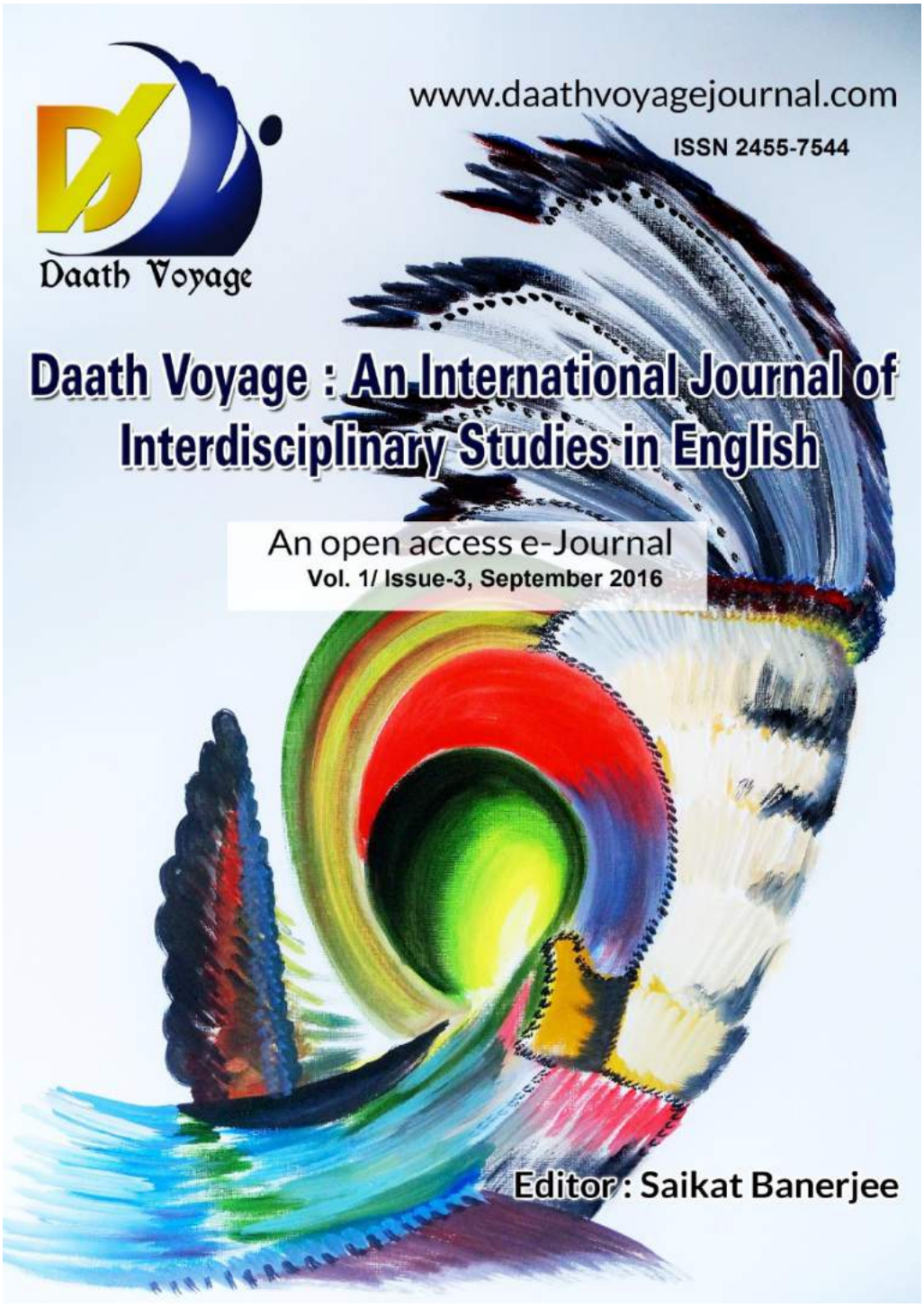

http//:daathvoyagejournal.com

Editor: Saikat Banerjee

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Dr. K.N. Modi University, Newai, Rajasthan, India.

: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English ISSN 2455-7544

www.daathvoyagejournal.com *Vol.1, No.3, September, 2016*

An insight into princely states of India: New-historicist approach

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Abstract *The Princes* written by Manohar Malgonkarin 1963, is a widely-read novel which covers the entire spectrum of princely life in India in 19th century—its splendour, elaborate rituals of the palaces, the harems, the concubines, the shikar parties, the sex revelry and the tyranny and despotism of the rulers. The socio-historical milieu of 1930s and 1940s forms the backdrop of this novel, which was marked by fast changing political scenario. This paper intends to look into the history of India with a new-historicist approach. This paper describes how the princes had to fight a losing battle against the upsurge of democracy in India. The political scenario prevalent during that period has been well described by the novelist. In this novel, Malgonkar depicts the life of kings and princes which appears to be full of comforts and splendor but actually it hides numerous personal tragedies under the surface, of which the world knows very little. The novel takes an indepth view of the psyche of the Princes of India as they ruled in the 19th century and the first half of 20th century, how they underwent the dilemmas and pain of being deprived of their kingdoms post independence. The story unfolds through the eyes of Hiroji Maharaja's son, Abhay, the young prince who holds the title of a

Maharaja for only forty-nine days. The novel is in the mode of flash back where the narrator, Prince Abhay looks back at his own childhood days spent in the royal palace of Begwad state.

Malgonkar, being a historical writer, gives a truthful account of the life of the princes before, during and after the merging of the princely states into Indian Union. He creates an imaginary state, Begwad, which can be regarded as a symbol of all 265 princely states in India. Malgonkar makes a fine balance between history and fiction, as he neither presents the documentary-like history nor does he exaggerate the fiction in melodramatic tone. This paper unfolds these above mentioned aspects in detail.

Key words: New-historicist, princely-life, political scenario, history, fiction, Indian Union.

The novels of Malgonkar are perfect blend of the facts of the contemporary society and its conditions. Novel is not merely a piece of fiction, it contains the ideas and expressions of the novelist which actually are the result of the influence of his 'social-environment' or milieu.The novels of Malgonkar also reflects the socio-historical milieu of their times,

ThePrinces, written in 1963, is a widely-read novel of Malgonkar: it covers the entire spectrum of princely life in India in the 19th century—its splendour, the elaborate rituals of the palaces, the harems, the concubines, the shikar parties, the sex revelry and the tyranny and despotism of the Indian rulers. In this novel, Malgonkar depicts the life of kings and princes which outwardly appears to be full of comforts and splendor but actually it hides

numerous personal tragedies under the surface, of which the world knows very little. The novel takes an in-depth view of the psyche of the Princes of India as they ruled in the 19th century and the first half of 20th century, how they underwent the dilemmas and pain of being deprived of their kingdoms post independence. Thus this novel graphically depicts the milieu during that turbulent period of Indian history i.e. when the process of merging of princely states into Indian Union started and when it finally culminated in the signing of Instrument of Accession in 1940s. In the author's note, Malgonkar himself writes:

> The characters in this novel are intended to personify the thoughts and ideas of a somewhat tightly-knit social group: the one time ruling princes of India. Since over six hundred Princely states were integrated into the Indian Union within a matter of months, it is possible that certain incidents described herein may seem familiar enough for some readers to associate them with persons of their acquaintance… (Malgonkar *The Princes* 7).

The Princes is a bold, dramatic, confessional novel of princely passions and personal tragedy. It is a story of a royal father and son caught in a struggle for survival in India's new democracy. The story unfolds through the eyes of HirojiMaharaj's son, Abhay, the young prince who holds the title of a Maharaja for only forty-nine days. Amidst the medieval ritual of court life, tiger shoots, and ceremonial pageantry, Abhay tries to free himself from the domination of his father's overwhelming personality and the world of princely India which to his young and educated mind appears to be so remote from the twentieth century. That's why

a major portion of the novel is based on the opposite points of view held by the king Hiroji, the Maharaja of Begwad and Abhay, his son, the prince. But the irony is that ultimately Abhay himself cannot forsake his own heritage. He is caught in a conflict, arising due to change of political scenario. Malgonkar deftly depicts the life and psychology of the princes of the states that were about to be merged in the India Union, prior and post Independence.

The novel is in the mode of flash back where the narrator, Prince Abhay, looks back at his own childhood days spent in the royal palace of Begwad state. He remembers the elaborate protocols followed by the courtiers in deference to his father Hiroji Maharaj. Even he (Abhay) himself had to perform a 'mujra' when he greeted his father by bowing before him and touching the ground thrice. He also remembers how his playmates were specially transported inside the palace through royal carriages because being the son of a Prince he could not just go out and play with commoners. He also narrates vividly the cock-fight and lamb fights, the hunting parties arranged by his father which used to be elaborate, extravagant affairs.

Abhay remembers that his relationship with his father was very formal and very dry but he loved his mother, the Maharani a lot. She also loved her son and cared for him earnestly whenever he fell ill. But Abhay, in his childhood, also noticed the lack of emotional attachment between his parents. He also noticed how his father treated Kanakchand, an outcaste, very contemptuously but the Maharani, Abhay's mother, secretly paid

Kanakchand's education expenses. Being a prince, Abhay got his college education in avery good, westernized college named Chelmsford College, Agra.

Meantime, things were changing very fast on the political front. The British power was weakening and the Indian National Congress and other democratic organizations were getting more powerful. One such organization was Praja Mandal. Slowly, people like Kanakchand who rose to high position in society on the basis of their education, started challenging the authority of the ruler Hiroji Maharaj.

Meanwhile, Abhay's mother, the Queen also left Hiroji, as she could never establish an emotional bond with him, busy as Hiroji Maharaj used to be in his own world of pomp and show and illusion of grandeur. The shocking news of Queen's running away from the palace further traumatized the young prince Abhay. After completing his education he joined army, visiting his Begwad palace now and then. He also married Kamala, a girl selected by his father as appropriate bride for him. Abhay's married life was quite smooth.

Gradually, with the end of the World War II, the authority of the British was further weakened. Rulers like Hiroji had strongly supported the British in the hope that they would be able to retain their royalty only under the British protection, that's why they were opposed the nationalist movement but during the late 1940s the writing was on the wall: they could no more retain their titles. They were made to sign the 'Instrument of Accession' after which they could no more lay claim to either the title 'Maharaj or Prince' or to the wealth and luxury that was enjoyed by them earlier.

Finally, Abhay sees in retrospect that he was Maharaj of Begwad only for forty-nine days. After his father died (or he committed suicide) during his hunting of the 100th tiger, Prince Abhay was coronated the Maharajof Begwad state but all this was very ironical because he himself knew that he would be Maharaj only for forty-nine days.

Thus, through this novel, the novelist has captured all the aspects associated with the princely states, as also the contrast between what once was (the glory and grandeur of the princes during the 19th century and first half of 20th century) and what now is (their loss of power and glory after 1947)—as seen through the eyes of the narrator, i.e. Abhayraj.

The socio-historical milieu of 1930s and 1940s forms the backdrop of this novel, which was marked by fast changing political scenario. The novel describes how the princes had to fight a losing battle against the upsurge of democracy in India. In the words of Abhayraj:

> These days of my boyhood were also the days of Mr. Gandhi's nation wide agitation for self-rule, and nothing that the Politcal Department or my father between them could do succeeded in keeping the movement from seeping into our state.
>
> My father had banned all the nationalist papers such as the *Chronicle* of Bombay and the *Hindustan Times* of Delhi, and had promulgated ordinances in the state to keep with the Viceroy's ordiance legalizing preventive detention, and indeed had kept well ahead of the British parts of

> India in the race for repressive legislation. He bustled out energetically, trying to make 'examples' of people associated with the agitation. He dismissed a clerk in his octri department because he had seen the man's son wearing the white cap. And once he was so enraged by a group of people shouting "Inquilab-zindabad" which meant "long live the revolution," after his car had passed, that he had all of them rounded up and send to prison for three weeks. (Malgonkar *The Princes* 61).

The political scenario prevalent during that period has been well described by the novelist. With the leaving of the British from India, there was considerable rise in the nationalist parties all over the country. There emerged new politicians demanding the unification of all the princely states into the Indian Union. This was obviously not at all taken in good taste by the ruling Princes or Maharajas. They tried to suppress the political agitations and subdue this new political awareness among their subjects. Hiroji Maharaj's words bear testimony to this:

> The way the government has begun to suck up to the nationalists is absolutely shocking—the nationalists who have never co-operated and have openly called upon the British to quit. We, on the other hand, are their staunchest allies. Without us, the Princes, there would be no such thing as an Indian Empire. We have offered everything—all our resources—to the war effort. The Congress has only obstructed it. And yet the British would be prepared to

> sell us to the Congress. That is what makes me furious—that there should be no justice. (222)

Malgonkar, being a historical writer, gives a truthful account of the life of the princes before, during and after the merging of the princely states into Indian Union. He creates an imaginary state, Begwad, which can be regarded as a symbol of all 265 princely states in India. Malgonkar conveys this fact in the novel through Abhayraj:

> What was happening in Begwad was happening everywhere else in Padmakoshal and in most Indian states…….And then in the third week of December, came the shattering news that the Government had 'merged' a whole group of princely states known as the Chattisgarh and Orissa states into neighbouring provinces and had promised off their rulers. (287-288)

Malgonkar makes a fine balance between history and fiction, as he neither presents the documentary-like history nor does he exaggerate the fiction in melodramatic tone. The very first chapter of the novel titled, *"So long as the sun and the moon go round"*, is significant as this phrase has been used by the father of Abhayraj, HirojiMaharaj. When he was quite powerful, he used to proclaim, "There will always be a Begwad, and there will always be a Bedar ruling it—as long as the sun and moon go round!" This sentence showed off his sense of self-importance and grandeur, but the same words acquire an ironic ring when the authority and the power of these princely states were reduced to nothing in the late 1940s. But the irony is that Hiroji Maharaj kept on repeating the slogan even after losing authority

which shows that he just wanted to console himself against the political change. He wanted to remain in a grand illusion. But Abhay Raj, the son of Maharaja, is fully aware of this change in the air, and he neither regrets nor laments over this issue. He accepts the merger of the princely states as an inevitable event of Indian history. "We were the princes; no one mourned our passing. We were a jest of history, a tribe that had lived its day because it had been carefully preserved in the strong chemicals of British protection" (Malgonkar*The Princes* 11).

At this point, it is important to keep this fact of history in mind that at the time of Indian independence, India was divided mainly into two sets of territories, the first being the territories of "British India," which were under the direct control of the India Office in London and the Governor-General of India, and the second being the "Princely states," the territories over which the Crown had suzerainty, but which were under the control of their hereditary rulers. In addition, there were several colonial enclaves controlled by France and Portugal. The integration of these territories into Dominion of India, that had been created by the Indian Independence Act 1947 by the British parliament, was a declared objective of the Indian National Congress, which the Government of India pursued over the years 1947 to 1949. Through a combination of tactics, SardarVallabhbhai Patel and V. P. Menon in the months immediately preceding and following the independence convinced the rulers of almost all of the hundreds of princely states to accede to India. In a speech in January 1948, Vallabhbhai Patel said:

> As you are all aware, on the lapse of Paramountcy every Indian State became a separate independent entity and our first task of consolidating about 550 States was on the basis of accession to the Indian Dominion on three subjects. Barring Hyderabad and Junagadh, all the states which are contiguous to India acceded to Indian Dominion. Subsequently, Kashmir also came in... Some Rulers who were quick to read the writing on the wall, gave responsible government to their people; Cochin being the most illustrious example. In Travancore, there was a short struggle, but there, too, the Ruler soon recognised the aspiration of his people and agreed to introduce a constitution in which all powers would be transferred to the people and he would function as a constitutional Ruler. (qtd. in Bhargava 313)

Although this process successfully integrated the vast majority of princely states into India, it was not as successful in relation to a few states, notably the former princely state of Kashmir, whose Maharaja delayed signing the instrument of accession into India until the very last possible moment; the state of Hyderabad whose ruler wanted to remain independent and had to be militarily defeated; and the states of Tripura and Manipur whose rulers took two years to agree to accession only in late 1949.

Having secured their accession, Sardar Patel and VP Menon then proceeded, in a step-by-step process, to secure and extend the central government's authority over these states and transform their administrations until, by 1956, there was little difference between the

territories that had formerly been part of British India and those that had been part of princely states. Simultaneously, the Government of India, through a combination of diplomatic and military means, acquired control over the remaining colonial enclaves, such as Goa, which too were integrated into India.

The same scenario of history has been incorporated in the novel also which reflects the political milieu of our country during that period. The government drew up a formula for the acceptance of the princes which was called "The Instrument of Accession." Under it, the princes were required to hand over to the government control only defence, foreign affairs and communication within their states. There were categorical assurances that their other powers would not be interfered with. But there were several princes who never trusted in the policies of the government. They had no faith in the promises of the government. Hiroji's character represents such princes who always doubted the intentions of the nationalists. Abhayraj remembers the reactions of his father along with other princes, who were confused, dejected, tense, torn between personal pride and common sense, when that Instrument of Accession was introduced:

> The difficulty was that many of the princes would not accept the nationalists' assurances at face value—my father among them… "They are all clever lawyers. They can do anything they like under the guise of these concessions—take control of our states at any time, on any pretext. Just by making out they are protecting us from attack."

Daath Voyage
: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English ISSN 2455-7544
www.daathvoyagejournal.com *Vol.1, No.3, September, 2016*

> I laughed at my father's apprehensions, for they seemed so far-fetched. But he did not join in my mirth and time showed he was justified. Two years later, not a single princely state was left.
>
> The transfer of power was to take place on the 15th of August. Three weeks beforehand, the majority of the rulers had still not formally accepted the Instrument of Accession… (Malgonkar*The Princes* 262).

Hiroji till then was relaxed due to the assurance given by the British to the Princes regarding their sovereign rule in their respective territorie,s though within the imperialistic confines of the British. The princes were promised through the Instrument of Accession that the Union Government of India would not interfere with the internal administration of the states, once the princes surrendered their sovereignty over defense, commercial and foreign policy. However, the government acted against its assurance and broke its promises to the princes. In the novel also, it is shown that the Praja Mandal occupies the Administrative block. Hiroji, along with other many princes are helpless to do anything. With fast changing world scenario, things also changed in India. At the outbreak of World War II, Hiroji supports the British by voluntarily giving an amount of fifty thousand pounds for war effort programme. His son Abhayraj tries to understand his father's perspective:

> It is only fair to say that my father saw the war from an entirely different angle, distorted by his own values, conditioned by his own upbringing. He was certainly no friend of the British, and he felt no particular hatred for the

> Germans… "The war will be a long one, even longer than the Great War," he said. "And both sides will bleed each other to death. That will be the time for the princes to unite and rise: to drive away the British and put down the nationalists and set up our own rule in the country. It is only the princes who can do it. Gandhi and the Congress, the white-caps wallas, will never do it…it is we who will oust the British…" (146).

Hiroji is sure of some positive outcome of the events which would ultimately result in the retention of his Princely powers. But, the defeat of the British, emergence of Japan as the Super power, victory of Labour's Party in England and growth of Nationalist's movement in India, resulted in the transfer of power from the British in the hands of the India National Congress leading to democratic rule in the country. As the national struggle for independence was gaining momentum, people were gathering and fighting against the aristocratic foreign rule as well the tyrannical rule of the natives.Bipin Chandra in his book, *India's Struggle for Independence* elaborates how the growth of political consciousness among the common people gave rise to the formation of local bodies of the States' people:

> The INC and the AISPC and other organizations of the States' people clearly saw through this imperialistic manoeuvre and demanded that the States be represented not by the Princes' nominees but by elected representatives of the people. This led a great sense of urgency to the demand for responsible democratic government in the States. Second development was the assumption

> of office by Congress ministries in the majority of the provinces in British India…..The years 1938-39, in fact, stand out as years of a new awakening in the Indian States and were witness to a large number of movements demanding responsible government and other responsible government and other reforms. *Praja Mandals* mushroomed in many states that had earlier no such organizations…. (Chandra 358)

These changes brought a sense of insecurity and fear of dispossession and displacement among the rulers of princely states. That's why Malgonkar also shows how Hiroji, on Praja Mandal's (supported by Congress) demand to build a dam in the interest of the poor peasants in the state, provides arms to the Bhils of Bulwara region to act against them, and this results in large scale violence and bloodshed.

HirojiMaharaj hates the nationalists even more than he does the British. He hates the British because they had taken their kingdoms by treachery but he hates the nationalists even more because they were ready to grab from the princes whatever the British had spared. The simmering anger of Hirojiagainst the then nationalists and politicians is evident from hisconversation with his son Abhay:

> "What about the people?" I asked, "The nationalists are not going to accept it."
>
> "The nationalists!" my father said with a sneer, "Goondas led by traders and lawyers!" Abhay notices that for the nationalists his father had nothing but

> contempt because he says, "I don't think we need bother hurting the feelings of the agitators. As far as I'm concerned, they just don't exist." The sneer was even more pronounced. (Malgonkar, *The Princes* 90).

Though rulers like Hiroji tried their best to retain their princely powers in India but they failed miserably. The novel also shows the disintegration of the Princely states. It shows how Delhi refuses to recognize the title and state of Begwad and takes over the political and administrative power. Hiroji Maharaj gets bewildered at his defeat i.e. loss of power over his state people. He cannot tolerate this insult and goes off in jungle to kill his 100th tiger but gets killed by tiger. Perhaps Hiroji commits suicide under the pretext of hunting his 100th tiger.

How Malgonkar has depicted the political upheavals in the novel has been highlighted by O. P. Bhatnagar in his book *Indian Political Novel in English*:

> *The Princes* by Manohar Malgonakr is politically more downright, copious and explorative in as much as it deals with the theorotics of a state as a nation within a nation with great imaginative astuteness. The roots of the problem stretch from the genesis of the states in the pre-British era to their covert protection in the British rule and the viability of their existence in the post-British India. (Bhatnagar 126)

The way in which Malgonkar describes the state of Begwad through the eyes of Prince Abhayraj recreates the milieu of that period. As it was, most of the princely states

lived in their own ivory towers, cut off from the rest of the world. As Abhayraj rightly observes that for his father the kingdom of Berwad was a world in its own:

> Begwad, lost in the hills and forests of Padamkoshal, had always been something like the Tibet of twenty years ago, totally walled off. It was only in the last years of the nineteenth century, after the railway and telegraph lines had penetrated into Padamkoshal, that the outside world began to break into in segregation. But the tenets of Victorian morality, the discipline of western social values, indeed the advent of the industrial age, were stoutly resisted in the states as British impositions, the tightening bonds of slavery. It was only in my father's childhood, when the telephone and motor cars came, that Begwad became fully exposed to the influx of twentieth century manners and morals and was caught up in the race for economic development. (Malgonkar,*The Princes*55)

In many ways Abhay has been shown as a contrast to his father: Abhay is young, educated with liberal thoughts and full of fresh ideas of reforms for Begwad. On the other hand, Maharaj Hiroji has been presented as a passionate, tyrannical ruler, belonging to the old school of princes; he is arrogant and pompous. Abhay recollects his father's imposing personality:

> He stood tall and powerful and handsome in his robe of rose and pea green brocade and the purple silverwork slippers and the purple three cornered pagri

> of the Bedars. Even the costume of long ago and the vulgar chains of pearls and diamonds did not make him look as though he were dressed up for a part in a play. He was one of the lucky ones like Jaipur and Bikanir who carried the trappings of their order with a natural ease: the pigeon blood ruby cluster on his pagri, the collar of rows of outsize pearls, the dark blue K.C.I.E. sash with the flamboyant star that came with it, the enormous chain of twisted gold around his left ankle. (Malgonkar, *The Princes* 30).

In order to establish the glory of his dynasty, Hiroji hires Dr. Niyogi, a historian, to write the history of 'Bedars' in such a way so as to make them appear a race of heroes, noble, brave and patriotic whereas the fact is that the 'Bedars'had ancestors from a casteless, professional highway community called 'Bedars'. Further, Hiroji also bribes a panel of Hindu priests to earn the right to wear janwa (the sacred thread of the high caste Hindus) and to offer prayers in the temples as the equal of caste Hindus. Hiroji Maharaj leads the life of a traditional prince, abiding by rituals and customs. Abhayraj describes a typical scene of elaborate puja which his father performed before Goddess Amba:

> I went on looking at him as though spellbound, at my father who sat next to me and yet was somewhat far away, his palms held out rigidly to receive the blessings of Ambica. The head priest with his luminous, shaven head went on mumbling prayers in a soothing singsong voice, pouring spoonfuls of water over the flowers, heaped at the feet of the goddess, lighting more and more

> joss-sticks and camphor cakes and offering her meat and wine and music and perfume all in make belief symbols and beseeching her protection in the coming campaign. (29)

The typical extravagance and grandeur of the Princes is shown in the character of Hiroji also who maintains many concubines, stages ram-fights, organizes lavish safaris for his European guests, offers extravagant parties to the visiting political department officers, presents expensive gifts to his guests, makes a pompous display of his wealth during festivals like Dussehra, Christmas and also on occasions like weddings and birthdays. A graphic picture of Dussehra celebration has been created in the novel in the following words:

> As in all Maratha states, the Dassara was our most important festival. It was on Dassaraday which comes at the end of the rains and when the harvest has been brought in, that our ancestors used to set out on their campaigns. Most of the states still kept up a pretence that Dassara was somehow a warlike occasion that we were celebrating it because we were setting out for the wars.
>
> That same evening my father and I went out in procession to the old palace in the city, riding on our state elephants. We wore jewels with our eighteenth century costumes and carried swords. The courtiers too were in costume and even the elephants were painted and caparisoned with silver bells round their necks. The procession went from the new palace to the old. In the courtyard before the old palace was the ceremony of distributing 'gold' to the populance;

> only, instead of gold coins, we gave away leaves of the apta trees. After that we offered prayers in the family prayer room in the old palace… (28).

Along with the description of the lavish life style of the princes during that period, Malgonakaralso realistically describes the minute details of the royal life. One such example is the description of Patalpat palace, its concealed treasuries underground, tiger rug room etc. Through Abhayraj we learn that one of the important parts of the palace is the tiger rug room, where the action of the novel begins and where the story of the novel ends too. The rug which is made up of fifty-eight tigers' skin sewn together, has been graphically described in the novel. All the tigers were killed by Hiroji Maharaj himself. It was a matter of great pride for the Maharaja to display his valour through his rug. The palace shows the lavish lifestyle of the life of the kings:

> It was early in the evening and he had just returned from his audience chamber. He was drinking Scotch and soda, sitting cross-legged and barefoot on the white mattress and leaning against the bolster in the room with the tiger rug. He wore his purple velvet cap which never looked out of place or theatrical on him. Fifty–eight tiger skins had been sewn together to make the rug which covered the room from wall to wall: all of them had been killed by my father. (Malgonkar 4)

The palace was full of furniture that had its own architectural value. The glimpse of royal dining table in the palace of Maharaj shows the majesty of the palace:

> On the long damask covered dining table on a salver the size of a cartwheel was the main dish of the evening a great mound of saffron rice with all the spices the palace cooks had been able to conjure and with a whole roast sheep on top, even as I glanced at it, my mind reeled with the thought that father had had my cannonball cooked for the Dassara banquet and only then did I appreciate e the full meaning of his whispered warning at the top of the stairs. (32).

The life of women in the palace has been described in full splendor. Abhay narrates how his mother used to live in the palace:

> My mother lived alone with her dignity, next to the shrine of the satis in a part of the palace which my father rarely, if ever, visited. She lived in the strictest purdah surrounded by a horde of women servants and a few ladies in waiting. Even the windows of her apartment were screened by heavy bamboo curtains. When she went for a drive or for her daily visit the temple in the city, she went in the sky blue Daimler with the window made of smoked glass, unseen by anyone with her tiny purple and yellow flag fluttering from, the bonnet. (60).

It is a fact of history that many Indian princes and aristocrats served in the British army (as others in local guard or police forces), often rising to the high official ranks; some even served while on the throne. Many of these were appointed as ADC etc., either to the ruling prince of their own house (in the case of relatives of such rulers) or indeed to the

British King-Emperor. Many also saw action, both on the subcontinent and on other fronts, during both World Wars. In the palace of Hiroji, there is reference of an A.D.C who performs his duty.

> The A.D.C. on duty, captain Haibat Ram, came in and switched on the lights , and my father jumped to his feet and folded his hands in a reverent namaskar to the chandelier overhead and myself and the A.D.C in our in our turn did a mujra to my father by bowing low and touching our foreheads with our right hands three times. The room was still dim though, for the chandelier had many of the bulbs missing and the A.D.C. with a curt nod because he wished to continue the discussion we had been having before. We were talking about the new constitution which my father proposed to introduce in our state. (12)

The historical milieu is again brought alive by Malgonkar when he refers to the customs of honorary titles adopted by the Indian rulers. The Indian rulers bore various titles—including Chhatrapati or Badshah ("emperor"), Maharaja or Raja ("king"), Nawab ("governor"), Thakur or Thakore, Nizam, Wāli, Inamdar, Saranjamdar and many others. Whatever the literal meaning and traditional prestige of the ruler's actual title, the British government translated them all as "prince," in order to avoid the implication that the native rulers could be "kings" with status equal to that of the British monarch. More prestigious Hindu rulers (mostly existing before the Mughal Empire, or having split from such old states) often used the title "Raja," or a variant such as "Rana," "Rao," "Rawat" or Rawal. Also in this

'class' were several Thakur sahibs and a few particular titles, such as Sar Desai, Raja Inamdar or Saranjamdar. The ruler of Begwad Hiroji is addressed as Hiroji Maharaj.

The most prestigious Hindu rulers usually had the prefix "maha" ("great", compare for example Grand duke) in their titles, as in Maharaja, Maharana, Maharao, etc. The states of Travancore and Cochin had queens regnant styled Maharani, generally the female forms applied only to sisters, spouses and widows, who could however act as regents.

Other protocols regarding giving gun-salute to these Princes have been incorporated in the present novel. As per the records of history, the gun salute system was used to set unambiguously the precedence of the major rulers in the area in which the British East India Company was active, or generally of the states and their dynasties. Princely rulers were entitled to be saluted by the firing of an odd number of guns between three and 21, with a greater number of guns indicating greater prestige. (There were many minor rulers who were not entitled to any gun salutes, and as a rule the majority of gun-salute princes had at least nine, with numbers below that usually the prerogative of Arab coastal Sheikhs also under British protection.) Generally, the number of guns remained the same for all successive rulers of a particular state, but individual princes were sometimes granted additional guns on a personal basis. Furthermore, rulers were sometimes granted additional gun salutes within their own territories only, constituting a semi-promotion.

While the states of all these rulers (about 120) were known as salute states, there were far more so-called non-salute states of lower prestige, and even more princes (in the broadest

sense of the term) not even acknowledged as such. On the other hand, the dynasties of certain defunct states were allowed to keep their princely status—they were known as Political Pensioners. There were certain estates of British India which were rendered as Political Saranjams had equal princely status. Though none of these princes were awarded gun salutes, princely titles in this category were recognised as among certain vassals of salute states, and were not even in direct relation with the paramount power. In the present novel, the state of Begwad has been shown as 17-gun salute state. Its ruler Hiroji Mahharaj is proud of this status but Abhay understands the vanity of all such titles. He says:

> Begwad was not the one of the major Indian state, it was an important one; carrying high prestige, honours, than its men or population or revenues may have warranted. Its rulers had a 17 gun salute and the hereditary title of Maharaja and both my father and grandfather had been knighted by the British as soon as they had ascended the gaddi and also made honorary colonels of the Awera Rifles, whose men were recruited from Padmakoshal…we had neither education nor industry, no roads to speak of and only a single track railway line running from east to west. Ours was one of the least populated and least developed states. ..(Malgonkar, *The Princes* 110).

Abhay recounts how the people used to remember the good old days when the Maharaja ruled over the country. They recall fondly that they did not have to wait long for getting justice, justice was promptly delivered. There were large number of holidays, there

was a lot of pomp and pageantry, frequent ceremonials, a lot of freedom to drink and dance and no one had to pay any income tax. "In the days of Hiroji Maharaj" they will tell you in recalling the days of my father's rule "we used to get wheat at sixteen seers to the rupee." (112).

The people considered Hiroji Maharaj's dada as a real food giver, the ann-data. This shows that the common men were in awe of their rulers. But the other side of the picture is that most of the rulers led a life of pomp and show. Hiroji Maharaj spends extravagantly on pomp and show, without thought or consideration for the abject poverty which besets his state. He is very fond of tiger-shooting and in the traditional manner arranges all the paraphernalia which is required to shoot the tiger. He invites British officials to join him in the hunt and disposes of 'the bagged tigers' generously among his guests.

According to the historians of this period, the English were keenly aware that as royal beasts and masters of the jungle, tigers had been closely associated historically with Indian rulers. They emulated various Mughal emperors for whom tiger hunting was an element of kingship. But more than emulation, tiger hunting was the symbol in the construction of British imperial and masculine identities during the 19th century. The British had great pretensions to becoming successors to the Mughals during the19th century. This aspect ofsocial milieu is reflected in the present novel also. Hunting as a favourite sport of the Princes, Maharajas and the British as well has been widely described in the novel. Hunting expeditions acted as a binding force between the Indian Maharajas and the British. Hunting

various wild animals, especially tiger was a matter of pride for the Indians as well as the British. It provided them opportunity to show their valour. Maharaja Hiroji is a very keen and expert hunter. His record of hunting tigers has been reached up to almost 100th. He is very popular among the British for his arrangements of hunting. Abhayraj recalls his father's popularity and appreciation he got from the British:

> "The Maharaja of Bedar is the only man in India who can guarantee a tiger." His Excellency had said to one of his dinner guests. "I mean really guarantee."
>
> And that casual remark of the Viceroy had caused a distinct stir among the princes; the competition for the Viceregal approbation was always fierce, and His Excellency's singling out my father like that must have caused a lot of heartburn.
>
> But it was quite true about the tigers; we certainly seemed to specialize in them. My father had always taken a quite unreasonable pride in his ability to provide tigers for his guests, and his organization, or what even his most casual visitors had learnt to call his "bandobast" or just "bando", was quite absurdly elaborate. He had reduced the business of finding tigers and getting them within shooting range of his guests to an almost infallible science. (Malgonkar, *The Princes* 109)

In order to encourage the Indian hunters, the British used to felicitate them by organizing big events on some special days.

Apart from hunting, Hiroji Maharaj has a penchant for women also. Once he spends one thousand and five hundred pounds sterling of his seventy thousand pounds annual income to purchase a South Indian Nautch girl. This eccentric and showy attitude of the Maharaj annoys his wife very much. The Maharani nurses resentment against her husband for this callous and ruthless behavior as a husband and as a Maharaja. At last she rebels and takes Abdullah Jan, the palace officer, as her lover and leaves Begwad. Afterwards she marries him in Pakistan. Abhay is traumatized at such behavior of both his parents.

Such dissolute life style of the Maharaja antagonized the nationalists further and they reacted against it through newspaper. They published articles and cartoons describing the feudalistic approach of Princes still prevalent in the country. Despite the ban imposed by Hiroji Maharaj on those papers, they were circulated all over. Abhay remembers how he once discovered a newspaper making a derogatory remark on his father and his lifestyle:

> For a time, my father's repressive measures were virulently attacked by the leftist papers, and one day the *Awaz*came attacked by the leading article entitled "Depravity in Begwad." I discovered one in my satchel at school, and I still remember the hot flush of shame and anger that came over me when I saw it and the cartoon accompanying it. The cartoon showed my father with a dog collar around his neck. On the table before him was a bottle of whisky. One of his arms was around a bosomy, semi-naked woman. The other hand hugged the chain attached to the dog collar. The caption said:

"LONG LIVE SLAVERY!" (61).

Education constitutes an important dimension of the social milieu of any society. In *The Princes* also, the social milieu, specially the elaborate arrangements made for all round training of the young princes has been reflected through the characters of Abhayraj. He describes in detail how his education was meant to shape him into an all rounder. Abhay remembers that by the age of eight or nine, he was always doing some kind of lessons or others as ordered by his father. His father had laid down a rigid time-table for Abhay's upbringing, providing him with riding lessons, cricket lessons, boxing lessons, music lessons and even lessons in wielding a sword. He narrates his early childhood days of education:

> Every morning the two horsed carriage would be sent to collect my two companions and by the time I had finished breakfast they would be waiting for me in the verandah. At five we would all drive to the school in the city in the same creaking two horsed carriage. In the afternoon after school was over, they would both come back to the palace with mean we all had tea together after that we would play games, mainly hockey or football until Pandit Sharma came to teach me Hindi and Sanskrit and the scriptures. At six o'clock came Mr. Fredrick Moreton , my English tutor and I spent the rest of the evening in his company.
>
> In addition to English and History and Geography, Mr. Moreton was supposed to teach me English customs and manners how to use the correct

> knives and forks and wear western style clothes like a gentleman, what to do with a hat and how to do with a hat, and how to tie a neck–tie, had not been properly brought up. Most evening we went for a ride in one of the palaces' cars and often we used to sit and listen to western music on the wireless. (20)

And yet this school of the princes was ridden with snobbery, not the snobbery of precedence of wealth, but the snobbery of proficiency in sports. "Whether your father was a nineteen gunner or held the G.C.S.I mattered far less than whether you played cricket for the school eleven," says Abhay. (Malgonkar,*The Princes* 77).

After completing his education, Abhay joins Army and fights for the British. He undergoes rigorous army training. His words reflect the exact milieu of India during the late thirties:

> During the summer of nineteen thirty nine, I had improved my backhand considerably, practicing with Gonsalves whenever I got the chance, and I was all ready for the tournament at Mussorie. After that I was going to Travancore for administrative training under the Dewan, Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer. My father had been very pleased…from now on, my future had a regulated simplicity about it. I knew that after finishing my training I would be sent on an instructional tour of India, accompanied by atleast two guardians taking in all the places of pilgrimage, and then a tour of Europe in the company of Mr. Morten. After that there was nothing to look forward to except to spend my

> time playing games and riding and hunting until, barring accidents, I became the Maharaja of Begwad. (124).

Abhay recollects his childhood days when he used to play with rams and lambs in his palace. All the servants used to call him 'Bal-raje'. When Abhay once asked a servant about the name of the lamb brought in the palace, he relpied: "It has no name, Bal-raje", the servant told me. Abhay remembers his games with the ram:

> All the place servants called me Bal-raje in those days….Our day used to begin by his (ram) running up to me whenever he heard my voice and demanding carrots and sugar cubes and nuzzling my pockets for them. After finishing whatever tidbit I had brought him, he would begin his butting. I would keep pushing him back with both hands and he would come charging back, his head down, asking for more. (25)

The favourite sport of the princes used to be the 'ram-fights'. There is a vivid description of such ram fights in this novel also. Though, when Abhay grows up, he realizes the cruelty of this sport. He says:

> A ram fight must be one of the cruellest sports in the world. They always do their best to match the rams evenly but the more evenly matched they are the more heartless the contest. Before each about, the opposing rams are taken round and exhibited to the spectators so that bets can be placed. The rams are then taken by their handlers into the roped of arena and made to stand facing

> each other at a distance of twenty feet. Then the whistle blows and they are released….The betting was not heavy on Cannonball, although my father had put a hundred rupees on him to win. His opponent was a grey and black Jaisalmir ram with twisted, goat like horns called Sandogama….
>
> "What are you doing? Bewakoofs! Ulloos!" my father's voice thundered, "Let the fight goon." (27)

Besides these, riding was one of Abhay's, favourite sports. It was also his pastime and diversion which was carried out under the coaching of Hamidulla, a passionate exponent of the forward seat. Abhayraj gives a vivid description of his coach:

> I can still recall his trim figure, dressed in soft riding boots, breeches , a tattered tweed jacket with patches on the elbows and a polo helmet. He would be carrying a leather crop which he never used, leaning languidly against the paddock rail, shouting words of encouragement at the horse or myself and giving the curt orders: "Fikra-fight! Fikra-fight!" (36)

Abhayraj adds a touch of humour when he clarifies that the phrase, "Fikra-fight! Fikra-fight!" had nothing to do with the fighting, it was Hamidulla's way of saying "figure of eight."

Until Abhay was eleven years old, he had no friends he could think of. He could not have the friends from the common people. His father chose only Charuduttas his companion.

Charudutta was Hirioji Maharaj's son by a concubine. Abhay remembers his relations with his half-brother, Charudutta:

> It was only when I was much older that I began to understand why Charudutt used to hate me as much as he seemed to, if only his mother had been legally married to my father, he would have been the Yuwaraj. But although he was my father's first born son, he could never aspire to his gadi merely because his mother happened to be a concubine…. (37)

Thus, in *The Princes* Malgonkar successfully recreates the socio-historical milieu of those decades of Indian history and society when the Princes and Kings were deprived of their pomp and grandeur after independence; when they were made to sign the Instrument of Accession. At the same time, the readers are provided a glimpse of the extravagant, luxurious life style of the princes before independence. Along with this, many other contours of socio-historical milieu such as sati pratha, polygamy, education system, army training, the caste system, the relationship between the princes and their subjects, the shikar parties, the festivals, the Dussehra procession etc.—all have been described so graphically that the readers are transported to that particular place and time in Indian history.

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: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English ISSN 2455-7544

www.daathvoyagejournal.com *Vol.1, No.3, September, 2016*

Sufistic Thought in Modern Urdu Poetry from India and Pakistan with special reference to Ibn-e-Insha

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Abstract: This paper will look into the possibilities of defying the apparent dichotomy, of primeval and modern, in the title itself. India and Pakistan have a common history, being part of the same chunk of land until their Partition. Sufism has a significant role to play in the shared heritage of this land. The nature of their culture today, a liberal, multicultural outlook, owes a lot to Sufistic thought. As history tells us, the initiates were possibly academicians, a part of the troop of invaders from Central Asia. Sufism ran parallel to institutions like administration and various religious factions. It led to an amalgamation and accommodation of people across sections into the larger fabric of society. This paper intends to treat Sufism more as the humane dimension of a composite religion along with the mystical. It came forward as a refuge to the underprivileged and the deprived, and as a tool for asserting equity and resistance, in a divided brahmanical society. Modernism as a movement in literature is also a response to the human propensity for bestiality and subjection of others. Both stand against the divisive strain in society and towards a greater achievement. An analysis tracing

sufistic thought as showcased in the poems of Ibn-e-Insha will be done for reading the elements of divinity, equanimity and anti-establishment, along with other sufistic tenets.

Key words: Sufism, Modern Urdu poetry, Ibn-e-Insha, composite culture

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Time present and time past

> Are both perhaps present in time future
>
> And time future contained in time past.[i]

Once again we vacillate between times today; times that have given us a culture, a civilization; times that range from primeval to modern. We are not to draw compartments; rather the endeavour is to try to seek a compromise and reconciliation between times and their worlds. Concepts that constitute the thrust of this engagement are *Sufistic thought, India-Hyphen-Pakistan, Urdu and Poetry.* Looking at these closely tells us that they are quite intricately woven into each other and more so indispensable to the existence of each. It is also interesting to see how in the process of the making of one, the other is breathed life into. To an understanding of the shared history and culture of a hyphenated India-Pakistan, Sufism is an intrinsic part. We might as well acknowledge the fact that Urdu as a language and a culture on its own is a significant point in civilizational transactions of this land. In the process of the ossification of sufistic thought, the vernacular gains authority over the Perso-Arabic tradition. Thereby the development of Urdu takes place. The attempt here will be to consider these relations in order to posit an analysis tracing sufistic thought in Modern Urdu poetry from this 'hyphenated' chunk of land.

Looking for the answer is not easy unless one understands what sufistic thought is and how it is related to poetry. Sufism once was a movement but it is now a tradition of thought. It was in the 12^{th}-13^{th} century that history records this tradition coming into our part of the land. The Sufis were part of the troop of invaders from Central Asia and perhaps academicians. It soon takes a position parallel to institutions, administrative and religious, carving its own all-encompassing niche. In no capacity one can say that it was the binary of religion here. But it

wouldn't be entirely wrong to say that it did stand looking in the face of orthodox prescriptive religion. We have examples of persecution and execution of Sufis by the state and rulers, like Hallaj by the Caliph of Baghdad and Sarmad by Mughal king, Aurangzeb. A poet advices,

Zenhaar magui bar sare jam'
Gar 'aasheqe saadeqi to aasraar
Didi keh beh sokre 'eshq ramzi
Hallaaj begoft o raft bar daar

Beware, don't utter a secret in public,
If you are a sincere lover of secrets.
You saw that in the drunkenness of love
Hallaj uttered a secret and went to the gallows[ii]

Yet Sufism gained a standing from its accommodative and all-embracing nature. It soon became a religion of the outcastes, the underprivileged and the destitute. A new face of faith emerged that of a composite and universal nature. The human element was not forgotten. It is rooted in orthodox Islamic faith, abiding by many of its tenets and obligations. But it was soon to outgrow its roots. It leads us to question the globally accepted position of Sufism or *tasawwuf* as Islamic Mysticism. One could see stark contrast in the way initiates would vary in their adhering to or defying Islamic laws and obligation. One can see Sufism as a mid-way also between a fashionable secularism and institutionalized religion. Both are positions that

neither let you question nor answer, 'why?'. You hush in one and avoid in the other. But sufistic thought is distinct from both religious and secular thought. It is a faith in its own capacity, a human mid-way. It is a mystical and esoteric face of faith but a lot more beyond it.

So far we have seen what Sufism is not with respect to tradition. But Sufism has more of thought than tradition. Each Sufi was distinctive. One might even look at Sufism as a personal faith. We can also consider the numerous Sufi orders or cults that never contested each other. If he was a Sufi, his concern was deliverance in the greater realm and not self-aggrandisement of any sort, not even reward or punishment. It somewhat served the need of the civilization peopled by unthought-of diversity in the proliferation of sufistic orders. It was more about the journey towards the 'One' that shaped their faith and our thought. It is a way of finding the essence of the universe being a creation of god, or his appendage. It seeks god both as reflected in each of his creations and also in space. The premises of its thought go even further. The thought, the philosophy, the awareness comes from the Sufi's experience and sensibility. The quest is for an unseen divine light but the path is to follow god's guidance towards him and towards their own self. It is difficult to frame concrete postulates of sufistic thought other than this that it seeks what orthodox religion denied; a direct communication leading to communion with god, in ways innumerable and mostly disapproved by the law-makers. It strives for truth, reality and knowledge surpassing the scriptures, a *marefat*[iii]. Even if the scriptures give the truth, the journey toward this realization

quenches the soul. It is not about confronting the law-makers but about the love of the law-giver, if we believe he has given any.

The Sufi questions because he wants to feel in himself what it would be to achieve a communion, particularly in absence of all shackles. Sufism renders god attainable, an actuality. It believes in the word that we are made in god's likeness and carry his essence in our souls, and the soul is unbound; god has written equally in all his creations and with this light glows the being that acknowledges it. A Sufi is not anyone from the heavens above. Everyday life and reality add to his wisdom. There is something to be learnt in all that exists- truth and beauty coexist. The only difference lies in the ability to see behind the veil. A Sufi is a seer. Here we see the shadow of a poet emerging. One does use these attributes also for a poet; these are things that define a poet, something that S.T. Coleridge refers to when he talks about secondary imagination in his seminal work, *Biographia Literaria* (1817). It is a poet's genius by which he is able to add sublimity to mundane sensory reality in his artefact. We have come to a place where the difference between a Sufi and a poet diminishes. One wouldn't know even if they swapped places. Without poetry and music- *khyal, fikr, zikr, sama*[iv] - it is difficult to imagine a Sufi's being. These are steps that escalate them towards the ultimate goal, a communion with god. Self-denial is a very important part of this faith, but it is done in different ways, as individual as a Sufi himself. It is a means of self-expression, 'ecstasy, to annihilation in God' (Mujeeb 61).

Aesthetics in all its purity has a major role to play in capturing thought essential to human civilization. So, we have the great Sufis who were all poets and/or musicians, as Amir Khusrau; great poets hailed as Sufis, i.e. Sufi poets, like Rumi, Hafez, Saadi; also poets who have a sufistic inclination of thought, like Quli Qutb Shah, Wali Dakkani, Siraj Aurangabadi, Mirza Mazhar Jan-e-Janan, Dard, Aatish, Ghalib, Asghar Gondwi, Amjad Hyderabadi and even modern day poets like Akhtarul Imaan, Ibn-e-Insha (who I'll also deal in detail ahead), Shafique Fatma Shera , Yousuf Zafar, Khalilur Rahman Azmi , Wazir Agha , Nasir Kazmi , Ahmad Mushtaq, Habeeb Jalib , Fehmida Riaz , Zahida Zaidi. In developing this line of thought in verse, we see a movement from the language of the scriptures and elites, Persian and Arabic, to Hindavi and Urdu, the vernaculars. A simultaneous question arises as to why verse? We do acknowledge that when dealing with sublime, transcendental ideas, language seems insufficient in containing these ideas. But over the ages, we have seen that various forms of art have been able to do this quite satisfactorily. The genre of poetry in particular, owing to the brevity and inherent conciseness of form, has conveyed ideas hitherto unexpressed. This also answers why a Sufi would consciously take to poetry and its composition into music which orthodox Islam condemns. What is alluring about poetry is the quality of the genre with which it communicates the most complex of thoughts with such ease.

When we talk about poetry in Urdu, the genre is further enriched. There is innate thought and musicality in this language and undeniably so. It wouldn't be very difficult to mark this

difference if we read out aloud John Donne, for instance, together with, say, Mirza Ghalib. It is certainly so in the context of South East Asia. The thrust of this civilization has been its spirituality, more than anything else. This location is specifically significant when we are dealing with arts expressing sufistic thought. Looking at the artefacts which come from the hyphenated land mass of India-Pakistan, they are instilled with its spirituality. Its spiritual journey and legacy is woven into the works of all of them who I named. I must say, *Four Quartets*[v] hovers over this engagement as does history in their works.

We are finally led to our present, modern times. One will definitely be faced with a difficulty as to how to bridge a gap, centuries long? What makes modern juxtapose with sufistic thought? We have come to realise how topical Sufism is. Even in life and thought in the 21st century, it proves relevant enough that we go back over and over again to it just to find answers to 'overwhelming questions'. And the thought we are dealing with is also modern in being a break away from institutions. It indeed was anti-establishment in many instances. To refer to a representative modern Urdu poet in this consideration who stands out is Ibn-e-Insha. There prevails a 'Sufi streak' in his life and works. In a lifetime of a little over 50 years (1927-78), one rarely comes across such prolificacy and completeness. Sher Mohammad Khan was born in undivided India but later belonged to the territorial unit, Pakistan. It is amazing that one can hardly trace any such divisions in his sensibility. He sees, observes but is never obliged to partake in the 'narrow domestic walls'. The world doesn't appeal to him as such- he is a '*jogi'* for whom *'sab maaya hai'* (Insha 104-6). Throughout his

works-ghazals, poems, travelogues, satirical and humorous pieces- one sees a wandering soul, for a clouded avatar of something, but with a grin.

In the poem 'Maazi ke Kharaabe ki' (98-100), Insha brings the whole world to life- past, present, future and the divine.

Maazi ke kharaabe ki

Mehraabe-shikasta par

Ik naam jo kanda hai

Kya naam hai, kiska hai?

Na saal na sin ismein

Na raat na din ismein

Tasveer nahin koi

Tahreer nahin koi

Na teer ka naqsha hai

Na paan ka patta hai

Ahwaal musaafir ka

Pinhaan hai na paida hai

Kya jaaniye kab koi

Kis des se aaya ho

Apnon se who ghamdeeda

Wahshat mein paraya ho

Kis haal mein rahta ho

Kya bhes banaya ho

Baadal ho ki bijli ho

Wah dhoop ki saaya ho

Jogi ho ki banjaara

Raja ho ki riaaya ho

Jis roz se dil usne

Duniya se uthaya ho

Kis-kis se lagaya ho

Aur dard hi paaya ho

Maazi ke kharaabe ki

Mehraabe-shikasta par

Is naqsh se kya matlab?

Is harf ke kya maani?

Yah naam mita daalo

Benaam bana daalo

Haan ajnabi Insha ko

Aawara wa ruswa ko

There ultimately is a vision of the One. The form is not clear. He underlines a twilight existence of the apprehended form of the One. He shows signs of presence but Insha seeks

the formless One. In his face, the rest of the world becomes a nameless entity. In this effacing there will be light, he suggests as etching a form was pointless and unyielding.

Insha frequently evokes the trope of a '*musafir', 'jogi'* and a transient world. '*Ye sarai hai, yahan kiska thhikana logo*/ *Yaan to aate hain musafir, so chale jaate hain*' ('Ye Sarai Hai'; 47). He is always conscious of the evanescence of life in the physical world. The world hurts him and so does his own ignorance. God as a supreme is present, Insha acknowledges this but is grieved that '*Tera daaman door nahin tha, haath hameen phaila na sake*' ('Sabko Dil Ke'; 35). This grief makes him conclude elsewhere that it is time to unveil the Truth- '*Insha ji utho ab kooch karo, is shahar mein jee ka lagaana kya*/ *Wahshi ko sukoon se kya matlab, jogi ka nagar mein thhikana kya* ('Insha ji Utho Ab'; 20) The Truth now is dream-like, such beauty and such light. The world laughs at him, rejects him. He just smirks back at them because of the *delight* he has found in his enlightenment.

'Ik bheekh ke dono kaase hain, ik pyaas ke dono pyaase hain' ('Dil Hijr ke Dard se'; 27) - this further reinforces how Insha feels about a union. They seem to be equal partners in a mutual relationship. One is incomplete without the other- *I am the farm, you are the clouds, I am the river, you, my ocean* (ibid; my translation). The creator and his creation are in oneness and that is the ultimate truth and epiphany for Insha. Both are inseparable in their union. 'Ik Patta, Ik Jogi' (88-89) takes the line further. Here Insha talks entirely about a leaf, weak and little, that chances to fall in the lap of a *jogi.* They immediately identify with each other, and in their mutual love. Hitherto physically separate, they now are united in a forsaken land.

Both tremble, wanting in breaths in their ultimate unison. Insha cannot but deny that his Beloved, sometimes like the moon in its full bloom, provides for all that is there- when he is going away from him, even then he reaches back to him, every time. Everything belongs to him, even his lyrics that only chant him and praise him- '*Jungle tere, parbat tere, basti teri, sahra tera . . . Aashiq tera, ruswa tera, shair tera, Insha tera* ('Kal Chaudahveen ki Raat Thi'; 18)

Sometimes Insha also appears to be a little desperate and uneasy with the Beloved's tantrums and trials- '*Aur kisi ke ab kya honge, chhod hamein bhatkaana ho'* ('Insha ji Hai Naam Inheen ka', 82). But the thread that might hold the ends together is there. The One resides everywhere, in all- '*Ek hi soorat, ek hi chehra, basti, parbat, jungle, painth'* (ibid)- Insha truly carries forth the essence of existence and divinity, and of Sufism, how humanity preserves in each of its face the beauty of its creator; how every particle created has equal claim to its creator. Insha is all for this universal brotherhood and solidarity of the human race. He echoes Saadi in one of his satirical poems, 'Yah Bachcha Kiska Bachcha Hai*'* (115-119). Saadi says-

Ba yak rind yak aazayee Adam beeni

Gauharand yak ze aafreenash dark eh

Rozgar aaward dard-e-azwi –ehu

Qarar namanad ra azwha deegar

Ghami bi deegarah mehnat kaztu

Aadami nenand namat ke nashayed (‘Bani Adam’; Shirazi)

Humans (children of Adam) are inherent parts (limbs) of one body

And are from the same valuable essence (gem) in their creation

When the conditions of the time hurt one of these parts

Other parts will be disturbed

If you are indifferent about the misery of others

It may not be appropriate to call you a human being (transliteration mine)

And here is how Insha renders a similar but his own ideal of equanimity and a universal brotherhood:

Ham jis Adam ke bête hain

Yah is Adam ka beta hai

Wah Adam ek hi Adam hai

Wah gora hai ya kaala hai…

Is jag mein sab kuch rab ka hai

Jo rab ka hai, wo sabka hai…

Har cheez mein sabka sajha hai… (118-119)

In all this, we also see another Insha that takes a leap and not only voices but satirizes too. It is better to stand up against the ills and die the deaths of Socrates, Hallaj and Sarmad than suffocate behind creaking doors.

Haq achchha par uske liye koi aur marey to aur achchha…

Unka yeh kahna sooraj hi dharti ke pherey karta hai

Sar aankhon par, sooraj hi ko ghoomne do- khamosh raho…

Insha ji lo dhaaga lo aur lab see lo, khamosh raho (Kuch Kahne Ka; 29)

Insha and other Sufi poets have passed on the baton, after continuously defying barriers of the temporal. In such poets and artists, we find all our generations living in their mouths and pen- as Auden rightly says in 'In Memory Of W.B.Yeats' (1940), 'The words of a dead man/Are modified in the guts of the living.' A location like South Asia gives ample instances that culture resides in such bearers. The composite religion-culture that Sufism is, one sees that it is a tool, a methodology, that to the world today has been handed down by our ancestors. Yes, I am only looking at how the pool still preserves a dominant gene and with a hope that it will continue to do so. It isn't a matter of opinion that thought prevails even when cultures keep altering and civilizations 'die'. Walls will continue to guard off humanity from its other side. The world does need a Sufi, a poet, a seer. The burden lies on posterity to look for such avenues and establish connections with past.

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[i] Eliot, T.S. 'Burnt Norton'. *Four Quartets.* 1943. New York: Harcourt. Ll.1-3
[ii] Anonymous
[iii] The attainment of truth, the ultimate knowledge and reality
[iv] Thought, contemplation, chants, assemblage for these elements
[v] Invoked as the epigraph and guiding principle in this engagement

Daath Voyage
: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English ISSN 2455-7544
www.daathvoyagejournal.com *Vol.1, No.3, September, 2016*

Mythopoeia and Cultural Repositioning in Amish Tripathi's the *Shiva Trilogy*

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Abstract: The current paper focuses on studying the representation of myth in Amish Tripathi's *The Shiva Trilogy*. Traditional myth is seen through an alternative perspective. The quest for eradication of evil in the texts turns into a quest for identity and the true nature of evil. Treatment of gender identities in the trilogy is also taken care of in the study. Colonisation dates back to 1900 B.C. where each nation becomes a representative of certain ideological system through its social hierarchy and governmental principle. The exclusion and inclusion of the marginal, eradication of social inequalities are studied too. The paper also talks about the recent phenomena of neo-mythic novels in Indian subcontinent, and the way it exceeds the limits of a text. The recent trends in publishing and marketing strategy opted for the genre is also discussed in the paper.

Keywords: Myth, Gender, Other, Colonisation, Social inequalities, Power.

Myth is believed to be the foundational force of cultures and civilisations. From time immemorial, critics and theorists have attempted to study and analyse myths. It has been an inevitable factor while studying the social, cultural, anthropological and religious history of

any particular ethnic group. The approach towards the study of myth has changed with the course of time.

Theorists of the nineteenth century attempted at studying myth subjectively and naturally; and the function of myth would serve as a literal or symbolic explanation of that world: "myth was taken to be the 'primitive' counterpart to science." (Segal 3) On the other hand, twentieth century critics have examined "myth as almost anything but an outdated counterpart to science, either in subject matter or in function." (Segal 3)

Twentieth century theorists have attempted to sanctify myth with the aid of science. This has been done not by questioning the role of science in modern civilisations, but by providing an air of scientific explicability to myth. As quoted by Segal, "They have not taken any of the easy routes: 'relativizing' science, 'sociologizing' science, or 'mythicizing' science. Rather, they have re-characterized myth. Either myth, while still about the world, is not an explanation, in which case its function differs from that of science (Malinowski, Eliade), or myth, read symbolically, is not even about the physical world (Bultmann, Jonas, Camus), or [probably myth reconciles the both] (Freud, Rank, Jung, Campbell). In the twentieth century myth has been reconciled with science by the reconfiguration of myth, not by any reconfiguration of science" (137).

In contemporary Indian literature, mythical stories have started showing vigorous presence. Writers like Amish Tripathi and Ashwin Sanghi (among a host of others straddling both the mainstream and graphic novel universes) have attempted at reworking mythical pasts

and converting them to into new narrative modules. The novels often rework on the mythical past of India and intertwine them either with history, or with contemporary socio political scenario to put forward a new genre of fantastic fiction. The way these mythical pasts have been interpreted by authors, it can be said that they attempt at sanctioning and remodeling myths by doing a reconfiguration of the same. These reconfigurations in turn translate into a wider cumulative acceptance in the domain of logical scientific reality.

In this paper, I'd like to attempt at studying the intricate narrative patterns that run through the neo-mythical fiction of Amish Tripathi. Throughout the novels, Tripathi has played with the conventional narrative structure and characters of our centuries-old myths. On the one hand, myth provides the structural backbone of the narrative and on the other, it acts as the reasons the plot thickens. The Neel-kanth myth becomes the driving force for the Meluhans, Swadweepans and the others. Myth exists within the myth. Further references, in this context, can be drawn to the tales of Lord Rama, Bhoomidevi, Lord Narsimha, Lord Rudra and so on.

The revered god Shiva turns into a tribal leader. Sati turns into a centenarian princess who is a social outcast. The mythical story of Sati's austerities for Shiva here turns into Shiva's endeavour for love. Kali and Sati are not same persona with different manifestations; rather they are here same face with different persona and identity. Daksha becomes a power-hungry ruler whose sole satisfaction lies in enlarging his reign and maintaining the image before his subjects; even at the expense of his own family. Parashuram, the incarnation of Vishnu in traditional Hindu mythology, becomes a bandit with earnest passion for his own

beliefs and devotion to Shiva. The most interesting interpretation is probably of Ganesh, whom Tripathi refers as "Lord of the People" (*Secret of the Nagas* 29). Ganesh is also known as Ganapati across India; hence "Lord of the People" is an apt translation of the title. Most importantly, all the gods and goddesses become human beings of flesh and blood, they are vulnerable at times. And this has been taken care of while making the cover pages as well. Rashmi Pusalkar, who's designed Tripathi's covers, says, "Shiva is a human of flesh and blood, he is not a god. The challenge was to show him as vulnerable. I portrayed him from the back, because Indian gods are never seen from the back. He has battle scars and a sculpted physique."[1] They attain the pedestal of divinity by virtue of their deeds. Shiva, a tribal leader, a 'barbarian', makes his way through oddities to find answers to unsolved riddles. The narrative becomes a symbol of pursuit of excellence: excellence of life, of future. It also becomes the inclusion and exclusion of the subaltern to the mainstream society.

In a similar process of de-deification, Rama becomes an ideal ruler; no longer relegated to the mythological hero. Vishnu becomes a title which is conferred upon people who achieve divinity by their great deeds. Tripathi has used the philosophical framework of ancient India. Creation, sustenance and destruction are mutually dependent processes. In order to sustain harmony, destruction is as (if not more!) important as creation and

[1] Chaudhuri, Dibyajyoti. "Shiva as A Tibetan Hero, Draupadi As Complex And Human Character. More And More Indian Authors Are Punching Solid Research with a Racy Style to Retell Indian Myths as Pop Fiction." TimesofIndia Epaper Archive. n.d. Web. 26th Jan 2015.

preservation. By providing a (pseudo?) scientific explicability to these myriad mythical stories, Tripathi has added another perspective for looking towards our own cultural past. 'Somras', 'neel-kanth', 'the third-eye', process of telepathy/thought reading make the reader rethink about the credibility of the new perspectives. Even the supernatural is not exactly so, it is these days couched in some kind of rational explanation. Even the initial air of unexplainable awe, respect and reverence for Shiva, the Neel-kanth is later explained as being the outcome of a pre-planned phenomenon. That Shiva's throat turns blue with the consumption Somras, it is not something supernatural. Rather, it was more of a chemical reaction taking place in a desired state of affairs; it was only the manifestation of a decision taken by the council of the Vayuputras, who has decided the arrival of the Neel-kanth much earlier. The idea of divinity and godhood has been challenged in this way too. The individual prowess, greatness, sacrifices and valour is not enough to bestow him with the title of god. The power structure acts silently to allow him to do so. Shiva is successful in getting the best of each of the places described. But that privilege was a gift to him, a gift without any prior knowledge about it that leads him to discover his true identity and reason behind his true existence. The notion of god is challenged both from within and outside the framework of accepted notions and set of beliefs. Restructured myth keeps on debunking the established version.

The pursuit is undertaken by Shiva, the protagonist. The novels are manifestations of his journey. In the course of these journeys, he discovers both the nature of the evil, and of his own identity. It starts from the Valley of Mansarovar, and then he visits the valley of

Indus, and afterwards, the valley of Ganges and Bramhaputra. Places like Ayodhya, Kashi, Branga, Panchavati, Dandakaranya reveal the nature of the nation to him, as well as his own identity and existence start being unfolded. The journey brings him back to the source from where it began one day. The travel conveys him to his destination. He lives for the purpose he was made for. Along with it, the search for identity is underway. The position of a *foreigner* probably helped him to eke out the truths; we must not forget that the earlier Mahadev also was an *outsider*, who descended from Pariha.

The texts deserve to be treated carefully as representations of empires with different ruling and social system. *The Immortals of Meluha* begins with the descriptions of life in the tribes of Tibet. Internal conflict and unrest among the tribes predominates their lives. Immediately after it, Meluha is introduced to the readers, a nation which explains itself in three words: "Satya. Dharma. Maan", in other words, "Truth. Duty. Honour."(*Meluha* 62) The other important dynasty, Swadweep is marked by "Shringar, Saundrya and Swatantrata", in other words, "Passion. Beauty. Freedom"(*Meluha* 371). The most fascinating motto is of the Land of the Nagas, whose motto is "Satyam. Sundaram.", i.e. "Truth. Beauty." (*Secret of the Nagas* 380). It takes the best of both the Suryavanshi and Chandravashi way of lives and creates one for itself. In Meluha, the king is the ruler. Every subject is bound to follow the rules as propagated by the king. Even the king and his family are also supposed to follow all the decorum. Theirs is an organised system-bound life. On the other hand, Swadweep leads a live of "functioning pandemonium" (*Meluha* 371). In Meluha, the society is at a stable state. Swadweepans have ultimate disparate social classes. It looks like a state of frenzy to the

Meluhans: sexual promiscuousness, perpetual state of ultimate chaos and disorder; but the true empathetic self is reflected in Shiva's encounter with the beggar, who happily and affectionately shares his morsel of food. Shiva realizes: "Freedom. Freedom for the wretched to also have dignity. Something impossible in Meluha's system of governance" (*Meluha* 387). On a surface outlook, Meluha appears to be the perfect governance system one can ever have. But with gradual progress of the narrative, the lacunas make their presence prominent; the kind propagates of equality in his kingdom, but in reality exploits the system in favour of his own family.

> 'The vikarma law...'
>
> 'It doesn't need to be changed, my Lord,' said Daksha. 'If you decide to marry my daughter, then the law cannot stop you.'
>
> 'All the same,' said Shiva. 'That law must be changed.'
>
> 'Of course, it will be my Lord,' said a beaming Daksha…he continued, 'Make a proclamation to be signed by the Neelkanth, saying that from now on any noble woman who gives birth to a still-born child will not be classified as vikarma.'
>
> 'No, your Highness,' interrupted Shiva. 'That is not what I asked. I want the entire vikarma law scrapped. Nobody will be a vikarma from now on. Bad fate can strike anyone. It is ridiculous to blame their past lives for it.'
>
> Parvateshwar looked at Shiva in surprise. Though he did not like even a comma being changed in any of Lord Ram's laws, he appreciated that Shiva was remaining true to a fundamental cannon of Lord Ram's principles — the same law applies to everybody, equally and fairly, without exceptions.

> Daksha however looked at Shiva in shock. This was unexpected. Like all Meluhans, he too was superstitious about the vikarma. His displeasure was not with the vikarma law itself but with his daughter being classified as one. But he quickly recovered and said, 'Of course, my Lord. The proclamation will state that the entire vikarma law has been scrapped. Once you sign it, it will become law' (*Meluha* 279).

The king was affectionate towards its subjects but that could not stop him from treating his own family as a privileged one. Daksha was well aware of his power position and know how to exploit it. The same attitude reflects as he wishes to attack Swadweep and make it a part of Meluha. Swadweepans were not in the dire necessity of being governed by Meluhan system. The Meluhan emperor shows the attitude of the coloniser that makes him feel the urge to unite the free nations under one flag and rule over the entire dynasty. In the words of Dilipa, the Swadweepan emperor, they were "more like a confederacy of aligned kings rather than a fanatical empire like Meluha" (*Secret of the Nagas* 15). Daksha wishes to mould the Chandravanshis, in his Suryavanshi way of life: "The evil Chandravanshi way of life has to end and these people have to be brought to our pure Suryavanshi ways" (*Secret of the Nagas* 13). The coloniser's attitude of categorising and converting the 'other' in the structure of the 'self' is quite unlike the self-propagated motto of "Truth. Duty. Honour." The Suryavanshis keep on believing that it is their noble duty to save the Swadweepans from the unorganised system of ruling of the Chandravanshis. In the course of the Meluhan wish to rule and civilise the 'others', the idea of utopia shatters: and with the discovery of the real nature of the evil, the reasons behind it turns the utopia into dystopia. One must mention the

social system of Kashi and of the Naga Dynasty. Kashi becomes a point of confluence of every kind of beliefs, castes and creeds. The liberalism practiced by Kashi does not make it vulnerable; rather this liberal framework makes it a place of ultimate peace and stability. The attitude of the king and the utopian *Ram Rajya* turns itself into dystopia. References should also be made to ruling system of Panchavati, the Naga capital, where they live with "the Suryavanshi ideal of justice and equality to its logical extreme" (*Secret of the Nagas* 380) but along with it, each citizen is allowed "to decide what they want to do with their lives. But the state provides the basic necessities. And in that, there is complete equality." (*Secret of the Nagas* 381) Under the Meluhan (apparently ideal?) monarchic system, the king and the kingmaker exploit reality for their own good. The projected reality differs from the actual reality that differentiates them from the other dynasties. The Meluhan emperor intended to use the myth of Neel-kanth for his own purpose. The power position alters as soon as Shiva starts discovering that the nature of evil is truly a relative one. There can be nothing like the *absolute* divine or the *absolute* evil. Tripathi structures an age old story within a modern perspective which allows interpretation and speculations, keeping in mind the contemporary socio-political scenario.

Gender positions in the trilogy require attention. Much has not been discussed whether the dynasties followed patriarchy or matriarchy; but keeping in mind the general description, it can be assumed that patriarchy was the basic functional principle of these societies. Patriarchy was used primarily to demonstrate the prevalent social structure, not to marginalise women and their voices. We can find a wide range of feminine portrayals in the

trilogy. While talking about the Tibetan tribes, we can be sure of their patriarchal social structure. On the other hand, Meluha had highly revered female medical practitioner like Ayurvati and Kankhala who adorned the most important places in the Meluhan court, by taking care of all the administrative, protocol and revenue matters. The chief protagonist is portrayed in a perfect blend of femininity and self-control. Sati fights her own battles. She is not overtly 'fertile'; and she does not depend on anybody to protect her. She is also the embodiment of truth, virtue, morality, beauty as well as 'softer' emotions. She is not someone who needs to be taken care of. Rather, she is the most perfect person in the entire narrative. We must also take a look at the portrayal of characters like Veerini, and Renuka, mother of Parshuram. Veerini, despite belonging to a royal family, could never strongly oppose Daksha's misdeeds against her children or grandchild. She could not even raise her voice over her husband in order to live with her children. For her, motherhood provides her the essential agency and empowerment. Her voice only starts finding its place when her children are in danger. In *The Oath of the Vayuputras*, she starts achieving an important space in Daksha's life and they both reconcile to protect their beloved child. Obsession with his beloved child Sati, Daksha could cross any restrain. Veerini acts as a logical restrain to him. She, despite not being responsible for her husband's misdeeds, takes the blame upon herself. She decides to live the same fate with her subjects. Portrayal of Renuka, a Kshatriya lady is really important here. She dared to go against her own clan for the sake of her love, and also pursued her husband to live her life in her own terms. She advocates her own voice for her freedom. That brings her the horrific end: honour killing. In the texts, we can find that the

social discrimination is functioning not in terms of gender in broader picture; it rather takes place in terms of an individual's past life and deeds. The law of Vikarma is the obvious point being referred to here. Tripathi makes the marginalisation not merely in terms of social class, but in terms of the experiences of lives. He explores the humiliation and subjugation experienced by marginal people and accommodates the contemporary social reality of untouchability. Even by making the princess a Vikarma, the author probably propagates the surface reality of equality in the texts. One must notice that the rule was diluted by Shiva, an outsider. Probably such social disorders could be only marked by some outsider's perspective. Shiva fights for the powerless, the victimised, the voiceless marginalised people, and by providing them a better chance to live, churns out the best of humanity out of them. In a nation with histories of untouchable clans, such treatment of rewriting history and challenging them from a position of power requires to be read carefully.

One must take a look the way the first impressions about the major places are marked in the narrative. Each city is marked with some specific architectural patterns. The Meluhan Empire is marked by the use of a particular set of monochromatic colours and structures. Devagiri is described in *The Immortals of Meluha* in the following words:

> The blank walls that faced the main road bore striking black etching depicting the different legends of the Suryavanshis, while the walls themselves were painted in the sober colours of grey, light blue, light green, or white. The most common background colour though appeared to be blue. The holiest colours for the Meluhans were blue, denoting the sky. Green representing nature, happened to be placed just

> after blue in the colour spectrum. Meluhans liked to divine a grand design in every natural phenomenon and thought it wondrous that blue was placed just before green in the colour spectrum. Just as the sky happened to be above the earth. (62-63)

On the other hand, the description of Ayodhya is marked by a stark contrast in same text:

> Ayodhya was nothing like Devagiri. At first glance, it promised much. The outer walls were thick and looked astonishingly powerful. Unlike the sober grey Meluhan walls, the exterior of Ayodhya had been extravagantly painted with every colour in god's universe. Each alternate brick, however, was painted in pristine white, the royal colour of the Chandravanshis. Numerous banners, tinted in pink and blue, . . . were permanent fixtures, adorning the city…
>
> The Swadweepans had none of the restraint of the Meluhans. Everything was painted bright — from orange buildings to parrot green ceilings to shocking pink windows! Civic-minded rich Swadweepans had created grand public gardens, temples, theatres and libraries, naming them after their family members, since they had received no help from the government. The Meluhans, despite finding it strange that a public building should be named after a private family, were awed by the grandeur of these structures. A vibrant city, with exquisite beauty existing side by side with hideous ugliness, Ayodhya disgusted and yet fascinated the Meluhans. (370-373)

The patterns of colour usage grab attention here. The colours used by Meluha are in harmony with the nature. It reflects their orderly, rule bound, synchronised nature. On the other hand, Swadweepans' use of colours shows their vibrancy and dynamism. They are aware of their lack of order in their lives, and they celebrate their extravagance. Kashi represents a number of contradictions: the city is a congested place, on the other; the Sacred Avenue is a broad beautified arena with "a breathtaking profusion of trees around the road, with probably all species of flora from the Indian subcontinent represented. Beyond the trees lay the plethora of temples." (*Secret of the Nagas* 69) The architectural diversity becomes the symbol of the city itself, which embraces all who seek for refuge. Branga again requires to be mentioned. The city exhibits affluence "with their buildings superbly were superbly built and maintained while their temples were lofty and grand" (185), yet it lacks the planning of Meluha, or the vigour of Swadweep: "The roads were laid out in a haphazard manner and not in grid form of the Meluhan cities." (185). Frequent plagues snatch all its life from the place: "A large number of public monuments had been constructed over the centuries…. Despite their superb condition, these public buildings were rarely used." (185) The layout of Panchavati surprises the reader the most, a state which in every way of life denounces the Meluhan way of life, picks the architectural neatness from them: "it had been laid out in a grid-like pattern, much like the Meluhan cities." (381) But again, it exhibits a sense of equality among all its subjects, economy does not play the controller of citizens' rights there: "Every single house, including that of the Queen, was exactly of the same design and size. There were no poor or rich amongst the fifty thousand Nagas who lived there." (380) The

cities tell tales of its people. Apart from this, Tripathi himself mentions in an interview that the covers of the books implicate a particular journey. The first book of the trilogy uses a blue cover, the second one is with a green cover, and the last one features a red cover. The author explains, all these colors belong to the additive color system, which denotes a journey from black to white, i.e., from evil to good.

I'd like to make a note to the way this new-age mythological book series marked their entry into the literary-market of the nation. Books are promoted much before their publication with the aid of mass media penetration to the point of pre-publication saturation. Books have started being launched with respective audio, visual and audio-visual files. The movie rights are bought even before the publication of the entire series. The marketing strategy opted for this particular series of books was myriad and mind bogglingly lucrative to say the least. For the first book, a semi-animated graphic trailer was released. For the second book, movies-like trailer was created, and screened in public forums like theatres and multiplexes. The trilogy has already gained the author an amount of more than fifty crore, even without taking in account the movie adaptation rights. The translations of *The Immortals of Meluha* and *The Secret of the Nagas* are the first translated books to enter the Top 15 national bestsellers lists. This book series has instigated the creation of a music album dedicated to it. They are translated into number of Indian vernacular languages like English (South Asia), Hindi, Marathi, Bengali, Gujarati, Assamese, Malayalam, Telugu, Kannada, Bahasa Indonesian, Tamil, English (UK). They are even translated in Spanish and Estonian, which marks the author's acceptance internationally. It can also be interpreted as the world's attempt at

looking back at India's dense mythological past. Even there are ceremonies for the publication of the book cover that takes place much before the publication of the book. The publication of the books becomes the major literary events of the year. The book, immediately after being published, turns the rejected author into "India's first Literary Popstar", as mentioned by Shekhar Kapur. (Meluha, Blurb) I'd like to mention here works of another contemporary writer Ashwin Sanghi, who also tries his forte in the same literary genre. Sanghi, in his texts, *The Krishna Key*, makes a number of references to the Indus valley civilisation as explained in the Shiva trilogy, without making reference to either of the books or the author. But the explanations and the historical framework has been sanctioned by Sanghi in his work. The Shiva Trilogy posits the reason behind the destruction of Meluha as being fallout of a nuclear blast. Sanghi, in his fiction, mentions that archeological excavations have proved the existence of some nuclear blast in the remote past in the Indus valley. Even Somras is mentioned as being an evil influence in the ancient past. Plenty of such intertextual references run through the fiction by Sanghi. In this way, the neo-mythical writers have structured a parallel domain of logic and reason, which offers a fresh and alternative outlook to our past. The intertextual references make the reading as well as the interpretation even more pleasurable. The way myths have been brought out of their traditional framework, reworked and remodeled, and fiction is created out of them, they definitely add a new dimension to literature of a commonwealth nation/nation with colonial past. The traditional outlook to western literature, both as a point of reference and inspirational vantage point has been shaken off. The writers attempt to glorify the nation,

takes the readers back to the remote past. Myths are turned into history; they are turned into the framework of human experience. For a generation of readers who have been voracious consumers of international bestsellers like *Angels and Demons* and *The Da Vinci Code*, picking up the *Shiva Trilogy*, *The Krishna Key*, *Chanakya's Chant*, *The Rozabal Line* and so on was but a natural outcome of the desire to revisit the past. A few of these texts have been translated in non-Indian languages and are being sold overseas. This also marks the authors' and Indian fiction's reach to the international literary market. Tripathi is conferred with the title of "Paolo Coelho of East" by Business World. (*Meluha* Blurb) Ashwin Sanghi is acclaimed in these words: "Behold, Dan Brown fans, this guy is now officially the answer from our own turf" by Hindustan times. (*Krishna Key* Blurb) Both of these mark the growing entrance and interest of the non-Indian literary world to the ancient mythical past of Vedas, Puranas and Epics.

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: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English ISSN 2455-7544

www.daathvoyagejournal.com *Vol.1, No.3, September, 2016*

Exploring the Illusive Borderlines: Construction of Identity in the Indian Subcontinent

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Abstract: The creation of borderlines demarcating the geographical boundary of the state has always problematized the discourse of nation incorporating the issues and debates of race, class, religion and historical events. It is also significant how it presents the ongoing process of the construction of personal 'identity' and the cultural determination of one's selfhood. In the Indian subcontinent, the case is more interesting and complex as nation building takes place in heterogeneous, even fragmented lingual and cultural societies all over our country. The idea of 'nation' in the Subcontinent is much complicated, where the question of ethnicity and other forms of religious and political identities play a key role.

My paper entitled **"Exploring the Illusive Borderlines: Construction of Identity in the Indian Subcontinent"** is a very modest attempt to get a glimpse into how the formation of borderlines by the partition of India delineates the construction of racial, religious and cultural 'identity' of an individual. This paper aims at studying few short stories like Intizar Husain's "An Unwritten Epic", SaadatHasanManto's "Toba Tek Singh" and films like

SrijitMukherji's "Rajkahini", Deepa Mehta's "Earth", exploring the inherent complexities that arise while defining one's identity, which is determined by one's socio-cultural and religious position. The arbitrary lines that the British had drawn in order to divide the entire nation have resulted in the creation of two distinct and separate identities, which are hostile and inimical to each other. The Partition not only unleashed immense bloodsheds and communal riots, but also brought out the perplexity of the common masses to determine their 'national' identity that is predefined by their religion. Husain's "An Unwritten Epic" portrays the character of Pichwa, who fought for the creation of Pakistan but unfortunately had to become a refugee there, leaving his homeland Qadirpur in India. This intense agony of Pichwa to locate his own native place is similar to Bishan Singh of Manto's story "Toba Tek Singh", who although being a Sikh refuses to go to India as his hometown Toba Tek Singh was situated in Pakistan, and eventually dying on the 'no man's land'. The brothel in SrijitMukherji's film "Rajkahini" is the epitome of a larger nation where the Radcliffe line has passed right through the courtyard. It depicts the complications that emerge while sundering the house into two, blending it with the Partition, demarcated by the illusive borderlines. The construction of identities of the subaltern people who fall on the trope of nation building is also a significant aspect. Deepa Mehta's "Earth" reflects the transformation of a skeptical and liberal person into a religious fanatic roaming on the streets of Lahore with vengeance in his mind, witnessing the hatred originated by the creation of Pakistan. Considering the aforementioned texts, this study also interrogates the formation of distinct

national and religious identities in the Subcontinent, at a time when it was taking root in the context of Partition and beyond.

Keywords: Borderlines, Nation, Identity, Partition

Introduction:

India being the land of world's most ancient civilization, has witnessed the transformation of human society through ages. Indeed, it is in this transformation where the root causes of the emergence of diverse ethnic, lingual and cultural identities lie. Not only the evolution of various human civilizations in different parts of the land has shaped the several identities, but also the long history of reigning by foreign intruders has decisively constructed multifarious identities across the vast subcontinent. Although many similar traits in the lifestyle of the people are found, the variances in culture, language, caste, religion, class, race, economy, and ethnicity can never be altogether ignored. These disparities become significant in the attempt to define one's selfhood as the process of nation building takes place in heterogeneous, even fragmented lingual and cultural societies all over our country. India, in both before and after the Partition, never had any distinct or definite sense of nationhood; instead the subcontinent has always been the place where many 'nation's exist. The creation of borderlines within the subcontinent demarcating geographical boundaries of the states and the formation of new nations with distinct religious and cultural identities has proved to be illusive. The arbitrary borderlines had and still exist separating different societal spheres, which become significant

in determining one's national, racial, religious, cultural identity, and the complexity that arises eventually. This paper will focus on the formation of distinct national and religious identities in the Subcontinent, at a time when it was taking root in the context of Partition and beyond.

Formation of Identities:

The formation of identities in the Indian subcontinent has always been a very complex process, as the determining factors like race, religion, language, culture etc. play a key role. An individual has various identities depending upon his or her constancy towards particular factor. However, the creation of national identity in the subcontinent has been a matter of serious concern and it has initiated severe controversies, discrepancies and conflicts during the time of Partition and beyond. Since ages, the various indigenous societies in India lack any definite cohesive identity. Ernest Renan has described, "The desire of nations to be together is the only real criterion…" (Hutchinson and Smith 17). Renan viewed nationalism as something that connects individuals to the state as they become sentimentally attached to their homeland. The shaping of the notion of nationalism or nation building is actually a process inwhich a person gains a sense of identity and self-esteem through his or her national identification.The creation of illusive borderlines to assert two separate religious and cultural identities in both part of the subcontinent, negating the differences in opinion has resulted in bloodshed, ruthless strife and political turmoil, which compels us to question the validity and existence of such boundaries. The Partition not only unleashed immense bloodsheds and

communal riots, but also brought out the perplexity of the common masses to determine their 'national' identity that is predefined by their religion. Several authors have explored in their works the inherent complexities that arise while defining one's identity, which is determined by one's socio-cultural and religious position. This studyis an attempt to interrogate how the formation of borderlines by the partition of India delineates the construction of racial, religious and cultural 'identity' of an individual by analyzing few short stories like Intizar Husain's "An Unwritten Epic", Saadat Hasan Manto's "Toba Tek Singh" and films like Srijit Mukherji's *Rajkahini*, Deepa Mehta's *Earth.*

Illusion of National Boundaries:

Intizar Husain's story "An Unwritten Epic" focuses on the complex issue of identity formation by setting the plot on the backdrop of Independence and Partition. The protagonist Pichwa who belongs from the village Qadirpur in Uttar Pradesh, fought his whole life for the creation of a separate Muslim state Pakistan, but after Independence finds that he has been completely left over from his dream-nation. He, along with the other members of village was unable to locate where the real Pakistan is. They wanted to construct a nation to fulfill their individual aspirations, which had its cultural base in their mind but in reality, their actual geographical nation had its existence far away from their native place.

> …in pre-partition days whenever they participated in political rallies and enthusiastically shouted the slogan, *India will be divided; Pakistan will be created*, their voices resounded with an unusual note of determination. After the partition of India, however, they had begun to talk senselessly and extravagantly. (Husain 6)

The chief objective of the partition of India was to solve the ongoing communal problems by creating two separate nations where cultural homogenization shall exist to a large extent. The sole aim or purpose was to create and maintain one kind culture in accordance with one religion, one style of communication, and a centralized and standardized government that will run the state. Professor Ernest Gellner has viewed cultural homogenization as,

> …it must be the one in which they can all breathe and speak and produce; so it must be the same culture. Moreover, it must now be a great or high (literate, training-sustained) culture, and it can no longer be a diversified, locality-tied, illiterate little culture or tradition. (Gellner 19-38)

Nevertheless, both the religious communities failed to realize that this cultural homogenization is not possible to establish in India because this nation has a long history of maintaining plurality of ideas and where diverse, multicultural existence can be traced. Although Qadirpur was a Muslim majority village, but Uttar Pradesh, being a Hindu dominated region was included in India. The story delineates the crisis of identity in the mind of an individual, as he fails to adopt himself with the contemporary socio-political scenario. The story opens portraying the courage and bravery of Pichwa, the Muslim brave-heart, who along with his companions defeat an entire army of Hindu Jats on the eve of Partition. However, their mission to establish Muslim dominated nation Pakistan ended up in utter pandemonium as they eventually realized that their own village-nation was located outside the newly created boundaries of Pakistan. Therefore, the brave hero of Qadirpur, Pichwa

suffers from determining his own identity, which is predefined by his socio-cultural and religious position. As a Muslim youth, he migrates to Pakistan like his other neighbours Naim Miyan and Munshi Sanaullah, in order to save his life and in search for a better opportunity of livelihood. However, to his great disappointment, he fails to get any job there and this economic displacement shattered his strong spirit and in a way forced him to return to India. Pichwa, the 'hero' of Qadirpur, who never thought of satisfying his daily necessities in his native village, had to experience the "unrequited desire for employment". The character of the 'epic hero' Pichwa was diminished by the partition and was reduced from its heroic setting to the mere stature of a poor beggar. In this way, Husain's story traces the complicated process of the transformation of one's identity that is influenced by national politics, religion and arbitrary boundaries of nation. Thomas Palakeel rightly observes:

> Pichwa'sunfulfillment, on the other hand, comes from economic displacement rather than from being uprooted from a heroic setting… As the "epic hero" who runs east and then west is reduced to the status of a beggar, the pompous author-narrator who started out writing an epic novel ends up as a full-time mill-owner in the new nation; perhaps the transformation indicates a truer calling, if not an epilogue to a comedy about a writerlyself caught in the politics of Partition… (332)

Pichwa was bewildered to find that his native village Qadirpurhas been transformed into Jatunagar, inhabited by Jats. This transformation of the small place not only refers to the changing geo-politics of external world but also indicates the changeover of identity particularly determined by religion and culture in the subcontinent both before and after the

Partition. Here Pichwa can be considered as representative of thousand people who had dreamt of the creation of Pakistan during the tumultuous years before Independence. Nevertheless, their hopes terminated in futility as they comprehended the dire reality of being left out from the newly created boundaries of Pakistan. The point, which becomes significant in this aspect, is the constant identity crisis of their individual persona as they fail to situate themselves in any of the newly created territories and determine to which nation they actually belong. Pichwa's dreamland Pakistan is obviously an ideological construct that resides in his cultural imagination and which cannot be located by drawing arbitrary borderlines.

This intense agony of Pichwa to locate his own native place is similar to Bishan Singh of Saadat Hasan Manto's short story "Toba Tek Singh", who although being a Sikh refuses to go to India as his hometown Toba Tek Singh was situated in Pakistan, and eventually dying on the 'no man's land'. Through this story, Manto has criticized the shrewd politics that aims to separate nation on the basis of religion. It projects a group of people in an asylum whose identities were primarily determined by their psychological state, as 'lunatics' i.e. irrespective of their religion or nationality. However, when the governments of both states decided to exchange the inmates of asylums regarding their religious identities, (i.e. Muslim lunatics to Pakistan and Hindu and Sikh lunatics to India) the actual complication of the story became prominent. Bishan Singh, a resident of Lahore asylum who has prioritized his regional identity over his religion, refused to go to India during the exchange program although he knew about the migration of his family to India. The character of Bishan Singh whose identity cannot be separated from his homeland Toba Tek Singh and his apparently vague

mutterings become the locus of critical juncture, which compels the reader to think about the construction of identity in the subcontinent during the Partition. As Kiranpreet Kaur in her article quotes Weinreich,

> A person's identity is defined as the totality of one's self-construal, in which how one construes oneself in the present expresses the continuity between how one construes oneself as one was in the past and how one construes oneself as one aspires to be in the future. (217)

Manto has depicted the lunacy of the people who have exemplified the nationalistic tropes by creating illusive borderlines and imposing needless restriction upon the free life of commoners. Infact, the lunatics of the asylum seem to be more sane and wise than people of the outer world who cannot realize the futility of crafting out a new nation from a consolidated state. The resistance against the partitioning of the country is portrayed through the activities of the inmates of the asylum, who did not accept any kind of forceful imposition of identity upon them by the authority. Bishan Singh did not accept India as his country and instead wanted to go to his homeland, Toba Tek Singh. Therefore, in this way he is challenging the imposition of national identity by the state, which is primarily based on religion. On the other hand, as an individual whose psychological identity becomes most important, his resistance to succumb to the authority and prioritizing his 'regional' identity can be interpreted as an attempt by the author to satirize the process of creating arbitrary borderlines. Arif Nisar has rightly pointed out,

> Manto's *Toba Tek Singh* in first place portrays how people who claim to be rational 'change' the geographies within nights. Manto by insisting that places have to be named, as it is a name than identify the place. The places that used to be identical with a specific name until yesterday, are now confronting with the identity crises. Manto has parodied and criticised the 'wise' people, who aim to build separate nations on the base of religion. For Manto, this aim rather involves splitting peace and harmony from within the human souls. (9729)

Indeed, the ending of the story with Bishan Singh dying in the 'no-man's land' is symbolic of his rejection of his changed nationality and itself a sharp criticism against the logic of partition.

> On one side, behind barbed wire, stood together the lunatics of India and on the other side, behind more barbed wire, stood the lunatics of Pakistan. In between, on a bit of earth which had no name, lay Toba Tek Singh.

The agony and utter confusion of Bishan Singh along with other inmates of the asylum to locate the specific borders of India and Pakistan is actually a symbolic representation of million people of the subcontinent who were bewildered on the eve of Partition to reconstruct their national identities in accordance with their religious identities. The apparent insanity of Bishan Singh evidently establishes Foucault's perspective who views "madness as being located in a certain cultural 'space' within society; the shape of this space, and its effects on the madman, depend on society itself." The perplexity of Bishan Singh's mental situation is similar to Manto's another story "The Dog of Tithwal" which portrays a dog who keeps shuffling between the two enemy camps was repeatedly asked about its nationality prior to its

death. This story deals with the same thematic concern that is quite identical to "Toba Tek Singh" where Bishan Singh suffers from tremendous identity crises. Like Bishan Singh who died at the end, this story also reveals the pathetic side where the dog is brutally murdered being unable to prove its national identity,

> The dog turned. One of his legs was now quite useless. He began to drag himself towards Harnam Singh, who picked up his rifle, aimed carefully and shot him dead.
>
> Subedar Himmat Khan sighed, "The poor bugger has been martyred."
>
> Jamadar Himmat Singh ran his hand over the still-hot barrel of his rifle and muttered, "He died a dog's death."

Clearly, Manto's story delineates the identity crisis of people who got trapped in the confusion between the illusive boundaries of India and Pakistan. In the Indian subcontinent during the dire days of Partition, an individual's identity has to undergo a complex transformation that is predefined by the factors like created borderlines, religion, psychological and socio-cultural construct of his own personality. For Manto, drawing boundaries and separating nations in order to construct a distinct national and socio-political identity is quite deceitful and hypocritical. Through the deep introspection of the insane figure of Bishan Singh, his short story "Toba Tek Singh" perfectly manifests the turmoil, confusion and chaos regarding the construction of one's identity during and after the Partition.

Srijit Mukherjee's film *Rajkahini* sheds light on the trauma of the Partition and how it had affected the marginalized sections of the society; including pimps, prostitutes, abandoned

widows, raped or 'fallen' women whose families would rather mourn their deaths than take them back at home. The very idea of 'nation' centers on a brothel in which all these characters, who are deprived of respectable or dignified identity have taken shelter. The brothel is the epitome of a larger nationwhere the Radcliffe line has passed right through the courtyard. It depicts the complications that emerge while sundering the house into two, blending it with the Partition, demarcated by the illusive borderlines. During the Partition, Sir Cyril Radcliffe had drawn a line that separates the majority areas of Hindu and Muslim community respectively, demarcating the boundary between India and Pakistan. This line, commonly known as the 'Radcliffe Line' has sundered the unity by breaking the entire nation into two and giving a distinct identity to the people of both the lands which is completely based on religion. India, which was the homeland of diverse races, religions and ethnicities for ages has suddenly transformed into two nations whose identity is solely foregrounded on two binaries that are not only opposite but also antagonistic to each other. The dividing of the house in *Rajkahini* reminds us of the partitioning of Tha'mma's ancestral house of Dhaka in Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Shadow Lines*. In this novel, the house has been divided with wooden partition wall going through doorways. The two parts of the family accepted this partition to stop the continuous quarrels between them. However, they could not find peace and this partition of the house created more bitterness between them. Both Srijit Mukherjee and Amitav Ghosh use this allegory of the house partition to represent the political partition of the larger nation. The idea of dividing the nation by differences in religious identities, which ultimately resulted in the creation of distinct political identities concluded in

developing hostile attitudes among fellow citizens. The movie presents the illusion of created borderlines that discriminate among people, in the words of Begum Jaan,

> *Janab*, the place which you are referring to as brothel (*kotha*)… is my country. This is motherland to me. There is no discrimination between Hindus and Muslims, upper caste or lower caste here… I don't know of which Hindustan or Pakistan you all are talking about…but all of these are useless blabbering to me. Because, I have no interest in the decisions made by people sitting in Delhi…[1]

The view of Begum Jaan interrogates a number of controversial issues relating the construction of national identity. If birth in a country gives the right to nationality then how can it change if the borders demarcating the nation change? Certainly, a Hindu living in East Pakistan before Partition considers himself as Indian, but after Independence, he becomes a Pakistani. In order to retain his former national identity he had to come to India becoming a refugee, being uprooted from his native land, his own birthplace. Similar is the case for a Muslim living in India too. Therefore, the national identity of a person is not only determined by his religion but also by illusive borderlines which demarcates the boundary of a state, and this identity is subjected to transformation or change if those borderlines also change in due course of time. The anxiety in the mind of Begum Jaan results from this fact which is similar to Jethamoshai's speech in Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*, "I don't believe in this India-Shindia.…suppose when you get there they decide to draw another line somewhere? What

[1]My Translation.

will you do then? Where will you move to?… As for me, I was born here, and I'll die here" (213).

The futility of borderlines is evident in Jethamoshai's speech as he believes in the rootedness of identities and nations. This speech is certainly an equivocation of Begum Jaan's dialogue in *Rajkahini*. To a great extent, their anxieties and the mode of questioning the system of drawing arbitrary boundaries are same. The lines that are drawn to separate people are illusory and imagined which do not have concrete existence in the real world. Both the film and the novel give the fictional demonstration of Benedict Anderson's dictum in the groundbreaking work *Imagined Communities*, "…the nation in anthropological spirit; it is an imagined political community, and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (5-7). The movie effectively interrogates the reasoning behind all the killings and partitioning and goes on to prove the fallacy of borders. Breaking up the entire country into two was actually a political decision of a mere handful and was strictly a political move to curtail national politics. The construction of identities of the subaltern people who fall on the trope of nation building is also a significant aspect of this film. Setting the plot on the backdrop of Partition riots, the film dynamically reflects the agony and pain of the unmentionable sections of society of being uprooted from their homeland, which is the metaphor of a larger nation. Srijit Mukherjee situates the brothel within a microcosm, the political turmoil and bloodsheds have been highlighted in the resistance of a group of neglected women against the evils of crude diplomacy and shrewd politics, which is not recorded in the pages of mainstream history. In any brothel, the prostitutes have only one identity that is based upon their work,

and is devoid of religion, caste, race or any other divisive factors. Therefore, the construction of identity in the brothels is a homogenous process and the collective consciousness among the members is fully manifested. Contrary to this, the construction of identity in the subcontinent is complex as nation building takes place in heterogeneous, even fragmented lingual and cultural societies. Despite the various cinematic flaws, *Rajkahini* delineates the futility of creating arbitrary boundaries between nations and people during the Partition that results in shattering of homologous identities by constructing a new distinct political and national identity, entirely based on divisive factors like religious and racial differences.

Deepa Mehta's film *1947: Earth* (1998) is significant not only because it presents the shift in individual identity during the gloomy days of partition but also the effect of tremendous trauma that directs the transformation of a person from human to beast. Set in the backdrop of partition riots, this movie effectively brings out the brutality and violent massacres conducted in the name of religion and nationalism. Based on Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Cracking India*, this film showcases how the political decision of creating borderlines not only partitions off an united nation but also puts up barriers among personal relationships, cracking the fastening of amity within a family and creating rifts between individuals that ultimately results in murders and bloodsheds. Through the neutral eye of a Parsee girl Lenny, *Earth* exhibits the inhumane atrocities that were conducted on both sides of the border. The film depicts a group of people belonging to various sects, whereas Shanta (Nandita Das), Tota Ramji (Sunil Mehra), Hari (RaghuvirYadav) are Hindus, Sher Singh (Navtej Singh Johar) is a Sikh, and Dil Navaz (Aamir Khan) and Hassan (Rahul Khanna) are Muslims. This portrayal in a sense is the

microcosmic depiction of the larger religious, racial and ethnic diversity of India. However, as the story progresses and the howling of riots became pronounced, the movie focuses on the most crucial arena- the shifting and construction of identities in terms of religion. Dil Navaz who was a liberal minded person at the beginning of the movie, turned into a religious fanatic roaming on the streets of Lahore after he experiences the killings of his own sisters. The people, who were at first good friends, became suspicious of each other's activities. Hostility and incertitude arose among them, who easily fell prey to the negative impacts of Partition. Dil Navaz who had passionate yearnings for Shanta does not hesitate to throw her into the hands of a riotous and bloodthirsty mob. He also (supposedly, as it is hinted in the film) murdered Hassan after witnessing his passionate lovemaking with Shanta. The reason for his cruel acts is nothing but the development of his hostile attitude towards other religion after the death of his relatives. In Pakistan occupied Punjab, the partition unleashed immense violence separating people into two categories, the Muslims who were majority and on the other hand, Hindus and Sikhs who were minor compared to the Muslims. As Dil Navaz was a Muslim, and his sisters were supposedly butchered in the hands of 'kafers' (non-Muslims, especially Hindus and Sikhs) in India, so he took up the duty of counter balancing that act of violence by taking revenge upon his enemies, who were once his near ones. Shanta, his unrequited love was a Hindu maid, and her lover Hassan also decided to switch his faith from Islam to Hinduism and migrate to Amritsar in order to pursue a better future. Therefore, Dil Navaz murdered Hassan, who was in the way of converting his religious identity, whichwas severely antagonistic to Dil Navaz’s own religious identity. Next, although he had a sense of

romantic feelings towards Shanta, he betrayed her by revealing her position to the fierce rioters. In this way, he took the revenge against Shanta who got inclined to Hassan instead of accepting him, and whose religious identity was inimical to his own identity.

Earth is a strong testimony of how partition related sectarian violence alters the identity of a person, or rather to be more specific, how the violent atrocities unleashed by creating illusive boundaries and dividing nation determines the identity of an individual. According to Ernest Gellner, the birth of any nation is connected to the nationalist sentiment, which is a "feeling of anger aroused by the violation of the principle [political and the national unit should be congruent], or the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfillment". So, before the birth of a nation, it is necessary for a group of people to feel hurt, deceived and unvalued; and this is exactly what has been displayed in the film. Dil Navaz was a liberal minded person and a voice of reason who believed in communal harmony until the slaughter of his sisters drove him mad with vengeance. His sisters were murdered by the religious 'other', who were also the 'other' in terms of national identity. Thus his identity shifts from being an 'Indian' to a 'Muslim' fundamentalist who desperately wants all the people belonging to 'other' religious identities (Hindus and Sikhs) be thrashed away from Pakistan. In this way, the religious and national identity merges which was the defining note of the Partition- i.e. to separate people by their religions and break the nation to construct two distinct and opposite national identities. As time progresses, the formidable ties of friendship get broken and the differences of religious and national identities become more prominent. Dil Navaz, losing his rational perspective identifies India with the land of non-Muslims including Hindus and Sikhs, and

Pakistan as the land of Muslims. Infact, one of the characters in the film, the servant Hari switches his religious identity from Hindu to Himmat Ali, the Muslim who recites '*kalma*' or the holy prayer in order to prove his faith and save his life from the riotous mob. One of the most significant aspects of this movie is the portrayal of how the sentiment of ethnical division gained the power of potent nationalistic movement. Not only the arbitrary boundaries between India and Pakistan have demarcated two separate nations thereby constructing two different national identities, but have also imposed two distinct religious identities that were inimical to one another, upon the people of both these nations. The film exposes the arbitrariness of many types of borderlines, both political and personal and subverts the notions that are rooted in socio-cultural and historical realities.

Conclusion- Nation as Identity:

To conclude, it will be proper to state that the formulation of concepts like nation, nationality etc. and their significance upon the construction of identity seem to be in flux rather than fixed. It is obvious, as the socio-cultural paradigms are volatile and mutable; they alter, shift and transform themselves because of various factors like religion, politics and ethnicity. The texts discussed and analyzed above explicitly present that cultural formation is the site within which the religious and national identity of an individual may be constructed. Bishan Singh of Manto's "Toba Tek Singh", Tridib and Tha'mma of AmitavGhosh's *Shadow Lines*, Begum Jaan and other females of Srijit Mukherjee's *Rajkahini*- they all share an innate and conceptual formulation of nationalism, which has its bearing on the construction of their own

distinct 'identities'. In this context, Benedict Anderson's view about the nation is quite enlightening,

> The nation is an imagined political community. It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members meet them or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. This makes it possible for emotional affinities to transcend some disruptive dissonances, thereby making space for a sense of nationness and nationalism. (5-7)

All the texts, Intizar Husain's "An Unwritten Epic", Saadat HasanManto's "Toba Tek Singh", Srijit Mukherjee's *Rajkahini* and Deepa Mehta's *Earth* emphasize the arbitrariness of such cartographic demarcations. The lines that mark borders, divide people, separate nations are illusionary and merely 'shadows' which do not have real existence on physical plane. These lines go far deeper into the psyche thereby creating artificial borders in the minds of people. A person tends to consider other people living outside his national boundaries as enemies and develops a hostile attitude towards the 'other'. Eqbal Ahmad in his book *Confronting Empire* classifies nationalism as, "…an ideology of difference and collective identity [built] on the basis of the Other" (75).

This is exactly what we find in Deepa Mehta's *Earth* where the protagonist exhibits antagonism towards the religious 'other' whose culture and national identity, he considers as polar opposite to his own. Even in *Rajkahini* we observe the creation of nation by illusive boundaries leading to political aggression and violent bloodshed. Regarding the origin of modern nations and the question of ethnicity, Anthony Smith described the fundamental

considerations- that nation must have a distinctive shared culture, an association with specific territory and a sense of solidarity. The construction of personal identity in the subcontinent in connection with nation is significant concerning this aspect. The creation of Hindustan and Pakistan is primarily built upon the solidarity based on religion, with specific borderlines demarcating their geographical territories. However, the process of such cartographic delimitation is imagined and the identity of an individual constructed by such arbitrary borders is not fixed or constant, but rather dynamic and unstable. This is exactly what we witness in Husain's "An Unwritten Epic" and Manto's "Toba Tek Singh" where Pichwa's and Bishan Singh's identity undergo repeated transformations generating a sense of ambiguity, confusion and anxiety. This is analogous withBenedict Anderson's view who has termed nation or nationalism as 'cultural artifacts', "…nation-ness as well as nationalism are cultural artifacts of particular kind… The nation is imagined as community because the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (4-7).

Hence, the construction of personal identity and the cultural determination of one's selfhood remain as a complex process in the socio-political context of the subcontinent. The illusive boundaries that are drawn in order to circumscribe the territory and define the nationality make this even more perplex. The texts analyzed in details just provide a glimpse into this aspect of identity formation, where the issues and debates regarding nation, religion, politics, culture, ethnicity and race are of important concerns.

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Daath Voyage
: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English ISSN 2455-7544
www.daathvoyagejournal.com *Vol.1, No.3, September, 2016*

The 'Woman' Question: Representation Of Women In Ismat Chughtai's Select Short Stories

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Abstract

Born at a time when India was brimming with hope for an independent Nation, Ismat Chughtai not only witnessed the tragic partition but was also deeply influenced by the political and literary activities of the time owing to her interest in reading and writing. The 'pen' was her weapon which empowered her to boldly raise her voice against the injustices meted out particularly to women. By plunging into the vast territory of Urdu literature, she not only made strides in areas of style and literary technique but also led her women contemporaries on a remarkable journey of self-awareness and undaunted creative expression.

Daath Voyage
: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English ISSN 2455-7544
www.daathvoyagejournal.com *Vol.1, No.3, September, 2016*

This paper proposes to look into the nuances of women's movement prevalent at the time when Ismat Chughtai was writing. By taking recourse to her short stories, I shall look into the complexities of the age which led to the formation of her women characters and how Ismat as a progressive writer responded to those times. Her literary oeuvre boasts of a variety of short stories and one needs to look beyond 'Lihaaf' to understand the writer better. She wrote at a time when voices of women were still muffled, let alone their entry into the world of literature. But for Ismat, this was the time when she felt that life needed to be breathed into the minds of young girls and women who were craving to make their mark intellectually. Through this paper, an understanding is sought of what makes Chughtai a proponent of women's liberation and how her characters too are equally ahead in breaking traditions. The focus shall be to understand Chughtai's intricate depiction of the psyche of Indian woman.

Keywords: ' woman ' question, chughtai, progressive, rebel, freedom and feminism.

This paper intends to focus on various factors that governed Ismat Chughtai's thinking and eventually led to her becoming one of the pioneers who chronicled stories about urban, middle class Muslim families with female protagonists, something which only Dr. Rashid Jahan could come up with before this revolutionary writer contributed to the Urdu Cannon. A staunch Feminist and a seminal Urdu writer, Ismat Chughtai deftly plays with words to give meaning to her thoughts and ideas that reflect her identity as a woman who witnessed adversities of the worst kind in the form of a Bloody partition in 1947 along with various political and literary upheavals. Hers is a poignant voice that cannot be ignored since

she continues to exercise tremendous influence on modern feminists and her works too remain contemporary with their myriad aspects.

When Feminism as a movement gained momentum in the West in early nineteenth century, it was primarily concerned with equal political rights for women. However, in India the situation was not quite the same. The ongoing struggle for Independence had canopied everything under its magnanimous shade. It was in this chaotic world that Ismat Chughtai appeared as a proponent of women's rights and with her rebellious attitude even made strides in Urdu language. She wrote in a language now known as Begumati Zubaan which best articulated the zeal and fervour of those times. Ismat Chughtai came forward as a writer who not only wrote bluntly but also spoke vociferously for 'social change', something that all the Progressives stood for. Her female characters are a reflection of reality rather than just being fictional personages whose innocence and compliant behaviour is all that a writer/novelist/poet usually talks about. Since she wrote at a time when female voices were still stifled, her characters often get engulfed in a dilemma whether to conform or to reject and break away with traditional roles. Interestingly, she makes use of her wit and employs techniques like satire in her works to unveil the hypocrisy which was very prevalent in traditional Muslim households. Ismat's bewitching language informed her readers of her consciousness that was aimed at reclaiming for women a space and world long denied to them.

In her short story *Ghar Waali*, Chughtai depicts Laajo as a young wanderer with beguiling beauty who would cast a magic spell on men, they would long to be in her company and were always ready to offer her the best of gifts. But Laajo is sent to Mirza, a pious young unmarried man who fears to accept her in his home but ironically gets physically involved with her later and the story then unfolds in rather unexpected ways. Although Chughtai never scorns directly, she uses language to convey her feelings about a particular event, action, or prevalent cultural tradition. In this case, she hints at the hypocrisy of religious Muslim men who on one hand consider women like Laajo of a fallen nature and on the other hand visit prostitutes in the ghastly silence of the dark. What kind of cultural values were then being upheld by the so called respectable Muslim families is what Chughtai asks blatantly. Women like Laajo are not meant to be wives but are men like Mirza fit to be suitable husbands then? This is a pertinent question which often gets lost in the story.

In a world which was pre-occupied with defining "good women" and which talked about "how to be a good wife", Chughtai questioned the conventional norms and herself refused to embrace purdah and was utterly disturbed with the segregation of women. Unlike other women of her time who would bow down to their "given" status, Ismat challenged the traditional society and expressed her desire to be free from all restraints:

"I wanted to be free and without an education, a woman cannot have freedom."[1]

[1]Chughtai, Ismat. A Life in words: Memoirs by Ismat Chughtai, trans. M. Asaduddin, 2012.

For Ismat, education then was an instrument that would set her free and in a society which discouraged women from attending school and acquiring formal education, she convinced her father to send her to school and later to the University for higher education and Ismat never looked back. As an unconventional writer, she never hesitated in talking about matters like prostitution, homosexuality, love marriages, sexual liaisons which were then considered controversial and writers conveniently chose not to write on these sensitive issues as the society was largely conservative. But Ismat would come forward with stories that dealt with all such issues quite creatively. She had no intentions of gaining popularity by winning hearts, instead was inclined to depict reality as it was. In that sense, she was a born rebel as she herself says:

"There's something in me that militates against putting faith in anyone uncritically…One should first examine all points of disagreement before coming to a consensus."[2]

Therefore when she wrote *Lihaf* she was only treating homosexuality as yet another subject for her story without realizing how the society would view it. She was then probably convicted not for writing on a subject as controversial as this but for being courageous enough to have thought about it in the first place. Themes related to sensuality were never rare in Urdu literature, especially in classical poetry and a few Urdu Masnavis (long poems often celebrating romance) are known to be too explicit. Male homosexuality was not a taboo subject but somehow female homosexuality was not approved of and therefore when Lihaf

[2]Chughtai, Ismat. A Life in words: Memoirs by Ismat Chughtai,trans. M. Asaduddin, 2012

was published, it sent tremors across the subcontinent and Chughtai had to bear scathing criticism. Begum Jaan, the protagonist, is an exemplary of an ideal Muslim woman, but she does have desires of her own which when go unnoticed by Nawab Sahab ,find refuge in her maid servant Rabbo who then brings a ray of hope in her otherwise damned life. The significance of the story lies in its attention to the intricately layered sexual politics of the domestic sphere and the complicated emotional lives of its denizens. However, Chughtai here seems to have a much greater objective. She is in fact targeting the entire 'Zamindari' system in this particular story by suggesting how the landlords or Nawabs would conveniently shut their wives off within the closed walls of the house without even realizing how it affects their psyche adversely. Their movement is restricted and their presence in the public domain is completely out of question Lihaf then becomes a metaphor for what is concealed in the society. Begum Jaan stands in contrast with Gori Bi in the story *Ghunghat* which tells about a married woman who spends her entire life as a virgin because her husband refused to lift her veil on the wedding night. Instead of complaining Gori Bi keeps waiting for her husband while Kale Mian is busy consorting with prostitutes and homosexuals. Goribi's loyalty is quite disturbing for the readers, she is so shy to lift the veil herself that her husband is enraged every time he confronts his veiled bride. Gori Bi has to unfortunately pay the price for being fair and beautiful while her husband is a dark skinned man. His ego is hurt when people talk of a fair girl being married to a dark man. Interestingly, in *Zaroorat*, another short story by Chughtai,, one comes across a bride who isn't beautiful but is married to a handsome man named Rasheed and the story at various places mentions the need for a bride to be more

beautiful. "Dulhan ko Dulha se zyaada khoobsurat hona chahye"[3], these words echo throughout the story which hints at the superficial standards that the society sets for marriage. A girl is always expected to be subservient and unfalteringly loyal, this is what she learns at home and this is what the society teaches her. Through her satirical tone, Chughtai succeeds in unravelling the ugly truths that pervaded her world and influenced her to raise her voice against these practices which she vehemently critiqued. Her women are representative of a society that upheld morality on one hand and ironically messed with the very same moral values on the other hand. Therefore one also often sees a lot of chaos in her stories.

Ismat Chughtai was undoubtedly a feminist but she is not always seen defying tradition. In fact, she is often found tethered to her roots which get reflected in many of her stories. Although her interest was primarily in women, it is also true that she placed her characters in a much larger social context rather than treating them merely within the confines of the *zenana*. In *Bachu Phuphi*she talks of her aunt who was popularly known as 'Bichu' Phuphi because she had a venomous tongue and one hardly heard her speak politely to anyone. However it is the same *Bichu Phuphi* who in the end cries for her brother who is on his death bed and showers him with love and affection, something which was rare to see. Here Chughtai is not at all satirical in tone nor is her intention misleading. She sympathizes with this woman who only spits venom when she speaks but after all has a loving heart. May be Chughtai is also trying to bring home the point that a woman is at the end of the day an epitome of love and mercy even if she has a tongue as bitter as *Bichu Phuphi's.* Here

[3]Chughtai, Ismat. A Life in words: Memoirs by Ismat Chughtai, trans. M. Asaduddin, 2012.

Chughtai's biting tongue is suppressed by Phuphi's raw language that embarrasses almost everyone in the story.

It is interesting to see that Chughtai being a rebel herself somehow fails to imbue her female characters with the same spirit. In fact, her contemporary Saadat Hassan Manto portrays women in his stories as much more stronger and confident individuals. His heroine Saugandhi, a prostitute in the story *Hattak*eventually decides one day to put an end to the exploitation that she had hitherto faced and prefers spending time with her dog rather than her clients or her lover. Here she appears determined in her decision to redeem herself from the slavery of men, something that is rare to find even in the works of Chughtai. Similarly, there's another story titled *Mozel* about a gutsy, beautiful Jewish woman who lives in Bombay. Mozel is a free spirited woman who has control over her life. She overruns her religious leanings to save lives of two individuals of a different faith. A noted Urdu poet Fahmida Riaz expressed her views on Mozel in the following words:

"She is intelligent, far-sighted, decision maker for her own life, strong of heart and mind and not at all sentimental- far more sensible and practical than most of the men around her. In Indian parlance, she is Shakti incarnate as she rises to save two lives."

Women like Saugandhi and Mozel are not very common in Chughtai's literary oeuvre which ultimately leads to the readers wondering as to what exactly was feminist about Chughtai's writings after all. Chughtai's world is replete with women who are traditional and in a way also conformists to a great extent. They rarely question unlike Manto's women who believe

in assessing their role in society and somehow end up lifting themselves and others out of darkness. It is only in stories like *Lihaf* and *Muqaddas Farz* where one finds women taking some initiative to put an end to their grievances. In *Muqaddas Farz*, the protagonist Samina elopes with her boyfriend Tashar Trivedi the day before her wedding and also converts to Hinduism before getting married to him. As the story progresses Samina's parents decide to settle terms with their daughter and son –in-law without them knowing that her parents have secretly planned a second Muslim marriage ceremony which requires Tashar to convert to Islam and Samina to reconvert. However, when the two become aware about this they escape again, this time leaving a letter behind in which Samina expresses her anger and holds her parents guilty for treating her and their son-in-law as puppets. This story, primarily a comment on the arranged marriage system also celebrates Samina's defiant spirit which did not succumb even to her parents' wishes. She is bold and determined and through her Chughtai questions the sanctity of institutions like Marriage and Religion. Apart from these two stories, it is seemingly difficult to think of a woman character who espouses the feminist spirit that Chughtai stood for. Chughtai was evidently critical of men and that gets very well articulated in her stories. For her, men are representative of imprisonment, of eternal domination who only subjugate women in all possible ways. If India as a nation was then being ruled by the British, the female community was in similar ways ruled by the male fraternity. In *Gainda* for instance, Chughtai comes up with a somewhat sentimentalised attack on the sexual exploitation of young female servants by their masters' sons. Gainda, a young widow servant is impregnated by the narrator's brother and consequently chased out of the

house whereas the boy is sent to Delhi to complete his studies. The matter is conveniently brushed under the carpet and it is ultimately Gainda who has to bear the brunt of the consequences. Her child would probably be called illegitimate and she will never again be seen with respect is what Chughtai is suggesting. However, the person who actually is responsible for causing trouble in Gainda's life is never even questioned but is instead considered to have been trapped by the maid servant. Chughtai is obviously ridiculing the hypocritic ideals that governed the society and urging her readers to assess a woman's status in society through an unbiased lens. Although women in Chughtai do not challenge the very notion of fixed identities, of birth-bound allegiances to religion and community, they do not completely shy away from experimenting with their lives and taking chances, they might not be as free spirited as Manto's women but they nevertheless share the same streak of resistance that gets reflected in his works too.

Chughtai is definitely capable of using words to best suit her purpose. She is particularly interested in understanding the female psyche which undergoes sweeping changes owing to varied experiences of a woman. It is interesting to note that even her narrator, most of the times the author herself is a girl with enough curiosity and someone who observes the minutest detail in daily chores and consequently in Life itself .Through her incisive language sheraises questions in a manner that her admirers are often left in awe and wonder as to how she manages to sneak into everyday lives of people and bring out instances that unnerve her and incite the rebel in her. One may find it interesting to read what Manto had commented on Chughtai as a woman writer:

> Ismat's pen and tongue both run fast. When she starts writing, her ideas race ahead and the words cannot catch up with them. When she speaks, her words seem to tumble over one another.[4]

Being an iconoclast, asking questions was something inherent in Chughtai. She believed in looking beyond established institutions and justified her arguments on the basis of her experiences and knowledge. Although Ismat's female characters are not entirely dormant, they do lack action. However, her women at least 'think' andthat is central to Chughtai's writings. As mentioned earlier, she is focussed on probing into the psyche of women and thereby lays bare the fact that her women are after all 'aware' of their condition and they are conscious of the social constructs that limit their existence as a human being. Chughtai is well known for her unapologetic and unabashedly realistic portrayal of women, particularly bound in the shackles of gender. One may always ask the question, 'What were Chughtai's women like?' Were they only a category of people that Chughtai wrote about because she could relate to them since she too was a woman or was there a different motive altogether? Being a product of an age that was brimming with hope for an independent nation, Chughtai creates her characters, particularly women with the same sensitivity with which she writes about Partition. Had it not been so she would never have created a character like Kubra in her celebrated work *Chauthi ka Jora* who works strenuously day and night to please her would be husband who has a callous attitude and never notices Kubra's unwavering devotion, her sister Hameeda however senses this and feels sorry for her elder sister whom she loves

[4]Manto, Hassan Saadat. Ismat: Her Life, Her Times, ed. By Sukrita Paul Kumar and Sadique. 2002.

dearly. Here, Chughtai beautifully brings forth the nuances in relationships by referring broadly to the tradition of Chauthi.

Chughtai felt that life needed to be breathed into the minds of young girls and women who were craving to make their mark intellectually and it is with this purpose that she used her pen, her weapon, her sword. Her words truly echo what Helene Cixous had rightly said in one of her essays:

"Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies."[5]

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[5]Cixous, Helen. The Laugh of the medusa, 1975.

Daath Voyage
: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English ISSN 2455-7544
www.daathvoyagejournal.com *Vol.1, No.3, September, 2016*

If I Were Young Again

Michael Lee Johnson

Itasca, Illinois USA

Piecemeal summer dies:
long winter spreads its blanket again.

For ten years I have lived in exile,
locked in this rickety cabin, shoulders
jostled up against open Alberta sky.

If I were young again, I'd sing of coolness of high
mountain snow flowers, sprinkle of night glow-blue meadows;
I would dream and stretch slim fingers into distant nowhere,
yawn slowly over endless prairie miles.

The grassland is where in summer silence grows;
in evening eagles spread their wings
dripping feathers like warm honey.

If I were young again, I'd eat pine cones, food of birds,

share meals with wild wolves;

I'd have as much dessert as I wanted,

reach out into blue sky, lick the clouds off my fingertips.

But I'm not young anymore and my thoughts tormented

are raw, overworked, sharpened with misery

from torture of war and childhood.

For ten years now I've lived locked in this unstable cabin,

inside rush of summer winds,

outside air beaten dim with snow.

Daath Voyage
: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English ISSN 2455-7544
www.daathvoyagejournal.com *Vol.1, No.3, September, 2016*

Flight of the Eagle

Michael Lee Johnson

Itasca, Illinois USA

From the dawn, dusty skies
comes the time when
the eagle flies-
without thought,
without aid of wind,
like a kite detached without string,
the eagle in flight leaves no traces,
no trails, no roadways-
never a feather drops
out of the sky.

: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English ISSN 2455-7544

www.daathvoyagejournal.com *Vol.1, No.3, September, 2016*

Sundown, Fall

Michael Lee Johnson

Itasca, Illinois USA

Fall, everything is turning yellow and golden.
No wind, Indian summer, bright day,
wind charms with Indian enchantment,
last brides marry before first snowfall,
grass growth slows down, retreats,
bushes cut back with chills, retreats,
haven of the winter grows legs, strong,
learns baby steps, pushes itself
up slowly against my patio door, freezes,
and says, “soon, soon, Spring I’ll be there.”
Winter is sweeping up what is left of fall,
making room for shorter day's longer nights.
I hear the echoes of the change of seasons,
until next sundown sunflowers grow.

: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English ISSN 2455-7544

www.daathvoyagejournal.com *Vol.1, No.3, September, 2016*

Unidentified

Debanjan Mitra

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Department of English,

Jadavpur University, Kolkata

West Bengal, India

I live amidst torrents

To roam deserted alleys

Full of soaring garbage

Here the waste and the sun

Guard my blind vision.

And in that hoax

A Bullet comes

Unspecified yet sudden

Underneath a rooftop

Hiding my scanty self

From Rain.

The victim Falls

Blood, Amen

No Death Certificates

Unidentified…

More and more rain

For the rain

It raineth everyday.

Daath Voyage
: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English ISSN 2455-7544
www.daathvoyagejournal.com *Vol.1, No.3, September, 2016*

Razia

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She weaved in the night

Dreaming in her stupors

Of her fight

Of her chores.

Those that are slain

Have returned her with no gain

She failed to her men

For not becoming one of their beloved domestic women.

For here she never utters praises

Governs all with poises

And what are these

If her husband notes that their relation is deterred, oh please

You may say she is a promise

Not a partner

But governance, lets' not have that from her

Yet she performs wise, amiss!

And then what could men offer

But blood and smeared knives

If marriage proves disaster

And king proves in submissive wives?

Daath Voyage
: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English ISSN 2455-7544
www.daathvoyagejournal.com *Vol.1, No.3, September, 2016*

The Match Makers

Shobha Diwakar

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C.P. Mahila Mahavidhyalaya, Jabalpur

Madhya Pradesh, India

They are there…

In your house and mine

Mesmerized, hypnotized… and dazed

You are getting on in years

24… 26… or 28?

Not married yet

I know a family … a good one

Who might be interested?

You can try

That is how it goes on

Surprisingly

These good Samaritan

Have daughters… unmarried

26… 28… 30

I ask

"Why don't you try this match?"

The answer stuns me

You see

My daughter (s) can wait

You look worried

: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English ISSN 2455-7544

www.daathvoyagejournal.com *Vol.1, No.3, September, 2016*

Crows

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It fed on the corpse

That lay dead on the road

As dead as dead could be

Nobody to claim its sorrowful state

'It' fed on it ungraciously

Perched on its back

Digging holes after holes

Not a tear did it shed

No pain felt 'he'

Silently they watched

And

Crudely they passed

Some of their wheels

Rolled on

Only then did 'it' fly

But

Soon returned to try

To feast on ‘its’ bosom free

The ‘thana’ beside it

The police around it

Ignored

The dead

That lay crushed and preyed

On the bare… naked road

The stink and the stench

That followed you long

Provoked you to feel its fate

A human life gone

No one to mourn

Bury … or cremate

Is that… a human’s fate?

Daath Voyage
: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English ISSN 2455-7544
www.daathvoyagejournal.com *Vol.1, No.3, September, 2016*

Scream

Sunil Sharma

Principal

Bharat College, Mumbai

Maharashtra, India

Pigeons on the wire,

Rain-water

Dripping

Fly off

Abruptly

Scared

By the angry blast of the

A school bus, idling

On an early-morning street,

In an Indian suburb.

Daath Voyage
: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English ISSN 2455-7544
www.daathvoyagejournal.com *Vol.1, No.3, September, 2016*

Without shelter

Sunil Sharma

Principal

Bharat College, Mumbai

Maharashtra, India

Daily---

Pigeons and crows

Perch on cable lines

In the neighbourhood---

The new avian homeless,

In hundreds,

Their green nests

Destroyed ruthlessly---

For the overpriced

Skyscrapers.

: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English ISSN 2455-7544

www.daathvoyagejournal.com *Vol.1, No.3, September, 2016*

Stillness vs. motion

Sunil Sharma

Principal

Bharat College, Mumbai

Maharashtra, India

The downpour

Slanting and sudden,

Drives away everyone indoors;

Except a solitary rock pigeon

Sitting on a cable,

Still---as Zen monk

A solid contrast of

Stillness and motion.

Daath Voyage
: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English ISSN 2455-7544
www.daathvoyagejournal.com *Vol.1, No.3, September, 2016*

Mandodari [1]

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Kerala, India.

"Queen Mandodari!!! The mighty Ravana is no more"

A trembling voice declare

Vanquished by the divine arms, betrayed by his own blood

Pre-destined Yugas[2] ahead by sages----

Mandodari closed her chamber doors

Her heart –an overburdened corpus of pains, her body, shivering with disbelief

This sandalwood paste, it torments her, the red vermilion casts a mocking smile

The royal robes draped around her sinless body swayed in the breeze

The breeze--- the breeze--- laden with the smell of her lord's bruised body

She remembered Tara's[3] words as she became a mute spectator of sibling rivalry

How did she endure the final moments of Vali[4]?

She remembered the pain of Sita[5] as she languished in an alien land

[1] Madodari: Wife of Ravana
[2] Yuga in Hindu tradition is an epoch within a four age cycle
[3] Tara is the queen of Kishkindha and the wife of the monkey king Vali
[4] Vali , the monkey king of Kishkindha was killed by Lord Rama

Far away from her royal throne

She remembered the lament of Shoorpanakha[6]

Who lost her husband at the hands of her brother—

She remembered the curse of Vedavathi[7]

As she lay, crushed like a flower beneath the mighty king of Lanka

Her ears echoed a thousand wails, pangs of separation, death, destruction

And NOW, now it is my turn

The line has crossed to this dark spot of absolute sorrow

Somewhere, the royal curtains flutter in the gale of victory

The land is divided, torn apart, dissected ----

New rulers pledge their allegiance to their leader—

Can't they wait till my lord's blood dries up?

The monkeys dance in frenzied madness

They join their hands and dance around his body—they laugh!!!

O Indrajith! O Meghanad! My sons! I lost you all

So this is the pain of solitude!!

The stars, the stars are after all right

Pre-destined! Everything happens for a reason—they say

The Avatar has a mission and it has to be accomplished—they say

[5] Sita is the wife of Lord Rama
[6] Ravana's sister
[7] An incarnation of Goddess Lakshmi who curses Ravana for violating her

So why do we live? What is the relevance of Karma?

The string of my lord's Veena lay broken, what remains is the sound of empty rustle

Blood, blood all across the golden walls of Lanka

The Rakhshasas are preparing a pyre, the pyre that engulfs the whole Universe

I can see them jumping into its secret labyrinths, one by one, chanting the name of my Lord

I can see yet another pyre, a pyre burning bright, flames from a chaste body

They declare –"It is the pyre of Sita for Lord Rama is suspicious of his wife"

Along with Sita burn the last remnants of Dharma

Let me not wait; Let me choose my final moments unlike Sita

"Rakhshasas" ordered Mandodari "Prepare my Pyre".

Daath Voyage
: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English ISSN 2455-7544
www.daathvoyagejournal.com *Vol.1, No.3, September, 2016*

Further Research

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Thinking about God,

when I was a child

First I was told

God needs NOT

any explanation

since, it is necessary

and not contingent

Confused by concepts

conceptualization,

I was then told

God is ‘UNcaused CAUSE’

for the universe

realization

My question however

still remains since

God's existence is

a separate

consideration

But what I was told was not

a grounding recognition

Daath Voyage
: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English ISSN 2455-7544
www.daathvoyagejournal.com *Vol.1, No.3, September, 2016*

A Change in the opposite Direction

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"*Fire* of passion"

Metaphoric fashion

Applied in our youth

We know not the truth

Still the heart beats

The mind is in peace

We feel quite jubilant

Growing exuberant

But later in life

When we have strife

Our phrase is changed

The words, unchanged

we're drawing ire

straits in dire

"*Passion* of fire"

Daath Voyage
: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English ISSN 2455-7544
www.daathvoyagejournal.com *Vol.1, No.3, September, 2016*

Metamorphosis

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Before seeing you,

I was like a child

Nothing of an art

But weaned after

you entered my heart

Before seeing you,

the world's attraction

was not a fraction

But slacken after

you entered my world

Before seeing you,

my outside world

was in conflict with

the inside world

But vanished after

you made my worlds

Before seeing you,

A scientist I was

knowing math & rule

But a change after

you entered so cool

Before seeing you,

I was not as you

But a poet grew

to write about you

or this very coup.

Daath Voyage
: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English ISSN 2455-7544
www.daathvoyagejournal.com *Vol.1, No.3, September, 2016*

Book Review

The Dreams Of Tipu Sultan (A Play). Karnad, Girish

Tripti Tyagi

Research Scholar

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THE DREAMS OF TIPU SULTAN (A Play). KARNAD, GIRISH. Oxford University Press: Delhi: 2004. pp. 125. Rs. 245/-(Paperback). ISBN-13: 978-0195664768

Book Review: Tripti Tyagi. New Delhi -110052.

A historical play 'The Dreams of Tipu Sultan' by the playwright Girish Karnad dwells in the history of Tipu Sultan, the monarch of Mysore (India) during the 18th century depicting his struggle against the Britishers who had almost established themselves as colonial power in India and were also expanding their military consolidations[1]. It portrays Tipu Sultan who is recalcitrant to thwart Britishers away from his nation. Nonetheless, it conforms to a school of thought that outshines him as a martyr[2] because he died fighting against the British military forces in 1799. In fact, when the BBC commissioned him to write a radio play in 1996 to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Indian Independence, he laid the best moment to venerate the martyrdom of Tipu Sultan to his nation. It was an excellent opportunity as well to dissent the critical views of other historical schools of thoughts that subsume him as a tyrant or an

"orthodox Muslim"[3]. His distraught over those remarks coerced him to describe Tipu as 'one of the most politically perceptive and tragic figures in modern Indian History'[4] and he credits his play commemorating Tipu Sultan's contribution to free India from the politicized clutches of the Britishers during the colonial period.

This genre also encapsulates a dream allegory representing the Sultan's dream visions as his source of inspiration. In fact, he used to see dreams and had recorded his thoughts in a diary[5]. Some of his dreams are used by Karnad to evidentially state the Sultan's perlocutionary acts over the dilemma of the hypocrisy of some Indian rulers and untoward expansion of the Britishers that may harm his nation in distant future if not at all stopped. Freudian method of 'the idea that the dream concerns itself chiefly with the future, whose form it surmises in advance- a relic of the prophetic significance with which dreams were once invested- now becomes the motive for translating into the future the meaning of the dream which has been found by means of symbolic interpretation'[6] is related to the character Tipu's dreams which were seen to be used as a motif to reach to an inference of evading the stereotypes and the Britishers. In his struggle against the onslaught of the British, it is his dreams that sustained him, 'spoke to him' and guided him in his public and personal life[7].

However at the same time, Karnad shows how his uncanny approach towards his dreams which were flanked by fathomed hopes leads to his end. Contrary to the content of his dreams, he was deceived by his own employees who had deduced to their avarice in the Subsidiary Alliance[8] that took his life in the fourth Anglo Mysore war in 1799.

Regarding structure, this play consists of two inter – dependent acts where in the first act begins with the end semantically by referring to his corpse and the second act delivers a dramatic irony in Tipu's life wherein he is unacquainted with the deceitful plans all around and becomes a target later. Dreams have occupied both the acts to bring his consistent phantasy[9] because these have depicted his motif of not only defeating the Britishers but also to develop his kingdom on modern concepts and to enhance it congenially secular. The plot of the historical play subsumes the conversation between two historians; Colonel Mackenzie, the oriental[10] scholar and Mir Husain Ali Kirmani, the representative of the colonized. The former professes objective approach in compiling historiography on Tipu Sultan whereas Kirmani perceives selective memory in narrating about his ruler.

Besides, the play utters only covert history and does not specify each minute detail like accession, wars and marriage and other rituals etc. Dr. Ramachandra Deva, a playwright who says that The Dreams of Tipu Sultan limits itself to efficiently dramatizing the external details of history and not its inner contradictions. The play also does not bring any fictitious character like Aziz and Azam in Tughlaq (1964) for Comic Relief yet all the historical characters are depicted usefully. Therefore, in this sense play is utmost historical with facile generalizations.

1. Sultan Singh Dhurwey. Social Relevance and Modernity in the Historical Plays of Girish Karnad. Periodic Research. Vol .II. Issue -I, August -2013. ISSN No. 2231-0045. p. 142.
2. Irfan Habib, ed. Confronting Colonialism, Resistance and Modernization under Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan. New Delhi: Tulika, 1999. (Irfan hails him a martyr.)
3. H.D. Sharma. The Real Tipu. Varanasi: Rishi Publications, 1991. & Mark Wilks. Historical Sketches of the South of India. USA: Cambridge University Press, 2013. (Both the writers hail him as a tyrant.)
4 S. Bageshree. Visionary Dreams. The Hindu. Online Edition of India's National Newspaper. 15 July 2004.
5. Tipu Sultan's diary of manuscripts containing his dreams is available at Nation Library in London.
6. Sigmund Freud. Interpreation of Dreams.1900.
7. Dr. Anshoo Sharma. The Constructs of History, Memory and Dreams Karnad's The Dreams of Tipu Sultan. Research Analysis and Evaluation. VOL –IV. Issue- 38. November 2012, ISSN 0975-3486. p.55.
8. A.D. Majumdar, H.C. Rayahaudhari and Kalikinkar Datta. An Advanced History of India. London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd. 1963. (He defines Subsidiary Alliance as a diplomatic policy by the British Government to sustain its rule in India.)
9. M. A. Habib. Criticism. P.577. (Phantasy is a term defined by Freud to show a wish that motivates one to do day dreaming.)
10. Edward Said. Orientalism. England: Penguin books, 2003. (Said's post-colonial theory of orientalism analyses how the western narratives (by Orientals) try to depict eastern as marginalized and inferior. Here Karnad's narrative is a response to such approach.)