while approaching checked her keenly and helped her to vomit by showing the case. The blood came frequently in her vomit and she was asked to rinse her mouth often.

In the evening she was shifted to some other room where they keep the second stage of ICU patients. In the evening the AC room's chillness didn't suit her and she got a heavy fever. They checked her blood count the hemoglobin count is very less. The nurse informed to the blood bank to give B+ blood. In the evening the blood is given to her and on the next day morning, the team of



experts visited the patients at four o' clock and they monitored the health condition. Aravind Krishnamoorthy doctor personally examined her health condition and asked the nurse to shift her to the general ward. VV doctor also accompanying with other doctors and motivated her to speak. The voice was not coming though she struggled a lot. He said it would be normal within few days. Slowly she could gain her speech.

Then the nurse approached her and said someone is waiting outside to see her. With full of strength, she raised and went to see. It was her brother standing with bright face waiting to see her. She swayed her hand and with the bright face, he saw her husband, brother, and sister. Everyone in her family wholehearted longed for her to come back with full health. God's grace she regained her fitness. Though she suffered for few months she joined back in college and she is working with full of confidence. In olden days there was no medication for cancer. But in present scenario, there is a cure for everything. Early deduction of any disease may cure all types of ailments. Prevention is better than cure.

We all working hard to reach success but we forget health is wealth. Though we are in the higher position or in the toughest working area everyone has to take care of their health. Proper awareness should be cultivated among everybody to approach correct doctor at the correct time. Everyone gets an equal opportunity to lead a healthy life. By eating nutritious food, proper diet and meditation and yoga would make us healthy and wealthy. Once this disease got cured the patient has to go for review three months once for three years, then, six months once for two years and yearly once throughout their life. We have to check our body periodically.

Without seeing their welfare many kind-hearted doctors working to serve the society. They always sustained in the heart of each one's mind throughout their life. Comparing to all profession medical profession is the noble profession. They give rebirth to us as a second god. This story is the tribute to all kind-hearted oncologists who spends their utmost time to cure the disease of the patients. "We committedly thank all the doctors; long live all generous ones".



Book Review : Emma Donoghue *ROOM* (2010)

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It's Jack's birthday and he's excited about turning five. He lives with his Ma in Room, which has a locked door and a skylight, and measures 11feet by 11 feet. He loves watching TV, and the cartoon characters he calls friends, but he knows that nothing he sees on screen is truly real- only him, Ma and the things in Room. Until the day Ma admits that there's a world outside...

Emma Donoghue's *Room* (2010) is primarily an account of the psychological journey of a five year old boy Jack whose world is the 11 by 11 'Room' (a garden shed) as is evident from the blurb of the novel quoted above. Room is where he was born and has lived all his life with his Ma and his friends Bed, Wardrobe, Table, and Bath etc. The story explores the life of a child who in the five years of his life has never felt sunshine, rain or grass beneath his feet, never smelled fresh air. He has not known the existence of any other human being other than him, his mother and Old Nick- the man responsible for abducting Ma and continually raping her.

Shortly after his fifth birthday, Ma tells Jack about the existence of a world 'Outside' Room. She tells him the truth behind their life in Room; something that Jack does not quite understand and is only confused and distressed by it all. And no sooner had Jack started convincing himself about 'Outside' than Ma starts planning their escape. However this time he is far from convinced because to him 'Outside' is almost like another planet which can never be visited and where he perhaps would not like to be. On being asked by his mother if he wanted to escape from Room all that Jack has to say is, "Yeah. Only not really." It takes a lot of effort from both Jack and Ma to execute their



‘Great Escape’ which they eventually manage to. It is also about what happens when this tiny world opens up to the wider world after their escape.

The novel that has been inspired from what has been perhaps the most disturbing cases of abduction and illegal imprisonment in the last decade- the Fritzl case, where in 2008, an Austrian man was discovered to have kept his daughter concealed in a secret basement room for twenty four years and with whom he had fathered seven children.

An award winning writer, born in Ireland and living in Canada, Emma Donoghue has often sought real events from the past centuries as inspirations for her novels. However, for *Room*, Donoghue for the first time was inspired by a subject making headlines in the present. Although she has been criticized of ‘sensationalism’ for her source of inspiration, the novel went out to sell 2.5 million copies and to be shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2010 and win the Commonwealth Writer’s Prize in 2011. It is perhaps the huge amount of critical acclaim and the immense popularity of *Room* that calls ones attention to how the most unimaginable situations of life inspire literature, where the one who is writing may not necessarily be the one directly involved but still succeeds in stirring the public’s conscience about the grim realities of the society we live in.

Donoghue acknowledges that the headline about the Fritzl had triggered her to write about a woman who bears a child to her captor and brings him up in the closed world of captivity. However, she also insists that it was not Elizabeth Fritzl that she was more drawn to but the five year old Felix, her youngest son. She was taken over by the idea of a child born in captivity, and raised in secret isolation in the middle of a city, with everything he needs except one of the biggest things- freedom. And perhaps the idea of a child emerging suddenly into the world of which he had heard things but never known it was fully real, inspired her to have this child as the narrator for her novel.

Apart from making it easier for Donoghue to tackle a subject like captivity, her young narrator perfectly captures the malleability of a kid's mind, the way they take what they know and



use it as a filter to interpret the stuff they encounter that they don't understand. Told entirely in the language of the energetic, pragmatic five-year-old Jack, *Room* is at once both easy and difficult to read.

Also, by making Jack the narrator of her novel, Donoghue further complicates the conflicting notions of captivity and freedom. When observed from two different perspectives, that of Jack and that of his mother, Ma, these ideas get completely redefined because here, captivity, freedom, trauma etc all operate at multiple levels and most often the line between them remains largely indistinct. And post their 'Great Escape' this aspect becomes more apparent. For example, *Room* is both the home and the world for Jack. It is where he and his Ma ate and slept and played and learnt. It is the only world he has ever known and although he would be often be made to sleep in the wardrobe so as to keep him away from any kind of contact of his father, he was not imprisoned in the same way his mother was. Ma on the other hand has known the freedom that is there 'Outside' and therefore to her *Room* was nothing more than a prison where she had been kept captive for seven long years. And until Jack was born, it was a solitary confinement- broken only by the arrival of the man who came to rape her. She later tries to reason it out with Jack stating, "Yeah, but see, why I was sad-it was *because* of Room"

Herein lay the intricacy of Jack's and Ma's situations. When the tiny world of Jack and his Ma opens to the wider world, it goes all awry. What seemingly feels like freedom to Ma becomes confinement for Jack and vice versa. On one hand Ma shudders at the thought of going back to *Room*-the place which had been the site of all the pain inflicted upon her by her captor and which had taken away seven precious years of her life, her 'freedom'. Except Jack she would like to have no memories of the place. Jack on the other hand misses *Room*; he longs to go back to that womb where it was just him and his Ma. He insists, "What I'd like best is to be in *Room* but I don't think that's in the world". The 'Outside' scares him. It is a place where he has to remember his 'manners', has to be careful of not disturbing a person next door and where he and his Ma cannot share the same bed. When they are finally 'Outside', Ma enjoys her first shower in seven years while Jack yells at the first rain drops on his face, Ma reunites with her friends and family while



Jack finds himself amidst strangers, Ma gets back her favourite walkman while Jack has to struggle to get his favourite Dora bag. When Jack is attracted to a backpack with Dora on it, his uncle tries to persuade his wife into not getting a one that is in pink and suggests that he gets a Spiderman bag instead. This is a peek into the strict gender roles that he has to adhere to in the 'Outside'.

Unfortunately, even Ma's idea of freedom is questioned time and again by the society. After her seven years of captivity when she steps out into a world she realises that it has moved ahead without her, had forgotten and stopped looking for her, and that now sees her as a victim and wants to know all the gory detail of her captivity. One of the most significant episodes in this context is her interview with the Media when she is made to revisit her past and even justify her actions such as keeping Jack alive in such situations.

The interview is a peep into how the world victimises the victim over and over again. Consequently, Ma collapses after the interview. Unable to come to terms with the questions raised on her motherhood, she almost gives up the battle she had been fighting all these years. It is perhaps the realisation that 'freedom' always comes with a price that forces her to take an over dosage of pills. It is the realisation that her new found freedom will always be challenged by the questions the world will keep imposing on her; that she would never be free of her past and it would be perhaps a greater struggle to start life afresh than staying in her captivity.

It is significant that the novel does not end with the escape and almost half the novel focuses on their rehabilitation. Had the novel ended with the 'Great Escape', it would perhaps have been a fantastic novella. By taking it into the aftermath Donoghue shows the horror of the experience, narrating not simply what happens 'Inside', within the four walls of confinement but also what happens next, in the 'Outside', where every day brings along with it a new battle for survival.

The message that Donoghue wants to perhaps drive home through Ma's and Jack's stories is that life is both a journey and a struggle to survive through that journey and we eventually discover whom we choose to survive this journey with. It is Ma's urge to live her life with Jack that helps



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her survive her plightful years of captivity, as well as the difficult days of rehabilitations. It is quite probable that had she not had Jack with her in Room, she would have given up on life. Similarly, in spite of her momentary collapse Ma eventually stands up to face the world with a new found strength which she perhaps derives from none other than her five year old son. As Ma tells her doctor “all those years I was craving company. But now I don’t seem up to it. Most days Jack’s enough for me” (393), in response to which the doctor quotes Emily Dickinson,

“The Soul selects her own Society-Then-shuts the Door-”

Significantly this is heard by Jack. And as for him, it is again his love for his Ma and the desire to survive life’s difficult journey with her that helps him to begin accepting the new life.

Room is thus a celebration of resilience-a story of a mother and son whose love lets them survive the impossible.