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## **Jack Kerouac's Road to Postmodernity: Tracing the Beat Rhythm through Lyotardian Sensibility**

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**Abstract:** Jack Kerouac was an author of the iconic text *On the Road* that gave birth to the Beat Generation in America. He was the spokesperson of this cult movement who also bugled the advent of Postmodernity in America much before than the claimed Euro-centric origins of the movement. The aim of the paper is to critique *On the Road* utilizing the critical equipment of Jean Françoise Lyotard, a thinker of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The clarity of his thoughts helped to define the postmodernist tendencies prevalent in the works of Kerouac. The text showcases that postmodernism did not emerge in the artistic or cultural arenas of European Sixties but was a product of much earlier American Post-war transitional years. His work remains an epilogue to Modernism and a prologue to Postmodernism. The paper would contend that the American Postmodernist in literature begins with Beat writings.

**Keywords:** Postmodernism, Beat movement, Paralogy, Metanarrative, Grand narrative, Differend, Sublime.

Postmodernism has been a decisive instrument in the tool box of critical theory. Much before the coinage of the term 'Postmodernism' in the criticism terminology, the Beat writer Jack Kerouac had bugled its advent by denouncing the rigid societal structures in his writing style, narration and even in the way he lived. The paper would scrutinize the text of *On the*



*Road* from the perspective of Jean Franoise Lyotard's critical framework. Lyotard's philosophy highlights the postmodernist tendencies that have been an innate part of Kerouac's repertoire. Lyotardian concepts would be extremely relevant in interpreting the transitional Post-war phase in America. In the process the contribution of *On the Road* in establishing postmodernity in America would become visible. Kerouac's seminal work *On the Road* was a stimulus to the tremors of arriving postmodernity in America much before the European claims of the movement's inheritance. The novel transformed the American literary landscape and a Beat Generation raised its head from the sinister alleys, crowning Jack Kerouac- the King of Beatniks.

Kerouac's works and life depicts an advent of Postmodernism much before it is registered in the European criticism. The Postmodernism as a phenomenon was prevalent in 1940's in America instead of the claimed decade of 1960's in Europe. Jack Kerouac's lifestyle and the body of his works bespeak of the transitional period where postmodernity began to emerge. The literary notoriety gained by Kerouac, the hyped image of him as the trendiest fashion icon by media and his being a writer for being famous are the effects of the postmodernist tremors in womb. Kerouac's work *On the Road* plays an important role in giving birth to Postmodernism. Kerouac has alluded to this changing era with his stylistic breakthrough, acuity and originality.

Postmodernism, as a term, contains its own paradox. The word 'post' refers to an aftermath as well as it includes the sense of being constructed on the base of Modernism. In Lyotard's work *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, he differentiates between modernist and postmodernist art. He argues that the art forms of these periods incorporate Sublime and also express the inexpressible. Lyotard states that the modernist art reduces the enormity of an event to a recognizable form. But the postmodern work by contrast presents the un-presentable in presentation itself and in the process denies the work to have a recognizable form. Postmodernist art refuses to be contained by the accepted



notions of art forms. In this vein, Kerouac has called his novel *On the Road* an 'Epos' - falling outside the definition of an epic. Kerouac's writing style was the first shock to the accepted ways of book writing. The first version of *On the Road* was written in record twenty days, single spaced paragraph of 175,000 words, typed on a 120 foot long taped paper scroll. It is said that Kerouac took the scroll to Robert Giroux, the editor of Harcourt Brace and rolled it out. But Giroux asked him how he could print *that*. Books could not be afforded to look like it. This novel became a legend.

Kerouac was aware of the repercussions as he had given a voice to the silenced and the marginalized communities in the work. He had destabilized the hierarchical standards. Hereby compatibility can be observed with Lyotard's Postmodernism. For Lyotard, Postmodernism is not a chronologically demarcated period. It is a response to a changing culture. Lyotard's idea of Postmodernism, stresses on the need of recognizing the failings in a system and resisting the dominant modes in practice. Kerouac's work gives the center stage to the marginalized forms that form the very crux of Beat life. The novel describes a trans-racial, transgendered countercultural backdrop. It defines those changes which surfaced up in the post-war generation. America was the only country to emerge as a leading power from the ashes of the World Wars. The Eisenhower era followed the dictum of least interference. The state absolved from an active participation in the lives of the citizens. The stability so achieved was temporal as insecurities were depicted in maniacal car journeys by the heroes of Kerouac's work. In Lyotardian terminology it can be seen as breaking of a grand narrative.

Lyotard's concept when applied to the novel magnified the areas depicting heterogeneity. In the novel *On the Road*, Sal Paradise (Jack Kerouac) and Dean Moriarty (Neal Cassady) journey across America and towards the end they undertake a trip to Mexico. The journeys of the two heroes emphasized on the multi-perspectives of viewing a nation and strengthened the notions of believing in the necessity of difference. The novel strongly rejected the defining narratives. In Lyotard's sensibility, the Metanarratives fail in a



postmodern world. In the post- industrial society, the grand narratives of Speculation and Freedom also collapse. Lyotard asserted that no effort should be made to conceive a universalizing narrative. This breaking of narratives was essential. It gave space to the multitudes of stories that were subdued earlier by the Metanarrative. The two American Beats are in the search of 'IT' which is a fathomless ecstasy. They are poor and beaten down but the spiritual search in their conscious minds elevates them. They gain *beato*- the beatific existence in their journey. Sal and Dean's friendship saw many ups and downs but it was always the road which joined them. Kerouac's text is the prophetic roadmap charting a search for life in the fellaheen world lying on the verge of the consumerist western civilization. The novel has an inbuilt tendency of non-conformism. The characters have offered resistance in their own unique way. They use drugs for getting ecstatic experience. Sex becomes a potent tool to shatter the traditional ways of thinking. The non-conformism displayed by the characters synchronizes with the concepts of Lyotard. His postmodernism involves an interrogation of the hegemonic structures set by the society.

The journey taken by Sal Paradise and Dean Moriarty (Neal Cassady) becomes a kaleidoscopic search for life. Sal undertakes the journey to escape the monotonous life and to overcome depression from a failed marriage and illness. He takes four trips along with other beat figures across America. Hitch- hiking on his route, he wants to reach the Promised Land of Denver. On his truck ride he becomes aware of multiple narratives which go into the making of a nation. He receives a cultural shock in a 'Wild West Week' celebration. In this event a simulacra of the pristine Texas glory is created. People imitate Texan life in cowboy hats and boots. This simulation is far way from reality. Sal's stay at Chad King's house in Denver reveals the downside of rising capitalism. Chad's father had invented a spot remover that was now copied by a big firm. While Chad's family lived in poverty, the company was soaring high in profits. Capitalism had made people subservient to its demands. In the name of progress, Lyotard says that system becomes a 'vanguard machine' which is dragging



humanity and de-humanizing it. People are hegemonized by totalitarian discourses, grand narratives and metanarratives.

Kerouac shows how the upcoming Postmodernity is an incredulity displayed towards such metanarratives. There are two types of grand-narratives- the narrative of emancipation and speculative grand narrative. In the grand narrative of emancipation, knowledge becomes a liberating force. Kerouac thus attempts to provide an antidote to metanarrative and grand narrative constructions of prosperity under the garb of Capitalism. The speculative grand narrative ends in a realization of the state of non-progress. Similarly Postmodernist void becomes prominent as in the Wild West Week, and thus the grand narrative of emancipation breathes its last. Sal Paradise also declares that he can feel the world collapsing around him. He has understood the raggedness of America and thus the idealistic visions start evaporating.

Sal meets Carlo Marx (Allen Ginsberg) in Denver. Carlo makes him realize through his poems that language itself has a linear progression and dreams are a mosaic of the figments of imagination. Sal witnesses the disintegration of myths thus upholding the advent of postmodernity. In LA he meets a Mexican girl, Terry. They make love and she tells him to believe in *manana*: tomorrow things would be better. Kerouac makes his protagonist feel the presence of the Grey myth of the West and dark myth of the East. Death becomes the ultimate reality that Sal is afraid of. Here one can see a parallel of Kerouac's beliefs and Lyotard's philosophy. Lyotard's Postmodernism is differentiated from Modernism as it exhibits a celebration instead of fear. This fear finds a vent in the make-up of Dean Moriarty (Neal Cassady) for he is a performer who is not afraid of anything- not even death. Sal sees that Dean was mad in his movements that included:

a shaking of the head, up and down, sideways; jerky, vigorous hands; quick walking, sitting, crossing the legs, uncrossing, getting up, rubbing the hands, rubbing his fly, hitching his pant, looking up...and sudden slitting of the eyes to see everywhere (Kerouac, *On the Road* 110)



Dean in his madness embodies the Lyotardian principle of Paralogy. Lyotard argues that in modern science the new discoveries that take place open up new language games. They defy the existing norms thus changing our former opinions. Paralogy- the false logic has the potential to revert the existing understanding of the world. In the novel, Dean becomes the fountainhead of power that destabilizes logic. In Postmodern transitions, Paralogy of Dean helps to form new language games nullifying every other format. Postmodernism is not then an utterly hopeless era where anything goes, rather it is a continuum where resistance has to take birth. The pinnacle of Dean's games is reached where he asks Sal to make love to his girlfriend Marylou in order to see how she makes love to another man. Sex here becomes a beatific experience where, "three children of the earth try(ing) to decide something in the night and having all the weight of past centuries ballooning in the dark before them." (Kerouac, *OTR* 125). At one point Sal justifies Deans' fulfillment of physical love. For him it becomes a medium to relish physical sensation of the source of life bliss, and a way of returning to innocence. For Sal, love becomes a refuge. Late in their journey, Dean shows the way to throw off every burden. He convinces Sal and Marylou to strip and run wild celebrating their existence.

Sal and Dean visit Old Bull Lee (William Burroughs). They take drugs which become a mode to enter into ecstasy. Old Bull Lee's drug intake has led him to an awareness of seven personalities within him, "each growing worse and worse....The top personality was an English Lord, the bottom an idiot. Halfway he was an old negro" (Kerouac, *OTR* 137). No authentic self is sustained by him and his body becomes a site of conflict. Lyotard claims that in postmodernism the authentic self ceases to exist. The identity crisis can also be witnessed as a deconstruction taking place due to an instability set in the post-war years in America. The drug induced hallucinations bespeak of 'cannibalization' of real self in a post-industrial society. Old Bull Lee's wife Jane (Joan Vollmer) enjoys reading the classified newspaper. When Sal asks her if she is looking for jobs she replies that she was reading the want ads as they are the most interesting component of a newspaper. The classified newspaper advertises



the ads that are being produced by a system. In Postmodernist space, as Lyotard says the Denotative and Prescriptive principles fail to sustain themselves. Denotations prescribe the world whereas Prescriptions tend to change it. The classified space is a sheer mockery on the system. In the first instance, modern politics deals in Prescriptions which are based on Denotations, as Simon Malpas writes, “if the good of society is X, we should do Y” (Malpas 5). Secondly in the Totalitarian regimes as well as democracies, Prescriptions are not given down from any authority but are imbibed by people. In *On the Road*, Old Bull Lee and Jane challenge the Denotative and Prescriptive principles making every authoritative voice redundant. They thwart the system but Dean’s madness engulfs it altogether.

In the next spring journey a new height is embarked by Dean and Sal. They give lifts to hobos, visit pubs, and listen to jazz. It becomes visible what is common between them- the Road. By living a ragged beat life they are participating in the void of Postmodernism. The void can be discovered in their lives when they discuss their roles in the family. Dean’s marriages, divorces and the kids from this experience do not curtail his exuberance for life. Through the application of Lyotardian philosophy, in Dean Moriarty’s case one can observe the formation of a ‘Differend’. It is a concept given by Lyotard which refers to a wrong occurring at a particular moment. Differend occurs when both good and evil occur at the same time. Sal sympathizes with Dean saying, “ Poor, poor Dean- the devil himself had never fallen further; in idiocy, with infected thumb, surrounded by the battered suitcases of his motherless feverish life across America and back numberless times, an undone bird. “ (Kerouac *OTR* 178 ) The presence of good and evil breaks the stereotype image of hero-villain boy. Dean embodies the Differend himself. In a Differend one faces the situation where all that remains is injustice. One is prevented from having a role in the game of justice. Language is unable to explain the event and as a consequence the victim is thrown into ‘silence’. No one approves of Dean’s life and he cannot utter a single word to defend himself when a friend scolds him. For Lyotard:





The Differend is a moment of silence, a stutter in the flow of language where the right words will not come. It marks a point of suffering where an injustice cannot find a space to make itself heard where an injury is silenced and becomes a 'wrong'. Differends are a point of departure for Lyotard's exploration of the politics and philosophy of language in *the Differend*. (Malpas 60).

The Injustice in Lyotardian sensibility manifests in the novel as Dean is blamed by his fellows for being a selfish maniac. But they cannot understand that Dean Moriarty has stopped role-playing. He is only following his urge to MOVE on the road. He inquires, "What's your road man?...holy boy road, mad man road, rainbow road, guppy road, any road. It's an anywhere road for anybody anyhow. Where body how?" (Kerouac, *OTR* 237).

The next Mexico trip of Sal and Dean is a version of apocalyptic tone of postmodern. Together Sal and Dean challenge certain language games and create their own rules. According to Lyotard language is a medium to explicate the play of language games. There are three features of language games as given by Lyotard. First, the language games are an object of contract between the players. Second rules have to be sustained. Third, every utterance is a move of the game. The language games then decide the relationships and bonding in a society. The language game played in the void, has the ability to say the unsaid. This ability has been achieved by Dean for he is a hipster who has abandoned every responsibility. They traverse tracing the fellaheen civilization of Mexico that offers a contrast to the consumer culture hypocrisies. America has a sense of finite reality which is generated by the consumerist industry. Kerouac's reaction against this is a reverence for residue left in Mexican culture with its depthless signifiers.

Kerouac's fellaheen world is the pure primitive humanity where ecstasy can be found. This raw ecstatic force is defined as "IT". This "IT" can be treated as a version of Lyotard's Sublime. Lyotard's presumption is based on the notion of understanding how postmodernist



art is empowered by Sublime. It demolishes the mediocrity of general opinion and employs the power of sublimity in analyzing the limit set by the society. The cause of Sublime remains un-deciphered yet it can be conceived. Lyotardian Sublime is understood in two ways: one termed by him as Modern and the other is Postmodern. One symbolizes modernist melancholia and the other is postmodernist jubilation. Modernist sadness is burdened with a longing for the world of stability whereas Postmodernist Sublime discovers new channels of expression. Postmodernist work breaks rules, challenges hierarchy and raises questions against hierarchy. In Kerouac's text, the "IT" becomes the epitome of Sublime. It is an ambiguous experience that constructs and demolishes itself. The aesthetic experience of Kant is bifurcated into the Beautiful and the Sublime. Whereas Lyotard's Sublime occurs with a simultaneous existence of pain and pleasure. Sublime brings rapture and horrifies at the same time. The pain represents modernist nostalgia and pleasure embodies postmodernist celebration. The Sublime for Sal crystallizes in Dean Moriarty. Dean has the ability to enter ecstasy through sex, drugs and music. He imparts this wisdom to Sal. Nothing matters if one enters into the labyrinth of "IT"-the spastic power.

Sal also becomes aware that Dean is the victim as much as he is a con-man. In Mexico, Sal gets dysentery and fever and becomes unconscious for many days. Dean deserts him and leaves for New York. A simultaneous existence of dark and light elements emerges in Dean's character. The absolute goodness is countered by absolute evil. In such a situation no justice can be excluded. A residue of the feeling of injustice remains. Lyotard has elaborated the concept of 'Justice' in a heterogeneous environment. His concept in context of the novel helps in understanding the injustice done to marginalized communities. Beats are the spokesperson of marginalized voices. They as a community include hobos, pimps, prostitutes, blacks, Hispanics, junkies and drug peddlers. Sal and Dean through their message of liberation provide justice to the down trodden victims of a Capitalist society. Based on Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, Lyotard explains the injustice, by introducing the theory of genre of discourse. Judgment takes place when a specific genre of discourse is selected to



understand the particular state of affairs. Judgments can thus be classified into two types- Determinate judgments and Reflective judgments. Determinate judgments take place when we fit in a given idea of a particular formulated context. Determinate judgments are made by the bourgeoisie on the Beats. In case of reflective judgment, a strange new event occurs and a search for context is generated. Lyotard gives an analogy of an archipelago where a navigator has to find his way linking various islands. Judgment becomes the basis of sailing among the islands. Reflective judgment sustains itself in the postmodernist philosophy as there are no pre-fixed laws of attributing justice. Dean becomes the 'crazy Ahab' who then gives direction to the crew. Beats then indulge in Reflective judgments and give a new terminology to the system. Through their freedom they refuse to be judged by the norms of determinate judgments. Instead they pass on reflective judgments that initiate a role reversal between the dictator and victim.

The quest motif takes the heroes of the novel to various places. This technique helps Kerouac to depict the transition taking place over the whole continent. In the end one realizes that there is no escape from reality. Dean says, "No more land! We can't go any farther 'cause there ain't no more land." (*Kerouac, OTR* 161). The road takes you back from where you started. Dean had come knocking at Sal's door and their journey had begun. In the end the 'madman' Dean comes again and leaves without Sal. Dean's behavior though muted still carries a resistance. He symbolizes the Lyotardian 'Seed of Disruption' whose impact remains on Sal and at a macrocosmic level, on the generations to come. Dean comes to meet Sal in New York from San Francisco, coming five weeks before the scheduled time. Sal has to leave him around a street corner as he has to go with another friend, but he continues to think of Dean who had come just to see him.



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## **History, Historiography, and Postmodern Theory**

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### **Abstract:**

The controversial and oft-debated movement of Postmodernism calls to question, and revises, traditional understanding and practices of history as well as historiography. Through an overview of the works of three important postmodernist theorists – Baudrillard, Vattimo, and Jameson, this paper seeks to explore historical consciousness in the recent decades, especially in light of the catchy, but problematic, postmodern pronouncements of the ‘end of history.’ Critical theory’s engagement with the questions of history and historiography, in the time of an alleged crisis of historical consciousness, is an important step towards a reassessment of cultural and ideological apparatuses that make up the postmodern world. This paper considers just what path this reassessment has taken in recent theory.

**Keywords:** postmodernism, history, end of history, modernity.

History more or less emerged as an academic discipline as a result of the project of Enlightenment. Historical understanding and the processes of historiography have undergone many changes since the Enlightenment began. But it was only in the twentieth century, especially the late twentieth century, that the methods of writing and narrating history came to be studied, revealing the gaps and preconceptions involved in one’s understanding of history as a subject. With Foucault, History came to be established as a discourse as much subject to the equations of power and control as any other. With Hayden White, the narrativity of history became prominent, and with Barthes, the linguistic and semiotic



considerations that went into the writing of history gained force. Since after the Second World War, the intentions, effects and aims of historical writing have been matters of exploration and debate. In the decades that followed the Second World War, the truth value of historical writing has been questioned and consequently established as not being absolute at all. Historical writing too is subject to the processes of selection and elimination that seem to be part of other types of writing. Like literature, history has been established to be a kind of narrative, and any kind of claim that it makes to facticity or reality is subjective and not at all universal. All these premises have widely transformed the discipline of history. History and historiography have become self-conscious modes of narrative, completely aware of the maneuvers and processes that go into their making. Yet never has the discipline of history been challenged as much as it has been by the tendency or movement that has come to be known as postmodernism.

Postmodernism itself has been a subject of great debate in contemporary literary theory. Its meaning, legitimacy, even its existence has been fought upon. And it will not be far from the truth to say that it has been a cause for celebration as well as for despair to various literary theorists. Defined mostly in aesthetic as opposed to chronological terms, postmodernism can be said to be the aesthetic or artistic tendency that aims to take the projects of modernism to their conclusion. Contemporaneous with the critical schools of Deconstruction and Post-structuralism, it is the expression in the arts of the utter fragmentariness of contemporary experience. Lyotard would call it the absence of any grand narratives and Derrida would call it the liberation of discourse from any limiting or unifying ideas of meaning. Most of these assertions are a matter of consensus as well as debate. Postmodernism, however, has also been a polemical subject in its relation to the discipline and even the idea of history. It is around the same time as postmodernism's advent that historicity itself was proclaimed to be in a crisis. This crisis of historicity is dealt with by many theorists – both from among the postmodernists and by others.



Postmodernism has often been criticized as being ahistorical. It is associated with the subversion of most of the ideas that were part of historical understanding – time, for example. The subversion of historical time is one of the many features of most postmodernist fiction and even some postmodern theory. Many major postmodern theorists have advocated ideas about history, which are, to say the least, controversial. One of these major theorists is Jean Baudrillard who is associated with the famous ideas of simulacra and the hyperreal. History is not the only subject on which he has voiced radical views. He has questioned the very authority of reality itself. According to Baudrillard, the postmodern condition is marked by its movement from the ‘real’ to the ‘hyperreal’. The postmodern world according to him is a collection of free floating signs without referents. He associates this peculiar kind of alienation that is a characteristic of postmodernism, with the idea of history itself. Challenging the assumption that history is progress or a narrative of progress and a never-ending one at that, he states: ‘Everything happens as if we were continuing to manufacture history, whereas in accumulating signs of the social, signs of the political, signs of progress and change, we only contribute to the end of history’ (The Year 2000, 27). The end of history, it seems according to him, is the inevitable conclusion of the march of ‘progress.’ It is not just a symptom of the postmodern age, it also seems to be the unavoidable future. Baudrillard does not feel however that this end of history is a cause for despair or concern. Instead he sees in it a reason to celebrate. In his 1987 essay ‘The Year 2000’, he says ‘We leave history to enter simulation... This is by no means a despairing hypothesis, unless we regard simulation as a higher form of alienation – which I certainly do not. It is precisely in history that we are alienated, and if we leave history we also leave alienation’ (The Year 2000, 23).

For Baudrillard it is history itself that is the reason for our alienation from our world and stepping outside of it only signifies a certain kind of liberation. In the postmodern world, one is faced with concerns not of history but of simulation. It is through one’s entry into the world of simulacra and simulation that one leaves history behind. In another famous essay of his ‘The Gulf War Did Not Take Place’, Baudrillard notoriously pronounces that the Gulf



War actually never happened but was a creation of the media. What hemeans is that the reality of the Gulf War was vastly removed from what was shown on the television sets. However even when that is taken into account, this statement appears as an attack on the idea of historical event itself. History is shorn of even the semblance of fact – a feature certainly of the announced end of history.

This dire pronouncement of the ‘end of history’ is part of a larger postmodernist discourse on history and Baudrillard is by no means the only one to voice it. Gianni Vattimo, in his book *The End of Modernity* came up with the same statement. In his book he criticizes the idea of history and ‘its two corollary notions of progress and overcoming’ (4). As the title suggests, Vattimo takes as his entry point into postmodernism the idea of the end of modernity which according to him can be defined as the moment ‘when simply being modern became a decisive value in itself’(4). Moreover this end of modernity according to him inevitably coincides with the end of history. He states in the Introduction to his book ‘If Postmodernism has a meaning at all, it has to be described in terms of the end of history’(12).This end however is not a ‘catastrophic’ one according to Vattimo, it is just a ‘new way of being’ after the ‘historical sickness’ of the nineteenth century caused by ‘excess historical consciousness’(165). Postmodernism becomes the very experience of that end itself. Living in the postmodern age is experiencing the ‘dissolution of the category of the new’ (11). Nothing is historical anymore, so the practice of history itself is pointless. Vattimo explains this end of history in his own terms. To refer to the postmodern age where history is no more, he uses the term ‘post-history’ (8). The postmodern condition therefore is also post-historical. He explains the post-historical as the condition where progress itself ‘has become routine’. The unity of progress and by extension of history has broken down and it no longer has any claim to coherence. He goes on to say that in the post historical condition, the ‘history of events’ which is what mainstream history has been ever since the Enlightenment, is just revealed as ‘one among many’ different histories (10). For Vattimo therefore ‘post-





history' is a more concrete point of reference in the discourse of modernity and postmodernity than history.

Baudrillard and Vattimo are only two of many postmodernist theorists who deal the same treatment to the discipline of history. Their polemical theories have met with their fair share of detractors. One of the many authors to respond to this treatment of history by postmodernist theories is Fredric Jameson, who in his work *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* explores various areas that have been influenced by postmodernism and attempts to counter some of its dire pronouncements. Before dealing with the postmodernist treatment of history Jameson concedes that the expansion of the postmodern society, technological as well as intellectual, has somehow left people behind. In a world that is increasingly becoming simulation, the inhabitants have somehow failed to understand and thus satisfyingly inhabit the hyperspace this world is becoming. As such, their response to history has also been short of what is intellectually required of them. History has somehow removed itself from the immediate grasp of the postmodern man and left to fend for himself he has somehow lost the access to historical understanding he had before postmodernism. As he states in his book, the postmodern condition involves 'being aware of a new and original historical situation in which we are condemned to seek history by way of our own pop images and simulacra of that history, which itself remains forever out of reach' (Jameson 25). Our modern historical understanding somehow seems to have become a simulacrum of itself, and since it is just a simulation, it is not accessible. Jameson in presenting this argument does seem to suggest the presence of some kind of unifying reality that characterized historical discourse before it became a simulacrum of itself. The postmodern subject is incapable of perceiving either reality or history. This inability is an 'alarming and pathological symptom of society that has become incapable of dealing with time and history' (Jameson 34). This incapability is not a cause for celebration, as Baudrillard would have it. Jameson's vocabulary suggests that this condition is pathological. Therefore, even in this argument however Jameson does not align himself to the theories of Baudrillard or Vattimo. In fact, he



seems to be vehemently against their dire pronouncements of the end of history. Even out of reach, history as a discourse is not dead. Postmodernism in treating it as such reveals its own pathology. Even in this case Jameson's vocabulary is revealing. He suggests that postmodernism suffers from some sort of a 'historical amnesia' (Jameson 34). It refuses to view history as anything but a collateral product of modernity and one that has outlived its usefulness.

Jameson criticizes postmodernism's attempts to kill the discipline of history by suggesting that postmodernism itself is not capable of historicizing either itself or reality. This is because according to him postmodernism views the world in the 'nostalgic mode' (Jameson 19), by definition backward looking, and thus is unable to align itself with the forward looking ideas of progress and by extension, history. The privilege of historicity thus, by default is not available to postmodernism. However, historicity according to Jameson is not just forward looking. Instead as he states in his book,

Historicity is in fact neither a representation of the past, nor is it a representation of the future (although its various forms use such representations), it can be first and foremost defined as a perception of the present as history: that is, as a relationship to the present which somehow defamiliarizes it and allows us that distance from immediacy which is at length characterized as a historical perspective. (284)

This might sound slightly similar to Baudrillard's comment on history and alienation but is actually quite different. While Baudrillard claims that history in itself is alienating and that is something that needs to be escaped from, Jameson suggests that the inherent alienation, or 'defamiliarization' of historicity as he calls it, is not only a condition essential to the discourse of history but also somehow quite enabling. This defamiliarization moreover does not seem to be the same distancing from historical discourse that is forced upon a subject when he only has access to a simulacrum of the actual history.



Further, comparing what the pronouncements of the ‘end of history’ mean to both modernity and postmodernity, Jameson suggests that the

end of modernism [can be seen as] as the end of the modernist developmental or historical paradigm. From the modernist perspective [this can be seen as] certain pathos. No more formal or stylistic innovation is possible; art is over, and is replaced by criticism. From the postmodern side of the divide, it does not look like that, and the “end of history” here simply means that anything goes. (324)

This stricture that for postmodernism announcing the ‘end of history’ is an admission that ‘anything goes’ is a major indictment. This attitude perceived in postmodernism is often criticized by many theorists. For Jameson, this seems to be a declaration that postmodernism in thinking of itself as outside history, also subjects itself to alienation from other notions of narrative discourse. Most of all however, a declaration of ‘anything goes’ sits starkly against the imperative slogan that Jameson begins his book *The Political Unconscious* with – ‘Always historicize’. As far as Jameson has shown, postmodernism seems fundamentally incapable of historicizing itself, whether it be because it insists on situating itself in and reveling in a world of simulacra, or because it views history as alienating, or because it really sees itself as an expression of free-floating discourses refusing to be bound by notions of history or reality or truth. Moreover, being incapable of historicizing itself, postmodernism’s claims to making assertions about the discipline of history itself seem dubious. What has happened instead is that under the onslaught of postmodernism any methodological elements such as truth or event or argument that formed part of historical discourse have come under question, making one believe that really, ‘anything goes.’

To throw some light on how postmodernism deals with this crisis of historicity, Jameson gives the examples of some literary expressions of postmodernism. Taking the example of the novels of Marquez and of Asturias, he puts them under the term “‘fantastic’ historiographies’ (368). These texts, as Jameson says are not entirely ahistorical, even when



ostensibly laying claim to the title of fiction. However, they end up subverting almost every tenet of historiography. They have convoluted, highly fantastic timelines, supernatural elements, magical realism, and all these fictional devices are meshed with a factual tone and in some cases claims to actual history. These according to Jameson are postmodern historiographies, fictional because postmodernism seems to be only capable of those. But most importantly these works are also 'fantastic,' thus by definition, hyperreal. These works moreover seem to stand in for actual historical discourse in the postmodern condition, and thus in a way are aligned with the simulacra of history that Jameson mentions in the line quoted earlier. That these simulacra are literary narratives is a telling statement in itself.

The transition of historical understanding from modernity to postmodernity has certainly changed the discourse of history. There is no doubt therefore that a change has been seen in historical practice as well. While since the Second World War the notions of truth, authenticity and objectivity have been rendered the subjects of much debate, and their authority is practically stripped, the question arises that what kind of status does this give to historical discourse and the practice of historiography. While the textbook sort of history finds itself unchanged, bound as it is to educational institutions, whose main concern is neither authenticity nor objectivity, one can imagine that other historical discourses might find themselves in a moment of crisis. This leads to the question of how historical practice reconciles itself with the postmodernist elimination of history.

Many postmodernist and other theorists when dealing with this very question of contemporary history and its usefulness, explore the relationship between historical understanding and its practice in the contemporary age. Michel Foucault, for example, deals with the question of history in its relation to the structures of power and oppression that influence discourses (Foucault 210). Jameson's tenet to 'always historicize' itself is an imperative of some kind of action. Bhabha, dealing with similar concerns under post-colonialism negotiates a 'third-space' where such discourses can be practiced (382). But any postmodernist exploration of finding a basis for a concrete moral or political action in history



always has to contend with the default non referentiality of everything under postmodernism. In his book *On the Future of History* however, Ernst Breisach mentions a work by Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt and Margaret Jacob. Called *Telling the Truth about History* and published in 1995, this book according to Breisach ‘confronts head-on the present uncertainty about values and truth-seeking and addresses the current controversies about objective knowledge’ (164). This work is being quoted here because it seems to present a viable middle path between the two attitudes to history this essay has analyzed. With the purpose of putting modern and postmodern historical understanding to practice, the authors of the work ‘distinguished clearly between a productive and a complete skepticism. The latter, including postmodernism, “is debilitating, because it casts doubt in the ability to make judgments and draw conclusions”’ (Breisach 164). What is required instead is some sort of a compromise which does not insist on eliminating the idea of history itself, and yet keeps some of the questions raised on its validity alive. For this, as the authors continue,

historians must engage in a vigorous search for the truth about the past (the life actually lived), which meant to remain open to the questions raised by postmodernists and concede ambiguities in the existing historical methodology without ever abandoning its validity. Neither the individual nor society could do without affirming “that truths about the past are possible, even if they are not absolute, and hence are worthstruggling for.” (Breisach 164)

Appleby, Hunt and Jacob therefore imply the existence of certain ‘truths about the past’. These truths might not be unified overarching affirmations but the very fact that they exist should make the endeavour of trying to access some kind of a historical understanding of the past a fruitful one.

History and historiography therefore have been major concerns ever since the Enlightenment inaugurated an academic space where they could be formed and studied. That academic space found itself more or less secure for centuries until the advent of postmodernism which proceeded to raise fundamental objections to many well established



ideas, including that of history. Baudrillard and Vattimo are but two of the voices that raised objections to the practice of history as was done during the age of modernity. These same objections became the subject of much critical thought, Jameson's among others. However, what has been more or less established in the recent years is that this debate is nowhere near its end. Thus while the discipline of history finds itself constantly negotiating its space in the kind of postmodern world characterized by free floating discourses and signs without referents, it has also ensured that it does not die. Instead the discipline and practice of history finds itself constantly redefined, but still alive despite the pronouncements of its end. Jameson's objective of 'always historicizing', as Jameson and some other Marxist critics would find, remains a practice that is viable and absolutely possible.

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## **Feministic qualities in the heroine of Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights***

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**Abstract:** In the novel *Wuthering Heights*, by Emily Bronte, the characters are quite intricate and engaging. In the novel there is one character who has a dominating influence on the way the novel goes. The story takes place in northern England in an isolated, rural area. The main characters involved are residents of two opposing households: Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights. *Wuthering Heights* is a tale of a powerful love between two people, which transcends all boundaries, including that between life and death. The author, Emily Bronte, has given full bloom to all the characters in this novel. To some readers it may sound strange-the imaginative male heroine but when we talk of Catherine, it becomes true as she is not only rebellious but she is only biologically a woman, but spiritually much more akin to a man in her independent adventure.

**Key words:** Feminism, *Wuthering Heights*, Emily Bronte, Catherine, Post Victorian age.

Catherine Earnshaw is the dominant female spirit which prevails the theme of *Wuthering Heights*. Her free spirit and carefree attitude allow her independence from conventional girlish norms as she is never conceived according to "bourgeois morality" (IEN 137). She is not concerned with fancy dresses or curls in her hair; instead, she prefers running barefoot through the moors and frolicking recklessly with Heathcliff. However, for Catherine, change is inevitable. In order for her to become a suitable wife and mother, she will have to transform from "a wild, hatless little savage" (WH 46) to a dignified female. Catherine is



forced to abandon her fantasy childhood and outdoor adventures in order to accomplish her goals and unconsciously “turn the table” on an overbearing patriarchal system.

Catherine is a character dominated by obsession and her single greatest obsession is her love for Heathcliff, the hero of the story. It is this which gives food to her soul, which controls her life and gives a sense of meaning, purpose and direction to her existence. The love which she professes for Heathcliff is not mere romantic love; neither is it based on mere physical attraction, it is an identification, a union of souls:- “Without Heathcliff” she says “the universe would turn to a mighty stranger” (WH 72). She contrasted the love that she professes for Heathcliff with that she publicly exclaimed for Edgar:- “My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods: time will change it, I’m well aware, as winter changes the trees. My love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath: a source of little visible delight, but necessary. Nelly, I am Heathcliff” (WH 72). Catherine’s relationship with Heathcliff was established in childhood, Nelly remarked:- “The greatest punishment we could invent for her, was to keep her separate from him” (WH 37).

Catherine possesses a wild, passionate nature which initially is presented when she spat at Heathcliff on discovering that he was the reason for her father losing the whip she was to get. Further evidence of Catherine’s wildness can be seen from the pledge she and Heathcliff made:- “promised fair to grow up as rude as savages” in response to the ternary of Hindley. It was as Nelly said:- “one of their chief amusements, to run away to the moors in the morning and to remain there all day, and the after punishment grew a mere thing to laugh at” (WH 41). Catherine is defiant of authority and seemed to enjoy the wrath of others:- “she was never so happy as when we were all scolding her at once” (WH 37). Catherine’s passionate nature, evident throughout her childhood, seemed not to exist in her early months of her marriage to Edgar. Her passion was described as:- “gunpowder which lay as harmless as sand because no fire came near to explode it” (WH 81).





A significant feature of Catherine's character is her wish to dominate both situations and people. When she wants to be alone with Edgar on one of his visits to the Heights, she pinches Nelly in exasperation and then delivers her a stinging blow when Nelly refuses to leave the room. When Heraton cries out in fear of Catherine, her response was to shake him:- "till the poor child waxed livid" (WH 63). She refuses to allow Edgar to leave after witnessing this event:- "I should be miserable all night, and I won't be miserable for you" (WH 63). Nelly recalled that Edgar:- "possessed the power to depart as much as a cat possesses the power to leave a mouse half killed" (WH 64). Later on, she orchestrates a fight between Edgar and Heathcliff and throws the key into the fire when Edgar attempts to leave. She described Edgar, her husband, as "a sucking leveret" (WH 101). Catherine's domineering personality resulted in her every whim being catered to at the Grange. Nelly recalled that Edgar had:- "an inept rooted fear of ruffling her humour" (WH 80). The author uses nature imagery to emphasize the extent of her dominance:- "it was not the thorn bending to the honeysuckles, but the honeysuckles embracing the thorns" (WH 80).

Catherine's self-determination ironically enables her to inflict Edgar with the same male-centred methods traditionally reserved for women. Unfortunately, Catherine does not deceive herself nor Nelly. It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff, now; so he shall never know how I love him. Hindley, who previously condemned Catherine, now treats her as a fragile object of beauty. One role permits her the freedom to love Heathcliff and enjoy her independence, while the other role demands she use her feminine qualities for gain and deception. I've no more business to marry Edgar Linton than I have to be in heaven; and if the wicked man in there had not brought Heathcliff so low, I shouldn't have thought of it" (WH 71). Catherine subverts the patriarchal role by choosing Edgar as her husband because "he is handsome, and young, and cheerful, and rich, and loves her" (WH 69). Catherine accomplishes Hindley's wishes, but the results backfire. Upon seeing Catherine for the first time, Hindley exclaims, "Why, Cathy, you are quite a beauty! I should scarcely have known



you--you look like a lady now” (WH 46). Having no female role model other than Nelly Dean, Catherine accepts her metamorphosis without question.

However, Catherine is cleverly capable of playing dual roles, but only temporarily. As is typical of the male perspective, Hindley hopes that Catherine will no longer care for running through the moors with Heathcliff, but instead marry Edgar and “bring honour to the family by an alliance with the Lintons” (WH 78). Catherine’s ability to thwart the way men have traditionally exercised power over women, if only for a short time, is a rarity during an era marked by male dominance. Catherine’s transition from a tomboy to a lady begins during her stay at Thrushcross Grange. Catherine’s attempt to use her feminine qualities for selfish reasons is an endeavour not used by most women in the nineteenth century—labelling Catherine a feminist before her time.

Catherine’s illness and death represent perhaps a natural and predictable result of her movement from the Heights to the Grange, by not staying true to her nature and by swapping the outdoor life that she had with Heathcliff for the role as the lady of the manor. She has in a sense cut off her own oxygen supply, instead of the wild air of the moors she now breathes the stifled air of the Grange, like a flower without light she eventually withers and dies, a situation entirely of her own making. Having rejected Heathcliff in favour of marriage to Edgar, she was found by the society in which she lived, once this course was chosen there was no going back, although she realised the error of her ways, she had placed herself in a situation in which death could only extricate her, therefore she was buried at the edge of the graveyard where the border between it and the surrounding moors was ill-defined. In death, she had returned to nature and regained her freedom, the dire consequences of her failure to remain loyal to her true self.

A significant feature of Catherine’s character is the influence she continues to have after her death, like Heathcliff she has a troubled spirit which torments Heathcliff to the point of madness and even to his own death. The dominating ability of Catherine Earnshaw had



influence even after she died. She still left a lasting impression on the people around her and after she was gone people still made some decisions based on her. While she was alive she had Heathcliff and Edgar rapped around her finger; she could have made them do anything she wanted and sometimes she did. While Catherine was dying Heathcliff spent the most time with her and she knew that at that point he would do anything for her and she used that against him. The major instance of Catherine's dominance is one that continues through the entire novel and that is her influence over Heathcliff. Catherine acquires this grasp over Heathcliff by telling him that he is not good enough for her and that he is also not civilized enough for her to marry him. Catherine is a domineering, wilful; she displays a certain naiveté throughout the novel. She is naive enough to believe that her marriage will actually advance her relationship with Heathcliff. The position she will have as mistress of the Grange and Mrs. Linton will allow her to raise Heathcliff up from his lowly position and -: "place him out of my brothers power" (WH 72). In her innocence, Catherine believes she can keep both men, on Heathcliff's return believing that he and Edgar could be friends. This makes Heathcliff very jealous and he goes away to make him self more refined for Catherine. After Catherine died Heathcliff commands her to haunt him saying, "I cannot live without my life! I cannot live without my soul!" (WH 146). Catherine had such a dominating impact on Heathcliff that he could not let her die he wanted her soul to be with him always. An example of Catherine's dominating presence even after her death made Heathcliff come up with a plan to take control of both Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. Catherine's death forced Heathcliff into a rage where he came up with a plan to get back at Edgar for marrying Catherine and not taking better care of her. One of the things he decided to do was take control of Wuthering Heights from her brother Hindley. He accomplished this by getting Hindley drunk and having him a game of cards in which Heathcliff won the deed to Wuthering Heights. Next Heathcliff would get Thrushcross Grange taking his revenge on Edgar, he accomplished this by getting young Cathy Linton to marry his son Linton Heathcliff. Then once Linton died Heathcliff was in control of both Wuthering heights and Thrushcross Grange. Once Heathcliff had his plan completed he settled down in Wuthering



Heights but Catherine's presence never did settle down. Heathcliff often went into Catherine's old room and sat on the bed calling Catherine's name hoping she would answer. Catherine's impact on Heathcliff changed Heathcliff so that he never concerned himself with anything else but his wanting to be with Catherine. Her presence on him was so great that he would do anything so he could be with her even after death. An example of this is when he invaded her grave and paid the gravedigger to break the one side off her casket and turn her body facing in that direction. Heathcliff then paid the gravedigger to bury Heathcliff on that side of Catherine and break away the side of his casket and face him towards Catherine's casket. He did this because Heathcliff thought that if he did this that he and Catherine would be together forever because she had so much influence on Heathcliff and he loved her so much that he could not even for one moment stop thinking about her. Heathcliff was now inviting death to come so he could finally be with Catherine. Catherine's dominating presence mostly had an impact on Heathcliff but through Heathcliff her presence had an impact on other people in the novel as well. An example of this is Heathcliff's plan to gain control of both households. While he was doing this he not only got his revenge on many people, he also destroyed many people's lives in getting what he wanted. Someone whose life Heathcliff destroyed as a result of Catherine's presence is Linton's. Linton was an innocent young man until he was brought into the middle of Heathcliff's plan, then from there his fate was sealed and he would eventually die. Also because of Catherine's dominating impact Heathcliff showed Edgar a huge sign of disrespect and Edgar was left out in the cold by himself.

### **Conclusion:**

Catherine's feministic qualities played a major role in the novel *Wuthering Heights*. The person she affected the most was Heathcliff but her impact also devastated many other people's lives as well. While Catherine was alive she was able to control the way her dominating presence affected others like Heathcliff to a certain extent. Then when she died



her presence was much more known to the reader because it was soon apparent that the control that was once there had gone and chaos was inevitable. Catherine's dominating presence definitely gave the novel a much more in depth meaning and also made it a little more interesting because it made Heathcliff do all of those evil and underhanded things. Her impact in the novel made the story better because there was a sense of unpredictability that would keep the reader curious and interested throughout the story.

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## **Shakespeare on Celluloid, Focusing Vishal Bhardwaj's *Haider***

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**Abstract:** Shakespeare's legacy lives on. The legacy is by no means a lean one. The immense canvas with mind-boggling characters set in diverse geographical regions remains unparalleled in English drama, as does his rich linguistic legacy. The greatness of William Shakespeare is his contemporariness. It is therefore quite explainable as to how interest in his works never wanes. The profound impact of his plays on cinema has not gone unnoticed. The 21<sup>st</sup> century has done very well in keeping Shakespeare alive on celluloid. The adaptations of his plays into films have been numerous. In fact film makers have done remarkably well in reinterpreting the Bard's plays in many languages and thus broadening the reach of his pen. In India film maker Vishal Bhardwaj has succeeded in adapting successfully three tragedies of Shakespeare into three films namely 'Maqbool', 'Omkara' and 'Haider'. The three films have received accolades for their dextrous handling of the plot and characters in the three plays they have been inspired by namely 'Macbeth', 'Othello' and 'Hamlet' respectively. The present paper attempts to look into adaptations of Shakespeare's plays into cinema, in particular Vishal Bhardwaj's films with the focus being 'Haider' made in the year 2014, looking at how he has endeavoured to make alterations in his screenplay and how he fits the Prince of Denmark into present day Kashmir.

**Key words:** Films, adaptations, setting, plot, characters, cultural milieu.

The interest in William Shakespeare never seems to go downhill. His appeal is enduring and global. Innumerable adaptations into films all across the world, stage plays, BBC television series and animated adaptations-all continue to replenish the artistic and aesthetic sensibilities of people, transcending geographical and linguistic frontiers. While



Japanese director Akira Kurosawa adapts *Hamlet* as *The Bad Sleep Well* in 1960, in the US we see the modern retelling of Lear's story in *A Thousand Acres* made in 1997. The world gave a rousing reception to Justin Kurzel's adaptation of *Macbeth* released on 2 October 2015, giving him a ranking among legends as Kurosawa and Roman Polanski. Michael Fassbender's performance in the film in the lead role has won him huge critical acclaim. For a student and lover of literature like me, it is heartening that Shakespeare continues to inspire film-makers even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the era of Post- Modernism.

Even more interesting is this: Director Jayaraaj adapted *Othello* into his Malayalam film *Kaliyattam* in 1997 while *Hrid Majharey*, a Bengali tragic love story loosely inspired by *Othello*, was released in 2014 and is a tribute to the Bard on his 450th Birth Anniversary, enough to tell us the reach of Shakespeare's plays.

Talking of literary adaptations, it cannot be denied that adapting a text, play or novel, requires more skill and discipline than working on a screenplay does. It maybe that one literary text becomes the source for another writer's work. Many adaptations have surpassed the original work, many are criticised for having lost touch with the soul of the work. "The real problem of the adapter is not how to reproduce the content of the literary work (an impossibility), but how close he or she should remain to the raw data of the subject matter. This degree of fidelity is what determines the three types of adaptations: the loose, the faithful, and the literal" (Giannetti).

It might be very difficult to straightjacket adaptations into categories, for in reality there may be a blurring of lines. In a loose adaptation, only a character or an idea might be taken up and then developed by a writer, as for instance Shakespeare's treatment of a story from Plutarch. Kurosawa's *Ran* falls in this category, being drawn from *King Lear* and set in medieval Japan.

In a faithful adaptation, the film -maker keeps as close as possible to the original. In *Tom Jones*, John Osborne has gone to the extent of retaining the omniscient narrator of the book. The problem, however, in any case is, of transforming the word into a visual. *Haider*, I believe, stands between both, as overlapping often takes place in adaptations.



In many cases, when the writer has not specified the locale, or maybe given his characters a different locale, the movie maker gives his own setting, maybe for either his own creative satisfaction, or in keeping with the demands of his screenplay. To this the director adds the ingredients of music, background score and dances.

What I find particularly interesting are the screen adaptations of the three dark tragedies- *Othello*, *Macbeth*, and *Hamlet* by noted Hindi director Vishal Bhardwaj as *Omkara* (2006), *Maqbool* (2003) and *Haider* (2014) respectively. The challenge of relocating the plays to the Indian milieu, giving them all the touches of the native culture, has been successfully taken up and proven by Bhardwaj in all the three films. In 1988, Polish director Krzysztof Kielowski made a series of ten films about the Ten Commandments, using allegory to explore meanings and interpretations of each commandment, while looking at hardships evident in the life of Polish people. The Trilogy by Bhardwaj is reminiscent of this series. He too has used his own symbols to interpret the three tragedies of Shakespeare.

As we take up the film *Haider* as the pivotal point of discussion in this paper, we will also go to *Omkara* and *Maqbool* as reference points. It would be relevant here to consider the art of adapting literary text into cinema or drawing inspiration from them and then using them as the base for the film screenplay, while treating the subject matter with originality. For instance if we talk of Hamlet's adaptation into the Lawrence Olivier version, we see the literal adaptation of the play, with original lines from the play, the setting and characters also being the same. *Catch My Soul* (US, 1974), on the other hand, is an adaptation of the rock musical based on *Othello*. In *Haider* the film-maker picks up the story and characters, and then translocates them into the Indian setting, placing them against the backdrop of a momentous and contemporary issue the country faces. The originality of the director lies here, for he makes everything about the film acceptable to the sensibilities of the native audiences. He makes his characters breathe and come alive in their setting so that they are not mere caricatures of the original, but have their own flesh and blood.

For any artistic dealing with an all-together different artistic medium- when making a movie adaptation of a text or using a text as the source or inspiration of his film, the task





ahead is quite a difficult one in itself. The text may be as short as Ruskin Bond's *Susanna's Seven Husbands* adapted into *7 Khoon Maaf* by Vishal Bhardwaj, for which he asked Bond to convert the story into a more detailed one and then based his screenplay on it, making necessary changes. In case of Shakespeare's works, the film maker walks on a double edged sword, firstly because his plays are set in a different culture, age, setting, intended for a different audience, and secondly because they are plays written in a diction and style that is extraordinaire.

Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark, is a complex tragedy wherein the protagonist suffers from the hamartia of dilemma, is supposedly suffering from Oedipus Complex, has been for ages, been debated upon as being mad or as feigning madness, is given to extreme mood swings in which he has the profoundest thoughts as in 'To be or not to be...', or utters the basest language as to Ophelia when he chastises her to go the 'nunnery'. The play is set in Elsinore and Hamlet studies at Wittenberg. He is the royal prince, whose mother has entered into a wedlock which is to be deemed incestuous or not. And finally Shakespeare uses the supernatural element in the form of the ghost superbly. I am inclined to think that whereas in classical Greek and Roman drama, the deus ex machina resolved the situation, in the play the ghost is the deus ex machine, who rather than untangling, leads to the further entanglement. To relocate this play written between 1599-1602, to contemporary India, and to unfold the story against a backdrop that's comprehensible and credible to our audiences, must have been a humungous task for the film -maker. Without so much as altering the major events that chart the destiny of the Prince of Denmark or the major scenes in the play, Bhardwaj has successfully transported his characters to a tangible scenario, very contemporary, very believable.

What kind of creative urge grips a film maker to take up the challenge of making a film based on a complex text? It is as though there are moments of creative frenzy that are so overpowering that they have to be vented out in the form of an aesthetically designed film, intense, and original in its treatment of the original text.



The speech Haider, Shahid Kapur, the actor in the lead role in the film, renders at Lal Chowk is the transmuted form of the famous soliloquy 'To be or not to be...', remarkably rendered as 'Hum hain ki nahi', so tactfully fitted into the plot of the film. Whereas Hamlet ponders on questions of life and death and other philosophical issues, the protagonist in *Haider* talks of the existing conditions in the state of Jammu and Kashmir in a satirical vein. He extends the question of to be or not to be to the people of the state as a whole, rather than making it a personal issue. In doing this, the director has made a point and given his opinion on the implications of Article 370, Armed Forces Special Act and the will of the people of Kashmir, making *Haider* the mouthpiece.

Whereas in the play it is known that the senior Hamlet is dead and Gertrude, the queen, is married to her brother-in-law Claudius, in the film the death of Haider's father is a mystery. It is Haider who makes the revelation to his mother (played by Tabu) that his father is dead and that she needn't keep her relationship with her husband's brother under wraps. This revelation is made almost halfway through the film, immediately after the speech he delivers at Lal Chowk.

The way the director has treated the supernatural element in the play, in the form of the ghost of Hamlet's slain father, also needs mention. 'Roohdaar' in the film is not a 'rooh' meaning spirit. He is a man of flesh and blood and he finds his way to the protagonist to reveal to him the truth of his father's murder, so far considered as a political disappearance. Whereas in an Elizabethan play, ghosts and witches were acceptable to audiences, in this age of post-modernism bringing a ghost on screen would have been seen as being a little far-fetched and so Bhardwaj transforms this very significant element in the play and gives it his own interpretation.

Hamlet's relationship with Ophelia is taken up from the point where Hamlet returns from Wittenberg. Everything that's happened between them before that has abstruse references only, for instance when Ophelia brings back to Hamlet letters he had supposedly written to her proclaiming his love to her. In *Haider* however, their love is apparently in the present, apparent and known to all, though not backed by the respective families. Likewise, in



the film, the play within the play or the mousetrap play is beautifully transformed into a song 'Bismil'. The director tells us in an interview that it took him four months to write this song for he wanted the revelation of the murder done poetically. The gravedigger scene is retained, with a song, only its point of appearance is changed. In the play it happens during the burial of Ophelia, in the film at the time the grave of Haider's father is discovered.

Grappling with complex plays, as the tragedies of Shakespeare, demands a great deal of study and skill on the part of the director and screenplay writer of the film. Any text calls for a deft handling and treatment of the subject matter in a medium that's very different from the source medium. Let us take for instance the film *Omkaara*, transporting the story of the tragedy of *Othello* to modern day Meerut in India. The characters in the film have been so beautifully adapted to the setting that not a trace remains of the original. Langa Tyagi, played by Saif Ali Khan, is Iago who brings about the tragic undoing of Omkara, the titular character. The creative genius and originality of Bhardwaj deserve mention here. The use of the local dialect in the film, in the midst of the gang wars and politics that Uttar Pradesh is more often than not associated with, give it a distinctly native flavour.

In *Othello* we have a despicable Iago, in *Omkaara* Bhardwaj has succeeded in creating an equally despicable Langa Tyagi. He needs to be acclaimed for the delineation of characters in the film. In setting them in our milieu, he has moulded them and breathed into them a new lease of life, yet retaining their original flaws as it were. One feels disgust for the conniving wickedness of Iago and pity for Othello for being so gullible. In *Maqbool*, Bhardwaj transports the Scottish tragedy to the contemporary underworld on Mumbai, with Abbaji (Pankaj Kapur) playing Duncan and Irfan Khan being Maqbool i.e. Macbeth.

The Shakespearean Trilogy of Bhardwaj blends the genres of art and commercial cinema, portraying the dark reality of life and presenting the grey shades of the protagonists. What is Vishal Bhardwaj's take on his adaptation of *Hamlet*? In an interview published in the Indian Express he was asked where in *Haider* does Shakespeare recede and he takes over he answered, "I've turned his (Shakespeare's) third act into the first act. As a filmmaker, I wanted to make Hamlet in Kashmir. In my film, in a way, Kashmir becomes Hamlet"



(Bharadwaj). Perhaps it is an endeavour to transcend the frontiers of mere artistic pleasure or entertainment. He has stated in the interview that he wished to talk about the human tragedy of the people who decided to stay back in Kashmir and it is for this reason that he has set the film in 1995.

The constraint of time and space work both for the theatre and movie director, not for a novelist, making adaptations quite a task in itself. In surpassing these constraints in order to bring Shakespeare alive on celluloid after 400 years of the Bard's death, draws attention to Vishal Bhardwaj creative genius. In his conversation with noted Shakespearean scholar Professor James Shapiro at the New York Film Festival Bhardwaj said, "The greatness of Shakespeare is that he remains so contemporary after 400 years" (Bharadwaj).

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## **Virtues Vital for the Current Cohort- An Appraisal of the Select Poems of the Legendary and Erudite Bards of India**

### **Subtitle- Endeavour to Unearth the Ethical Values**

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**Abstract:** “Education without values, as useful as it is, seems rather to make man a cleverer devil” professes C. S. Lewis. In the current education system with much preference given to mark oriented culture one has to rummage around human values. The contraption dominated globe has nothing to do with ideals. It is the providence of the modern youth who have to contend, contravene and establish themselves in this power-driven, money-inclined, rapacious world. As educators we hardly hassle to implant the personality traits like social responsibility, patriotism, gender equality, sexual morality, integrity, community living, netiquette, benevolence, respect for elders, fairness etc which were widely prevalent in the Gurukul system of the yore. The present paper is an earnest endeavor to unearth the ethical values in the poems of erudite and highly-cultured legendries Dr. A. Padmanaban, Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, Dr. S. Mohan and Mr. A. P. Vajpayee of India.

**Keywords:** Education, human values, Abdul Kalam, legendry, personality traits



## Introduction

Dr. A. Padmanaban I.A.S is a former governor of Mizoram. His poems are known for its comprehensible, lucid and elegant style. Every line of his verse is riveting and swears to enlightened ideal. Former President Dr A. P. J. Abdul Kalam's poems are told apart for its exquisite idiolect, epigrammatic thought and code of ethics indispensable to the current age group. Justice Dr. S. Mohan is a former Judge; Supreme Court of India. His poems are distinct, prominent and apparent in style. They are phenomenal and filled to the brim with principles vital for life. Former Prime Minister of India Mr. A. P. Vajpayee's poems are stately, judicious and profound in rhetoric.

In his poem **Our Mission is Water** which is composed during Kalam's visit to Sudan to address the National Assembly of the Republic of Sudan he venerates the confluence of the blue and white Niles. Confluence is a substantial quality of the water bodies. Nature is an ingenious teacher, its every deed and gesture delivers a sermon for life. To Kalam, the convergence of the rivers has a righteous mission which has to be espoused for the wellbeing of the human race. As a mouthpiece of the river, he interrogates,

When we rivers confluence

Oh humanity! Why not your hearts confluence

And you blossom with happiness. (9) (4.2)

Water is not only the elixir of life, but also rare and worth its weight in gold. In fact it is more staple and requisite than gold. Its conflux has a magnanimous mission behind it and need to be emulated by human beings.

In his poem **The Lord on the Mount**, the poet Dr. A. Padmanaban affirms that earth born, ephemeral things like 'riches', 'gold', 'estates' are not eternal. They are wavering and never bestow celestial bliss. True religion and god never relate to these terrestrial and



quotidian aspects. “Happiness is that state of consciousness which proceeds from the achievement of one's values” adjudicates Ayn Rand, US Russian-born novelist. The poet is of staunch stance that love and truth have an emphatic mantle in wearing away the cynical bent of mind and are deemed to be the deified aspects of religion. Running on his conception on religion, the poet professes the religion of the universal man that spreads the gospel of love, equality, beauty, virtue, humaneness, humanity and so on.

Furthermore, the poet discriminates the disposition of the rich and the poor in the poem. He acknowledges and exalts the guiltlessness of the indigent. He lauds the attributes of his mind, thoughts and deeds which has neither malice nor greed but the fine qualities like innocence and gratitude. The lines,

He is rich in poverty

He is generous in penury

You are poor in plenty

You are contumely in opulence (11) (4.2)

puts across the intolerant and conventional demeanour of the affluent.

Justice Mohan's patriotism is stately and august in his poem **Tricolour**. His ardour, adoration and reverence for his motherland lights a fire of nationalism in the reader's mind. His striking and splendid beat, “tricolour- valour; cold- fold; high-die; sneer-here; aloft-port” (12-13) (4.8) holds us spell-bound vis-à-vis his idiolect and diction, not only in the backdrop of rhythm but also for its import that makes obeisance to the national flag. One should give acclamation to the poet who conjures up the tricolour flag as shrouded with martyr's valour, its fold is dyed with their heart's blood.



The bard's profound and earnest staunchness and devotion to his flag comes to picture when he deems even the shade of his country's flag to be self-respecting and noble. The flag is radiant and majestic. It has to soar lofty according to the poet. Endearment towards one's homeland is bespoken by one's deference to the national flag. The poem makes explicit the poet's untrammelled love for his tricolored flag and spurs others to uphold the same.

In the current era of automation, nature and a life associated with it has become a chimera. The next poem **Gratitude** by Kalam is a picturesque portrayal of the splendor of nature especially the woods. Millions of trees are ravaged every day to quench the thirst of human avarice that never comes to cessation. A verse on forest, its magnificence, panoply of trees indeed pacifies and soothes the nature enthusiasts of the modern era. The juxtaposition of the forest life with the episodes of everyday life is another captivating focus of attention in the poem.

The line "A forest was growing" (9) (4.7) would make anyone yearn for its accomplishment. To the poet the trees stacked with fruits and the little children clinging to mother are alike. It can be interpreted that the tree is the mother, known for its unstinting, altruistic attribute. The fruits that come from the tree are considered to be its children. A mother and a child are inseparable. But the magnanimous tree renounces its children to sate the palate of the earthlings. But the bestial humans rip off its babe, finagle and fuck it up wreaking havoc on trees and thereby razing the entire forest. The bushes with wild flowers are bracketed with the guiltless brains frolicking in grime. It is only feasible by a sapient Kalam to yoke the humming sound of bees and butterflies to the unseen hands on veena strings and the strenuous proletarians going to sweat their brow. The blooming of flowers in the trees of the forests in the course of spring is beatific and allures the poet.

Being pertinent to the poem's title, the poem propounds the mean deportment of the panthers in expressing their gratitude to god who rescued them from death. Only one among a





crowd of ten is kind enough to say thanks to the lord. The poet articulates the significance of gratefulness in man's life.

The following poem **Light in Life** by Dr. A. Padmanaban brings one to light from ignorance and mythical creed. A dark world gets irradiated by light which ensures aglow, effulgence and vision. May be it is the natural elements of light such as sun and the moon or candle, oil and electricity their mission is same. Irrespective of the givers the light received is the same? The same notion is appurtenant to religion too as there is 'Chris' in Krishna, 'Ram' in Ramzan and Ali in Diwali. All religion opens on to the terminus fraternity and comradeship, the ubiquitous attributes imperative for life. Thus the poet wraps up,

“Though different are the givers

They are one- only to give

Light in life.” (10)(4.7)

Placid and harmonious life is god's gift. Woefully, modern man is bereft of it. The present poem **God and Mammon** by Dr. A. Padmanaban connotes the way for an unruffled and amiable life. In this man made world, 'avarice, arrogance, pomp, publicity, dogma and ritual have engulfed man's serenity. It is unto man to get quietude. “Although gold dust is precious, when it gets in your eyes it obstructs your vision” is a veritable aphorism of Hsi-Tang Chih Tsang, renowned Zen master. One who withdraws from the aforesaid traits to him bliss, contentment and harmony are in the bay.

Carrying on with his thoughts on the sagacity requisite for ecstatic life the poet calls attention to the unduly proclivity given to mammon in this materialistic, insatiable world. Juxtaposing affluence and deity, the former is put on the pedestal and given high momentous.



It is as plain as the nose on your face that even a deceased would come to life, open its mouth and become awestruck by the sight of money. This may be related to the Tamil adage, “*Panathai partha penamum vayai pollakum*”. But the bard advocates the fact that wherewithal is perishable and will fizzle out into thin air. “Wealth consists not in having great possessions, but in having few wants” affirms Epicurus, ancient Greek philosopher. Idolize god and not the chattels is the morality the poem propagates. God said to love human beings and use things but we humans use human beings for our wants and love things is the maxim apt to the present context. The lines,

But prayer, pure and sincere

Brings you

PEACE AND HARMONY. (11) (4.7)

substantiate that one’s concentration and attention is to deserve the power of god, the divine supreme and dispense with mundane things that are wobbly and evade peace in life.

Kalam’s poem **Forgive Pride and Ego of my Race** reflects the doldrums of the crematorium. The bard bemoans the demise of his friend’s dear one. The closing chapter of human life with the mournful scenes of the crematorium Ghats, the sentiments of love, woe, departure, anguish, affliction, quotidian sight in the graveyard makes us to ponder over the transience of human life. The final call put over the conception that quietus is confirmed and ineluctable. The poet commiserates with the human race for their pride, arrogance, ego in this ephemeral world and communes with the almighty to feel no resentment and grant an amnesty to them for the same. The following lines from the poem validate his appeal.

As the fire made its final music I then prayed the Almighty

To forgive all their pride, their ego and their worldly worthless arrogance.(9)(4.4)



The poem **Keep them Free** by Dr. A. Padmanaban has very much concurrence with Gandhiji's quote "God has everything to satisfy everyman's need but not everyman's greed." The poem is an entreaty to the human beings to keep the natural resources free from acquisitiveness and transgression. Mother Nature is compassionate, considerate and magnanimous. She has offered everything to us at free of cost. But what we have done and doing is an exploitation that cannot be verbalized. We have slung mud on our head by ruining and terminating our life source. Priceless treasure such as flora and fauna, ozone layer, the elixir of life-water, the country side, land etc are fucked up and brought to naught without nous. No technology can substitute ozone or water. Nature is nature and man is impotent to vanquish his catastrophe. Myriad air conditioners or coolers could not be paralleled to the slender breeze, the unique gift of nature. No substitute or alternative is available in terms of god's gift. Hence the poet's supplication

Man! keep them free

From your greed and villainy. (10) (4.4)

is to keep nature free from human exploitation and poaching.

**The Agony of Hiroshima** is a sensitive poem by A. B. Vajpayee, the former prime minister of India. The poem is dolorous and tear-jerking. It is a snapshot of the calamity begot by the nuclear weapons. The ruthlessness and lack of ethics rattles and inflicts anguish on the poet. Its ravages are of inestimable value. The poet is like a cat on hot bricks, uptight and has become insomniac contemplating on the depredation of the nuclear weapons and the scientists behind its innovation. His peace is ruffled by the gruesome human obliteration. He pens,



A scrap caught in the tooth

A grain of sand in the eye

A thorn in the foot

Takes away sleep

Peace of mind. ((10) (4.2)

The bomb blast and its aftermaths are fatal and detrimental. Human life is beyond price. Even a pet's separation is heart rending and cannot be replaced. Kith and kin, lovable and the intimate preyed on by the lethal blast breed untold agony in the heart. Nothing comes to rescue to the vanquished and the sufferers of the war. The poet requests to restrict the weapons and its use. His appeal is universal.

The adjective 'black' that delineates the night intensifies the pain and the loss felt. Nights are dark; it is the law of nature. But 'black night' betokens the human decimation, where everything is burnt to black ashes. Two hundred thousand people were obliterated and thousands were maimed. The desolation due to explosion is perpetual. Its sequel is retained persistently, time and again. The poet feels contrite about the gruesome havoc caused to the human life. He intensely proposes that the people behind the mishap should reproach themselves and wear sack cloth and ashes for their scandal and iniquitous practice. If not, even history will never let them off the hook. "You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him to discover it in himself" utters Galileo Galilei, Italian physicist and astronomer which synchronizes with the aforementioned thought.



The poem evokes the patriotic sentiment of everyone's onus to mount guard on fellow human's life. In the name of riots due to politicians or to carry out an adamant issue many bombs are blasted. The innocent lives of the multitude are done away with. The entreaty is for an evolution and change. Care and concern for the contemporaries is the sublime thought that the poem brings forth. One should always be mindful of the fact that no one has the right to raze the god created precious planet or the lives sustaining in it is the poet's grave appeal.

The poem **Tumult** is a nationalist poem. It is an exceptional verse composition that enlightens the indispensable concepts of life by the brilliant bard Dr. Kalam. The prelude of the poem acquaints us with the pulchritude of diction. Hats off to India's rocket engineer, scientist, His Excellency President and Professor Abdul Kalam for his pre-eminence in handling the words of language. His prowess is explicit in the following lines which conjure up the dawn in the sea shore.

Silvery mist has veiled the sea

Sun is not yet up to scatter it

Sound of sea waves behind the mist

Like child crying as caged in darkness. (11) (4.6)

The feel of the unlit, overcast, fog covered morn, comparison of roaring sea waves to a child's whine due to the gloaming is vivid and vibrant enough to see in one's mind's eye the snapshot of the din and the racket of the seashore. The mood created in the first few lines of the poem is sullen and dejected. Futility of autumn and the desolated environment impels self-analysis in the poet's power of thought. "The unexamined life is not worth living" quotes Socrates, ancient Greek ethicist-philosopher. Hence the poet looks at himself. He cogitates, tasks like putting Rohini in the space orbit, testing five major missiles are mammoth for which his utmost dedication and attention are used up. Despite the diligence and



commitment, as a patriotic striving for the welfare of the masses Dr. Kalam interrogates himself,

Did I explore space to enhance Science

Or did I provide weapon of destruction? (11) (4.6)

When a few missiles were borrowed from china to tackle the crisis, during war Kalam felt the inevitability for indigenous missiles and indigenous technology. But as a man of high moral values his thoughts on ethics and patriotic feeling knocks at the doors of his conscience.

He ponders that the contemporary life style is a lust for luxury and opulence. The true passion of soul is thereby dissipated in the air of riches and wants. The poet culminates that one needs to resolve his flummox. You are the panacea for your travails is the cognizance that lays into his mind. He further adduces that life is a cycle of mirth and misery. It is adventurous. It is mettle and sagacity which facilitates one to become a savior and an idol to his country. The poet's morale is inordinately substantial. He prompts the youngsters not to be apprehensive about their kismet. This poem is called off with a striking piece of advice that unwrap the life skills indispensable for sustenance.

Go ahead with destiny

Learn from failures

Become one with yourself. (12)

As a poet of exceptional foresight and lofty conviction he internally vows,



“Fulfilment of my desire to make up my country

Stand amidst the creations of knowledge. (12)

His buoyancy is reflected,

Sun is up, mist has melted

Coloured stands are up to decorate sky

I have hyper plane to fly. (12)

The hyper plane of the poet would take him to his determined path and may carry out his challenge by making India one among the supreme powers of knowledge. Thus the poem is held in high regard not only for its lyrical elegance but also for creating the serene aura and vivid view of the sea shore with an enlightened ethics of patriotism.

Justice Dr. S. Mohan’s poem **Oh Sweet Mother** is a poem meant for a mother who begets new procreation into this world. The poem is a parable drawing attention to patriotic sentiment. It unfolds the selfless deportment of an Indian mother. There is an acclaimed saying in Tamil which says, “Eenra Pozhudin periduvakum than maganai sanroan ena ketta thai” which means, “Great is the joy of the mother when a child is born to her; but greater is her joy when she hears his unblemished character and merits from others.” To a mother the bliss of giving birth to a child is an unparalleled experience. It is a feeling that bestows inexpressible consummation and a sense of achievement. To an authentic and genuine mother rather than the elation of giving birth the matter of pride is her son’s contribution and service to the mother nation. The poem presses home the duty of a man to his fellow countrymen,



especially the duty of a son. His ministrations to his country would raise his mother's collar. Philanthropy is the rent that we pay god as we are the tenants in this god created earth. The son addresses his mother as he feels complacent of his unstinting humaneness and social concern through this poem. His welfare-oriented tasks are manifold. He is

The helper of the poor

Friends of the sick

Companion of the needy. (12)

One should lend a helping hand to the needy despite his/her dire circumstances. The indomitable spirit and the resolution to be instilled in every mind is explicit in the following lines,

Neither halt, nor hesitate to help

Even if tumbled to poverty, nor reduced to pulp

Humble ever will I be, ready always to bend. (12)

The poet also wishes to be away from amour-propre. As goes the dictum, "Helping hands are better than praying lips." The mother preaches her son to consider service as his faith and doctrine.

This is thy religion





### You said without an end. (12) (3.3)

In a world inundated by the craze and yearn for material wealth and wants as a mouthpiece of the mother the poet considers the blessings of the indigent are beyond price and as vibrant as the rays of the unique sun.

A tree's growth is based on the quality of its seed and nurture. "The value of life is not in the length of days, but in the use we make of them; a man may live long yet very little" is the sound statement of Michel de Montaigne, French writer and philosopher. To enlighten values in the thought, word and deed of the young is the conscientiousness of the elders. Especially a mother's role is cardinal. The poet's plea is to instill the attributes of ethical values like magnanimity and bounteousness in the minds of the juvenile so that we can create an aura of placid and complete life to the future generation.

**Nature** is a marvelous poem that strikes a chord as it is very much pertinent to the contemporary context. Drafted by Dr. A. Padmanaban the poem's succinct words but enriched thoughts have volumes to inculcate in the minds of the acquisitive. The very word nature leaves a futile and bare feeling of desolation, wretchedness and impotence because of the havoc created to it in the mechanized world. "We never know the worth of water 'til the well is dry." avers an English Proverb. The poet's idea that accentuates the dire need to preserve nature is the need of the hour and receives standing ovation. 21<sup>st</sup> century man inbuilt with the crooked and bent mindset is a maven in ravaging nature. His technology and superpower can neither impose limits nor hamper nature's power. No technology has the power to impede Tsunami nor produce rain and manufacture water. Our so called scientists and technologists can neither prevent the depletion of ozone layer nor put a hold on inundating floods. Whether it is a breeze, cold, shiver, Winter, Summer, Autumn or Spring it is nature's capers. Hence the poet pens,



You are powerless

Even the powerful no peer to nature

You are nowhere before nature. (11) (3.10)

“As you sow so you reap”. Thus the bard ends the poem with a poignant and evocative but irrefutable and unascertainable question,

Do you cultivate nature?

Do you love nature? (11)

It is implied that if we love it,

It nurses you

It nourishes you

It is for you. (11)

We need to feel compunction and become red faced with a tight lip when the question,

It is for you

Are you for it? (11)



is posed. Nature's unselfish attribute is taken for granted and humans have started exploiting it. It is misuse beyond description, ruination without mercy ultimately slinging mud on one's own head. Though we have enjoyed the fruits of it established not only our livelihood but also the comforts and luxuries because of it we lack the minimum ethics to conserve it.

**What Humans Need** by Justice Dr. S. Mohan is a sensitive poem set in the ambience of nature. The poet's competency in word usage is engrossing and provides a route to a world enwrapped with the aroma of flora and fauna that makes us to put away the monotonous drudgery of the computerization. The lines of the poem drafted with amazing verbal skills can not only be put on a pedestal for its rhythm pattern but also for its expression and the potential to trigger our senses and give ascent to the poet's ideas, when the lines,

When dark clouds gather we delight

Sorrow and anxiety from our hearts alight

It rains pouring down

Making parched field wet and brown

The smell of earth rents the air. (11) (3.3)

are read. It shots the spectacle and sense of a rainy day and the dampness of the parched field. A sort of unspoken happiness, mirth and gay is associated with nature is what the poet remarks. The fragrance of the mud has the power to swab the angst and brings calm, cool and



relaxation amid the scorching heat. The phrases ‘sowing seeds’, ‘glorious grow’, ‘green carpets’, ‘faithful trumpets’ mark out the process of a tree’s growth and the jubilation following it.

The heart of the poem lies in the last two lines where the poet unveils the requisite morale that has been dissipated in the air of the modern era. He insists on gratitude, the minimum courteousness a man should hold for being delighted in the luxuries of mother earth.

The bosom of earth in countless ways does feed

Gratitude is what humans need. (11)(3.3)

Thus the poet introduces the broad concept of gratitude into the narrow heart of the contemporary legion that will enable a noble and gracious life.

## **Conclusion**

Children are like clay, easy to be moulded. Upsurge of white collar crime rate is awful to note. “Price is what you pay. Value is what you get” avows Warren Buffett, American Investment Entrepreneur. As the tutors of the existing era it is our benign duty to indoctrinate moral and ethical principles in the minds of the juvenile. “Try not to become a man of success but rather try to become a man of value” claims Albert Einstein, German-born brilliant American theoretical physicist. “The mind of the superior man is conversant with righteousness; the mind of the mean man is conversant with gain” maintains Confucius, Chinese philosopher.

Thus it is apparent that each and every poem of the illustrious, oeuvre, eminent, high rank academicians is a tour de force. One can speak volumes on their flair, grip and prowess in deploying the dictum to state explicitly their perspectives on life. Through the enriched



precepts of their verses let us create superior pillars of India au fait with probity, propriety and life skills.

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## **Pratibha Ray's *Yajnaseni: The Story of Draupadi* as a Study in Feminist Revisionist Re-writing**

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**Abstract:** The research paper “Pratibha Ray’s *Yajnaseni: The Story of Draupadi* as a Study in Feminist Revisionist Re-writing” will explore the idea of ‘Feminist Revisionist Re-writing’ or ‘Feminist Revisionist Mythology’ in the light of the translated version of Pratibha Ray’s *Yajnaseni: The Story of Draupadi* (1995) by Pradip Bhattacharya. It studies the role of Yajnaseni or Draupadi as presented in the text from a feminist perspective thereby countering the male biases that have coloured her presentation in the epic or in mythology since time immemorial. It will attempt to show the way in which the above mentioned text asks new questions in relation to Yajnaseni. It will describe the way in which this text rediscovers the character of Yajnaseni, resists sexism in literature and increases awareness regarding the sexual politics prevalent in the society. The research paper shows the way in which the text dismantles the literary convention to reveal the social ones and invert both by making the ‘Other’ into the primary subject. The paper also attempts to show the way in which ‘Revisionist Mythmaking’ is a strategic revisionist use of gender imagery and is a means of exploring and attempting to transform the self and the culture.

**Keywords:** Feminist Revisionist Re-writing/Feminist Revisionist Mythology, Feminism, Revisionist Mythmaking.

‘Feminist Revisionist Re-writing/Feminist Revisionist Mythology’ is a type of feminist literature which refers to the retelling of myths from the point of view of the main female character recreating the story in a way that attempts to subvert the treatment of



women as inactive objects in literature and also in society at large (*Literary Vistas Vol. 4* 143). The feminist narrator in the 'Feminist Revisionist Re-writing' also pokes fun at the flawed view of women in the original text. In Pratibha Ray's *Yajnaseni: The Story of Draupadi*, the anecdote of *Mahabharata* is narrated through the perspective of Draupadi, the Queen of the Pandavas, whereas originally the story of *Mahabharata* has been narrated by Ved Vyasa, a man. It gives her agency as the narrator of the story because in the story, Draupadi justifies her decision of marrying five husbands as it helps her to maintain harmony and unity among the brothers (*Yajnaseni* 54-64). She portrays herself as the common thread that will bind all the brothers together thereby rehabilitating her image of a fallen woman having many men. Moreover, her polyandry may also be seen as a subversion of the patriarchal norms of a patriarchal society although she is initially very uncomfortable with the idea but later gives her consent thinking of the greater good. Lord Krishna indulges in polygamy and has many wives but aspersions are not cast on his character as he is a man and moreover, a god. The mythical Draupadi of *Mahabharata* does not get the agency to rehabilitate her image in the original epic as the text is narrated by a man so it is done by Pratibha Ray in this text.

“Feminist criticism’, then, is a specific kind of political discourse: a crucial and theoretical practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism, not simply a concern for gender in literature” (Moi 204). The novel is informed by feminist criticism as it exposes the ingrained biases and prejudices of a patriarchal and sexist society as manifested by the Pandavs when they bring home Draupadi after her marriage to Arjun. Yudhishtir announces her arrival in the following way to their mother Kunti:

The elder brother called out exultantly, “Mother, today we have brought a priceless thing. Open the door and see! Your sons have not returned empty-handed.” (*Yajnaseni* 55)

It shows the objectification of women as Draupadi in the above instance is perceived as a priceless object and is dehumanized. Similarly, during the game of dice she is staked and lost



by Yudhishtir to Shakuni, the maternal uncle of Duryodhan, representing the Kaurav side in the game as a commodity that belongs to Yudhishtir thereby dehumanizing her. She protests against Yudhishtir's decision to put her on stake when he himself had become a slave after losing himself in the game of dice. When she is dragged to the assembly hall of the Kaurav court by Duhshasan and an attempt is made to de-robe her in front of the whole Kuru clan including the elders of this clan Draupadi emerges victorious in this struggle against patriarchy and sexism. The act of de-robing her is a strategy used by Kauravs to dishonour her so she nips this attempt through the strength of her mind and by surrendering herself to god, that is, Lord Krishna who provides her with unending flow of cloth which nullifies the attempt to de-robe her and she is able to save her honour. Thus, Draupadi becomes a feminist figure because she is able to subvert the objectification and commodification of women in society when she insists on the human value that she has as an individual in keeping the brothers united and not a mere pleasure object that is meant to be shared among men. On the other hand, her 'stri shakti' or power as a woman is manifested when she comes out unscathed from the de-robing episode on the basis of the strength of her soul and her mind and with the help of divine aid thereby subverting commodification of women in the society and foregrounding her identity as a human not as a commodity.

Among many feminists it has long been established usage to make 'feminine' (and 'masculine') represent *social constructs* (patterns of sexuality and behaviour imposed by cultural and social norms), and to reserve 'female' and 'male' for the purely biological aspects of sexual difference. Thus 'feminine' represents nurture, and 'female' nature in this usage. 'Femininity' is a cultural construct: one isn't born a woman, one becomes one as Simone de Beauvoir puts it. (Moi 209)

In the novel, Draupadi is shown to be biologically a female as we are told about her vulnerability when she is menstruating and is clad in a single garment but is dragged to the assembly hall of the Kauravs although she is expected to live in seclusion in the inner





quarters of the palace. She is not feminine as she does not conform to the social constructs, that is, patterns of sexuality and behaviour imposed by cultural and social norms. An instance of her non-conformity can be seen in her refusal to go to the assembly hall when Pratikami comes and tells her coldly “King Duryodhan’s command is: queen Yajnaseni should appear in the assembly-hall” (*Yajnaseni* 234). She questions Pratikami about the appropriateness of King Duryodhan’s command as her husband Yudhishtir is still the emperor but she is told by the messenger that he has staked his Queen Krishnaa after staking and losing his immovable assets, movable assets, male slaves, female slaves, brothers and himself so she is now the slave of Kauravs. She still remains unfazed and tells Pratikami brazenly to go and ask Yudhishtir whether he first staked and lost himself or her and she wouldn’t go till she got an answer from him. Thus, she is shown to be a female who is not feminine as she does not conform to the dictates of King Duryodhan or her husband Yudhishtir thereby flouting the feminine model code of conduct that is prescribed by patriarchy to keep women in shackles. She is a rebellious figure who refuses to accept the wishes of the vengeful king or effeminate husband thereby asserting her identity as a feminist. Moreover, during the de-robing scene she does not depend on any of her husbands to rescue her from her predicament as they have lost their freedom as a result of the game of dice and are the slaves of Kauravs instead she acts for herself by using her ‘stri shakti’ which too foregrounds her feminist identity.

The French feminist Hélène Cixous in “Where is she?” talks of death dealing binary opposition such as Activity/Passivity, Culture/Nature, Head/Emotions or Intelligible/Sensitive etcetera. These binary oppositions are imbricated in the patriarchal value system and each opposition can be analysed as a hierarchy where the ‘feminine side’ is seen as the negative, powerless instance (paraphrased from *Moi* 210). In the novel, Draupadi is seen to be active rather than passive thereby subverting the patriarchal binary opposition as during the stripping scene she vows to herself “Till I wet my hair with the blood of Duhshasan’s breast, I will leave it unbound thus” (*Yajnaseni* 244). Her vow exhibits her



agency as she desires retribution and also her determination to punish the wrongdoers. She exhibits intelligence when she questions the rules of the game of dice that has spelled doom on the Pandavs as a king is expected to play another king but Shakuni plays with Yudhishtir on behalf of Duryodhan which displays manipulation in the game thereby subverting the patriarchal binary opposition of head/emotions.

Julia Kristeva, French-Bulgarian linguist and psychoanalyst, has shown femininity as marginality in terms of positionality (Moi 212-213). In the novel, Yajnaseni subverts the centre-periphery power politics and establishes her identity at the centre rather than at the margins by making use of Dhritarashtra's boon to broker the freedom of Yudhishtir (*Yajnaseni* 244) thereby aiding her husband to get freedom rather than her husband aiding her in the hour of need. As a result she relegates her husband to the margin and occupies the central position.

'Gynocriticism' refers to women's writing that helps to propagate the feminist concerns of the writer through her literary work. Pratibha Ray is one such woman writer who tries to rehabilitate the image of Draupadi as she is a much misunderstood and vilified character from the epic of *Mahabharata* who has been blamed to cause the war of Kurukshetra thereby providing a balanced portrayal of her character by showing the humane aspect of her character as when she is dying she utters "*Om shantih, shantih, shantih!*" (*Yajnaseni* 398) and justifying her motive in causing the war by showing it to be a corrective measure to right the wrong that was done on her. The other aim of the author is to convey the discourse associated with the emancipation of women to the women of today through the example of Draupadi.

The novel is an example of 'Feminist Revisionist Re-writing' as the literary work presents Yajnaseni, one who has emerged from the sacrificial fire, as a character who lives her life on her own terms subverting the patriarchal norms in a patriarchal society, showing agency and establishing her identity as that of an emancipated woman. Her character is



projected by Pratibha Ray as a prototype of modern women who too need to break free from the shackles of the patriarchal society. Her life's story is narrated by her and not by any man. She is presented neither as a goddess nor as a demoniac woman but as a human being thereby undercutting the gender stereotypes created by patriarchy and imposed on women. The author selectively presents the incidents from Draupadi's life to give her character a feminist shade and portrays her as an example for the whole womankind.

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## **Patriarchal Hegemony as Revealed in *Sunlight on a Broken Column***

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**Abstract:** The novel is a keen portrayal of male chauvinistic society of pre and post-independence time. The novelist has sketched the contemporary society of her time as she perceives it. She has presented a very balanced approach to the sensitive issues of the time. She has been very honest and realistic in depiction of Taluqdar family. Though she herself belongs to a Taluqdar family, she did not try to hide the bitter truth of Taluqdar family. Her straightforward narration of different episodes in the novel makes it more alluring. She has very vividly described the female subjugation in patriarchal society. The novel also presents a society in transition, which aims to free itself from the shackles of traditions, customs, patriarchy etc. The narration is so thought provoking that it takes readers back to pre-independence time and readers are lost in a world that people have lived more than seven decades ago. The novel seems to address the issues, which are beyond the shackles of time and still relevant in the present time. Even today in 21<sup>st</sup> century, women are often victim of male dominance and could not free themselves in a patriarchal society. The present society still perceives how violence of all sorts whether physical, sexual or psychological is still perpetuated against the women by the men. Therefore, the novel has a universal theme and has not lost its relevance even in the present time.

**Keywords:** female subjugation, patriarchal domination, society in transition, violence against women.



Attia Hosaain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* is an exemplification of Muslim patriarchal society of pre and post-independence time. The novel portrays a male dominated society where women hardly enjoyed any position. They are subjugated to men folk and are considered second to men. The most significant part of the novel lies in the manifestation of women's awareness regarding their rights and their changing roles in society. They continue to struggle to resist patriarchy and thus they shock readers with their extraordinary courage to stand against the patriarchal hegemony. That is why, it is often perceived as a society in transition. The novel criticizes patriarchal culture and male domination in the society. S.N. Kiran has highlighted how patriarchal figures, feudal system and their influences are glorified in the novel, "The ancestral house is symbolic of patriarchal hegemony and Feudal Aristocracy. Baba Jan, the maternal grandfather of the narrator is bed ridden; he is a Taluqdar and a commanding and formidable figure in the region"(4).

Laila, the protagonist of the novel, has taken a chief role against the patriarchal domination of women. Her exposure to western education made her question the superfluous influence of men on the lives of women. The pitiable condition of women has always been disturbing her. S.N. Kiran has rightly said, "These factors and practices had a strong impact on the moral development of the narrator. Gender and class prejudices always disturbed her. The sufferings of women in the patriarchal families made her unhappy"(7). Consequently, she had begun to question everything as an impact of liberal education on her. She began to question patriarchal domination, gender prejudices, moral values, misinterpretation of Islamic values as she states, "Everything in those days of my years ended with a question mark" (Hossain 175).

Though educated in the western schools, she still could not escape from the patriarchal influences. It hardly made a difference in the society whether the girls are educated or uneducated; their destiny is almost the same as Laila says, "I have no courage, Ameer. I have never done anything I really believed in. Perhaps I believed in nothing enough. I have never been allowed to make decisions; they are always made for me"(Hossain 265).



The clutches of patriarchal domination are not confined only to Muslim society but also to other communities. Sita, a representative of Hindu community also meets the same fate. She is also not allowed to make her own choice regarding marriage rather her parents decide the course of her life as she says, "I cannot ever marry for love and I do not want a masquerade. If it has to be this way, then my parents are the best judges of the man with the best qualifications for being a husband"(Hossain 216).

It is astonishing to see that even women have become instrumental in supporting and establishing patriarchal practices in the society. They hardly care for the feelings of young girls. Contrary to the teachings and norms of Islam, Muslim girls are not consulted for their marriages. The elder members of the family whether male or female dictate decisions regarding marriages as Aunt Abida says, "This child, Laila, must be of marriageable age. No doubt she will marry one of Hamid Mian's sons, and Zahra will marry the other"(Hossain 251).

As depicted in the novel, girls are programmed from the very beginning to fit into the patriarchal roles. They are not provided an environment to take decisions on their own. They are trained in the spirit of service to the male chauvinistic society. Aunt Abida says to Laila, "You must learn that your 'self' is of little importance. It is only through service to others that you can fulfill your duty" (Hossain 252). Therefore, the role of women is quite arbitrary in the society. The tradition of male slavery continues from generation to generation. Laila states, "I suffered more because of Aunt Abida's acceptance of her life –and her silence" (Hossain 252). It is a pity to see that elder women never raised a voice against the male dominance. Laila, who represents Attia in the novel, is a pioneer of women independence. It is for the first time that women like Laila have initiated to contemplate for their own rights. It was a time of socio-political transformation in the Muslim society. A direct contact with the west in the colonial time had ushered into a sort of renaissance in the Muslim society. Though Islam had been advocating freedom for women for a long time, its teachings could never be institutionalized in the society. Western education and ideals prompted women for



their rights, which Islam had already safeguarded for them. Because of the unexpected change in the Indian Muslim society, several critics have termed it as a society in transition. Asha has rightly marked, "Caught in the vortex of socio-political transition, the Muslim woman, living in Hyderabad, Lucknow or Punjab, experiences a cultural dislocation, exposed as she is to antithetical influences"(14).

Laila, a distressed and considerate child, is raised by her orthodox aunts and uncles who are against female education and keep on reminding her feminine duties. The male chauvinistic society is afraid of modern education of women, as they perceive it as a rebellion against the patriarchal system. Laila is a revolutionary figure as she raises her voice against the system. She questions her family's rules and society's customs and paves the way of a new dawn to the female world as depicted in the novel. Hakim Bua's discouragement for female education is quite symbolic when she insists, "Child, put away that book. Those insect letters will eat away your eyes"(Hossain 17). Laila's visionary response to Hakim Bua is quite symbolic of revolution of female education as she responds, "Bua, Bua," I said, hugging her. "These books will be garlands of gold round my neck" (Hossain 17).

Contrary to the female education scenario, there has been no restriction on the boys' education. It is always with the women that they have been subject to different sanctions. She is always critical about this gender discrimination. Another example to be cited is Zahra's marriage. Laila, here, exposes the bitter truth of feudal and patriarchal society, which has captivated women and reduced their existence to oblivion. She has portrayed Mohsin as a patriarchal figure, who sternly opposes Zahra's presence while discussing her marriage prospects, "Is the girl to pass judgement on her elders? Doubt their capability to choose? Question their decision? Choose her own husband?"(Hossain 20).

The novel also exposes some implicit barriers for the women in the name of caste and creed while choosing their husband. Therefore, the novel demonstrates how feudal system has given birth to caste system. The feudal lords are glorified because they have wealth, influence and power. Their women are supposed to marry the same status men. Thus, class-



consciousness is also a big fascination of the novel. Ram S. Kandhare has rightly expressed his views:

Women are victims of the patriarchal system even within the domestic space that is supposed to be their sole domain. The novel re-emphasizes that a woman can exercise her will and choice in a quest for her selfhood, as exemplified in the characters of Nandi and Laila. Zainab is fond of Asad but she could not think of marrying him because he is not his equal in blood. (37-38)

Laila's maturity regarding the patriarchal hegemony is quite evident as she considers even modern and western education inspired by patriarchal influences. Aunt Saira presents her views regarding female education, "I believe our daughters will find it easier, having the benefit of education. That is why I believe in education for women- to prepare them for service" (Hossain 131).

She embraces the patriarchal education system to prepare the women to fit in the new patriarchal roles. Women are never free from patriarchal influences despite the implementation of modern education and mannerisms. For example, Laila considers Zahra's appearance, speech and mannerisms a hypocrisy as she succumbs to her husband's wishes but inwardly she adheres to conservative values. Laila implicitly terms her marriage to be a shift from one patriarchal order to another:

I knew she had not changed within herself. She was now playing the part of the perfect modern wife as she had once played the part of a dutiful purdah girl... She was all her husband wishes her to be as the wife of an ambitious Indian Civil Service officer. (Hossain 140)

Attia exposes the futility and injustice of Taluqdar family that perpetuates violence against the socially backward women. One example of social inequality and female exploitation is a





discourse between Uncle Mohsin and the servant girl Nandi for immortality as he says, "This slut of a girl is a liar, a wanton"(Hossain 28). Nandi retorts, "A slut? A wanton? And who are you to say it who would have made me one had I let you?" (Hossain 28). For her outbreak, Nandi is, "hit across her shoulders" with a stick, and Laila impulsively goes to her friend's help. Blinded by tears she runs to her screaming, "I hate you, I hate you" (Hossain 28).

Nandi grows up as an individual from an illiterate lower caste background and shows her suitability for existence in the most hostile of situations. She is never given freedom of choice. She is always subjugated to male world. Women are not only sexual slaves of men, they suffer for making their personal choices. Laila is never accepted in her family because of marrying a man of her own choice. *Sunlight on a Broken Column* illustrates that women's subjugation is a universal phenomenon irrespective of faith, caste, creed and financial positions.

Laila's western education and intellectual development have a direct clash with patriarchal functioning at Ashiana. She cannot envision the world of her dreams in a strictly male dominated world that makes her secluded with her own western and modern values as she says, "I felt I lived in two worlds; an observer; in an outside world, and solitary in my own"(Hossain 124). Her own world did not visualize only a society free of patriarchal influences but also the value system that she adopts during the years of her education and bringing up. *Jamal and Sandhya* have rightly marked:

Laila's fight is not just with the external elements of patriarchy but is also against the value systems she internalizes in the process of growing up. She is the only lady given the benefit of formal education unlike the other women in the household. Laila's exposure to learning changes her attitude and began to analyze and make her own decisions and believes to be correct for each incident that happens. (71)



Despite all moral and social sanctions, women actively resisted the patriarchal influences as depicted in the novel. They are shown to be struggling for gender equality. Nandini Kumari has rightly stated:

Women's conscious struggle is to resist patriarchy, which subordinates the female to the male, to treat the female as inferior to the male and this power is exerted, directly or indirectly, in civil and domestic life to constrain women. (121)

Women are victims of the patriarchal system even within the domestic space that is supposed to be their only territory. The novel re-emphasizes that a woman can exercise her will and choice in a quest for her selfhood, as demonstrated in the characters of Nandi and Laila. Nandini Kumari has rightly asserted:

Laila's intellectual development is accentuated through the observation of the patriarchal functioning at Ashiana. Though Laila is being educated to fit into the but she is bound by old traditions and culture. (126)

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## **The Ibis Trilogy and Amitav Ghosh's Exploration of Nineteenth Century History**

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**Abstract:** Amitav Ghosh's Ibis trilogy containing three novels—*Sea of Poppies*, *River of Smoke* and *Flood of Fire*—is a unique fictional creation revealing his wide researches on various aspects of the colonial rule and colonial aggression in Asia, exploitation of the subaltern, the sea-routes of the time, the technical know-how of piloting ships, the typical language used by the *laskars* in ships, details of opium production in colonial India, the growing tensions between the Chinese authorities and the British exponents of free trade leading to the Opium War and such others. The present article, after offering a brief introduction to the ship *Ibis* and showing how it serves as the connecting link among the three separate novels, discusses the colonial strategies used in exploiting the Asian people as revealed in the trilogy, the condition of the subaltern in the early days of colonial rule in the Indian subcontinent, and Ghosh's revelation of the unknown facts behind the Opium War as well as the Indo-Chinese relationship.

**Keywords:** Amitav Ghosh, 19<sup>th</sup> Century history, Amitav Ghosh, *Ibis*, Opium War, Indo-Chinese relationship.

Amitav Ghosh made it clear that there is no linear connection among the three books—*Sea of Poppies*, *River of Smoke* and *Flood of Fire*—and that the trilogy is in no way a single book divided in three parts (Ziya Us Salam, 2015). The readers, yet, find some connections as are



evident in the reappearances of characters in the course of narratives and in offering spaces in each of the books for similar discourses such as exploitation of the subaltern in the Indian subcontinent during the colonial period, colonial strategies of aggression in Asia in nineteenth century and the background as well as the progress of the Opium War in which Indian businessmen and soldiers were directly involved. *Sea of Poppies* highlights the details of opium production in colonial India, greed of the colonial masters who exploited not only the poor Indian farmers but also the well established landlords by twisting their laws, along with a cast of numerous intricate stories the most thrilling of which is the adventure of two laskars, two convicts and one passenger of Ibis when the ship was caught up in a whirlwind on its way from Calcutta to Mauritius; *River of Smoke* follows its storm-tossed characters to the crowded harbours of China, explores Canton and other newly developed islands where the British traders had continuously been engaged in selling opium despite the Chinese government's effort to stop them, the trying of luck of a few Indian traders who are victims of the growing tension between the Chinese government and the British exponents of Free Trade; *Flood of Fire* also follows the fugitives from Ibis, traces the beginning of globalization and of settlement in countries other than one's motherland and, most important of all, it offers details of the Opium War, focusing on its Indian link and clarifying thereby some parts of the hitherto unrevealed facts<sup>1</sup>.

*Sea of Poppies* starts with a touch of mystery, with Deeti's vision of a ship which is to be recognized by her as Ibis later,—a poor, illiterate, housewife in a remote village in Bihar in eastern India during nineteenth century had no chance of witnessing a ship previously—when she joins a group of indentured labors in order to escape from the threat of rape and murder after her husband's death. Deeti leaves her home with a low cast man Kalua, with whom she had little acquaintance and who was also desperate to leave the place of his birth and try his luck for survival. Much to her bad luck, Deeti is recognized and threatened by her husband's relative Bhyro Singh who boarded Ibis as the recruiter and manager of the laborers and who is eventually killed by Kalua while rescuing Deeti from the clutches of Bhyro Singh.



To avoid severest punishment Kalua and Deeti escape from Ibis in a long boat along with the third mate Serang Ali, an European fugitive Miss Paulette and two convicts—Neel Ratan Halder, a learned landlord, convicted in a fake case by a British officer, and Ah Fat, an opium-addict. Though all these five persons are thought dead in the face of the whirlwind, they are traced in the next two books: Deeti is seen as owner of a shrine where she lives with her son whose father Kalua is dead by now; Miss Paulette is the owner of a garden and a nursery; Ah Fate, now known as Freddie, comes out to be an illegitimate son of the Indian (Parsi) trader Bahram Modi whose widow takes an adventurous journey to Canton to see Freddie, his late husband's son with a Chinese woman; in another expedition Neel Ratan's son Raju joins his father who is now respected as a translator in Canton; Serang Ali is also seen as an informer. Besides these five, there is Zachary Reid who was initially a carpenter and was by luck appointed as the second mate of Ibis, now becomes a trader; some British officers, babus of the officers and relatives of important characters (Deeti's brother Habildar Kesri Sing, for example) reappear in the last two books along with numerous others, revealing the links in between the narratives. The events in the later part of *Sea of Poppies* take place on the ship Ibis which had been built for transporting slaves and since the formal abolition of slave trade the schooner's new owner acquired her with an eye to fitting her for exporting opium, though it was also used for carrying indentured labors<sup>2</sup>. In a unique way the ship has been used by Ghosh: side by side its realistic description the ship is visualized (by Deeti in the beginning of *Sea of Poppies*)<sup>3</sup>, is painted as if it were a bird (in the beginning of *River of Smoke*)<sup>4</sup> and is often remembered by other characters as a sort of mysterious presence. Freddie, for example, who was known as Ah Fatt to the inmates of Ibis, tells Paulette when he is reunited with her, "The *Ibis* –it has tied us all together in strange ways" (*Flood of Fire*, 365). When Zachary boards Ibis as the skipper, it was like a homecoming, though he finds many changes in the vessel. "The change was so great as to suggest the intervention of some other-worldly power: as a sailor Zachary knew that certain ships possess their own minds, even souls—and he did not doubt that the *Ibis* had conspired in making his transformation possible" (373). Towards the end of *Flood of Fire*, again, when Zachary



comes out as triumphant, Babu Nob Kissin recalls the day he first saw Zachary on the Ibis: “It occurred to him also that it was the *Ibis*, the marvelous vehicle of transformations, that had launched him on the path of destiny....In a swirl of saffron, he ran outside—but only to be confronted with yet another miracle: the *Ibis*, which had for the last several days been at anchor off East Point, was gone” (606). A rich imagination works behind the story of Ibis, a ship that was transformed several times for specific purposes and finally, it vanishes, as if after completing the task assigned to her by fate. Different roles of Ibis in different periods of history clarify the trends of the time; a sort of mystery added to the appearance and the uses of the ship through the characters’ attitude to it enhances the narrative’s capacity to captivate the reader’s mind making it fabulously entertaining.

### **Imperial Aggression and forced Exile**

In an interview given in 2002, Amitav Ghosh said that he did not think there exists much difference between writing fiction and writing non-fiction. Sometimes the world interests him as fiction and sometimes it interests him as non-fiction, he said. (*The Sunday Statesman, Literary*, 2002). The Ibis trilogy has in it elements both of fiction and non-fiction; it is a harmonious blend of historical facts and fictional elements—the important historical facts are used while characters are, with the exception of Napoleon, representatives of typical British people with a colonial mindset and ordinary persons who were the most wretched victims of imperial forces—in which the real world outside has been introduced only after an intensive research on it and the fiction is founded on the facts received from that intensive research. Ghosh’s emphasis is on highlighting little known areas, if not hitherto unrevealed facts, of history. The Ibis trilogy investigates into the ways taken up by a section of British people for making up the loss caused by the abolition of slavery. These people were so desperate to make money that they made long term strategies of exploitation to make the poor farmers more and more poor so that they would opt for the life of indentured laborers and throng together to the European ships to be deported. These wretched fellows were fated to be exiled for survival—Edward W,Said calls such exile “irremediably secular and unbearably



historical”<sup>5</sup>—and Ghosh’s imagination traces the possible route of their escape first, from the hinterland of north-eastern India to the sea port and then from the harbor to the unknown destination.

The imperial aggression is perhaps best revealed in the words of Mr. Burnham, the owner of Ibis, who justifies the system of slavery—of transporting human beings from Africa for their life-time services to the white people in Europe and America—with a queer logic. He argues that the Africa trade was the greatest exercise in freedom a so-called slave in the Carolinas enjoyed more freedom than his brethren in Africa, groaning under the rule of some dark tyrant (*Sea of Poppies*, 79). He further justifies his new trade of transporting indentured laborers from India to Mauritius with the help of the typical colonial logic: “When the doors of freedom were closed to the African, the Lord opened them to a tribe that was even more needful of it—the Asiatick”(79). The conversation between Burnham and Zachary, two fictional characters, hits at the right cord, enabling the readers feel at once what Edward W. Said actually meant when he wrote that ‘exile’ is a “truly horrendous” act that is “produced by human beings for other human beings”( *Reflections on Exile*, 174). Mr. Burnham also had ready answer to any query in regard to exporting opium to China to cover up the naked greed of the influential persons like him. He was in favor of Free Trade for global benefit, he could assure anybody. The fact was that the Chinese government was taking serious steps to prevent the inflow of opium into China as most of the Chinese people turned drug-addict, posing a serious threat to the future of the land. But all their attempts failed as the European traders continued supplying opium to China, often bribing the Chinese officers. The traders argued that the Chinese government was interfering with their freedom and hence China should be punished. They also argued that the common Chinese people should not be deprived of medicines made of opium. But when those traders were engaged in conversation among themselves, the ugly face of imperialism is disclosed as when one of the traders said that the end of trade with China would be ruinous for all (*Sea of Poppies*, 11-112). This technique of conversation among characters belonging to different groups helps Ghosh to





highlight the duplicity in the nature of the colonialists. The entire Ibis trilogy through the varied intricacies of its plot highlights this colonial mindset. The British anxiety for loss of profit increased gradually and with this growing anxiety increases their strength to retaliate the Chinese government. *The River of Smoke* gives details of the efforts of the Chinese government to stop opium trade (147). While serving as Bahram's clerk, Neel interpreted the newspaper articles to Bahram: it was found by the Chinese men of letters that in their own countries the Europeans were very strict about limiting the circulation of opium. "They sell the drugs freely only when they travel east, and to those people whose land and wealth they covet" (229). The duplicity in the nature of the British people is further exposed in *Flood of Fire when* Compton and Neel agree to the point that the Chinese people had the freedom to petition their government but the ordinary people of Britain, a country that used to beat its own drum as upholder of freedom for all, "cannot petition their government or do anything to affect official policy" (220).

Having made thorough research on the British strategies for extracting more and more benefits from Asia, Ghosh gives shape to his characters and the narrative. The fictional character Deeti is a superb example of the process of victimization, thanks to colonial aggression and greed for profit in the name of freedom. In order to earn easy money from cash crops the British businessmen compelled the Indian farmers to produce indigo in Bengal<sup>6</sup> and opium in Bihar, depriving the farmers of wheat and paddy which they needed most to support them. Earlier poppies were grown in small clusters as luxury item—the sap was left to dry to get hard 'akbari afeem' which the farmers could sell to local nobility and were also free to keep some amount for personal use during illness. But now they were forced to produce poppies only and the entire production had to be sold to the British factory for packaging and marketing 'chandu' opium; the farmers were ill paid and were denied freedom of free selling; "with the sahibs forcing everyone to grow poppy, no one had thatch to spare—it had to be bought in the market...and the expense was such that people put off their repairs as long as they possibly could" (*Sea of Poppies*, 29). Ghosh offers details of how the



farmers were forced not to produce paddy and vegetables in their own land: the agents of the British businessmen would go from home to home in winter, forcing cash advances on the farmers, making them sign 'asami' contracts; in case a farmer refused, the agents would forcibly keep silver coins in his pocket and forge his fingerprints and the white magistrates were never ready to listen to the native's plea. Deeti's husband, a crippled soldier who had lost his limbs while working under the British army, was a worker in Opium factory and his wife had to manage the field work and sell the opium to the factory. After her husband's sudden death in factory, she had no other way but to mortgage the patch of land she had. Finally she sent her only daughter to her brother's wife and secretly left her home accompanied by Kalia to reach an unknown land. After Deeti came in contact with other indentured laborers on Ibis, she learnt that everyone had a similar story of serving with a contract and plunging deeper in debt. The Bengali landlord Neel Ratan Haldar is an example of exploitation of a well off and learned Indian having unshakable faith in Company's policy and Queen's rule. Neel was financially exploited by Burnham, and being accused of forgery, he was sent to a jail across the black water, as a part of capital punishment. The myth of impartial British judiciary is thus broken and the imperial strategy of using law against the colonized comes out. The double face of the colonizers—their greed for wealth and their lip-service to save the Asians from the tyranny of local rulers as well as their pose as the "servant of Free Trade"—is exposed in a brilliant way.

### **Portraying the Subaltern in colonial regime**

An active member of the Subaltern Studies Group, Amitav Ghosh has a natural tendency to render facts from the perspective of the subalterns. In the Ibis trilogy also the misrule of the colonial masters has been rendered from the perspectives of the subaltern. While the portrait of Deeti exemplifies the torture inflicted on the subaltern by the combined force of the patriarchal rule and the colonial rule, the portrait of Habildar Keshri Singh is an example of the torture inflicted on the Indian soldiers by the colonial rulers who remained silent, curiously, to the criminal acts based on caste system in India as they interpreted such



atrocities based on caste discrimination in terms of freedom of the individual. Deeti belongs to the group of Indian subaltern who “could not speak”. She was married to an impotent ex-soldier who at the time of marriage was working in an opium factory run by British trader—it was revealed to her later that her only daughter was fathered by her in-law on the very day of her arrival to the house of her in-laws and she had been administered opium that time—and used to spend her life as any poor woman in the village would do by that time. Only after her husband was on the verge of death, she learnt that at the start of the season he had taken a much larger amount than she had ever thought of and the meager amount that she could get by selling opium would in no way help her to survive. The clerk in the opium factory advised her to send her sons to Mareech and if she had no son, to sell her land. By this time she was being threatened by her brother-in-law who was eager to occupy both the land and the body of Deeti. She was ready to die in her husband’s pyre to save herself from the lust of her brother-in-law, but was rescued—an incident that sometimes occur in fictional writings with nineteenth century backdrop—by Kalua, another subaltern belonging to much lower class. Both of them somehow managed to escape and could board Ibis as indentured laborers. The incident of Bhyro Singh’s recognizing Deeti and his attempt to rape her as well as his whipping Kalua in public apparently to punish him for eloping with an upper class woman but actually for taking revenge on him for preventing his perverted sex relationship with Deeti, offers Ghosh the scope for elaborating the subaltern issue in colonial India. Even the captain of Ibis, though outwardly gentle, supported Bhyro Singh as he followed the unspoken rules of the colonizers. When Zachary argued that the choice of one’s wife must not be the concern of the authority, the captain reminded him of the practice in America where a Negro was never spared in case he dared to marry a white woman. The Captain also clarified the British policy of ‘divide and rule’: he clearly told that the upper class Indian people who had been helping the British continue colonial rule in the Indian subcontinent must be supported by the rulers. In matters of marriage and procreation, he further clarified, the British should never interfere; if the supporters of the British would lose faith in the ruler and apprehend that the British could no more be trusted as guarantors of the order of caste that would indicate the



end of British rule in India (*Sea of Poppies*, 482). Through this discourse between two non-Indians Ghosh makes it clear that the British rulers always spoke of civilizing the colonized people but in fact they believed in basic differences among races and devised shrewd ways to aggravate differences among the colonized people to make their rule safe and secure and enrich their coffer.

*Flood of Fire* highlights Deeti's brother Habilder Kesri Singh who joined the British army against his father's will and had direct experience of the Opium War. Following the colonial policy of not interfering with the existing caste laws, the British Captain allowed Kesri Singh to be heckled and humiliated by his fellow soldiers for his sister Deeti's elopement with a low caste man. Despite his sincerity and courageous performance he was never allotted the position he actually deserved as a soldier. It was not only the discrimination in status: the native soldiers were never allotted new weapons which were given only to the British soldiers. When Kesri Singh learnt that the British soldiers were being trained in the use of a new weapon, a percussion-fired musket, he asked Captain Mee if he knew about the new guns and if those guns were to be issued to the sepoys or not, the Captain told in a tone of embittered resignation that the native soldiers were always sent to fight with old equipment and the authorities complained that sepoys did not match up to white troops. Kesri could notice later that the new gun did not emit puff of smoke at the time of firing and that unlike the older which were difficult to fire in wet or damp condition, the new guns were all weather weapons (279-280). The Indian sepoys were ill paid, they were equipped with inferior weapons and they were denied the glory of fighting for their own land. Ghosh introduces a new discourse through the conversation between Neel and the Chinese writer Zhong Lou-si. Lou-si wanted to know if the Indian soldiers were slaves and if not, whether they were paid the same wages as the red-haired English troops. He also wanted to know if the Indian and the British troops ate together and lived together. When he received the negative answers, he further queried if there were Indian officers too. When confirmed that the Indians fought for less pay and without any position for command, Lou-si was sure that the Indian must have



been very poor. Neel knew that the answer was not that simple. Thanks to the Indian caste rules according to which the Rajputs had to take up the profession of fighting, the colonial ruler got the easy way to exploit them.

### **The Opium War rendered from New Perspectives**

The Ibis trilogy discloses the nexus between the British merchants who were not willing to stop the lubricating business of opium in China, and the British government in London. A large sum of money contributed by the merchants was sent to William Jardine, the biggest trader in London, who bribed many members of Parliament and a horde of newspapermen. “Nothing like that had ever been seen before—merchants and seths using their money to buy up the government! So many speeches had been made, and so many articles had been published that now every Englishman was convinced that Commissioner Lin was a monster. It was rumoured that on Jardine’s advice the British government was preparing to send an expeditionary force to China” (*Flood of Fire*,77).

While Zadig Bey expressed his first hand knowledge of the immediate causes behind the Opium War, Neel recorded in his diary how the tension grew between the British and the Chinese government. The diary contains data gathered from his conversation with the Tibetan Lama Taranathji who had served as a translator for the Manchu General Fukanggan at the time of the Qing dynasty’s Gurkha wars. According to the diary, at one stage the Gurkhas even sought help from the British and failed. After that they became tributaries of China and acted as chief channel of information about Hindustan. Taranathji told Neel that over the years the Gorkhas had given the Qing many warnings about the British and their ever increasing appetites but their warnings were ignored. Neel also recorded his shocking experiences as eye witness of the outbreak of the Opium War at Humen. First he saw a British ship “Royal Saxon” heading towards the Chinese Customs House indicating that the captain approved of the Chinese contact. That ship was soon chased by the British warship and was compelled to change its course. Meanwhile the Chinese ships that had been kept in



alert began to move only to be caught unaware and destroyed by the British Warships. Neel witnessed how the Chinese fleet was destroyed by rocket: “it was as if a sheet of lightning had come down from the sky, to set the channel on fire”(151). Neel also expressed his astonishment that in a country as populous as China all the provinces did not have a good army at their disposal, that most of the empire’s troops were spread out along the western frontiers which were far from Guangdong (343).

Kesri Singh experienced the horror of actual fighting; but as a soldier he also experienced the meaningless of joining the British army as he could not share the glory of winning over the Chinese. When a wounded Chinese soldier came to attack him knowing that he was embracing sure death, Kesri recognized the look in the dying soldier’s eyes: “he knew it to be the look that appears on men’s faces when they fight for their land, their homes, their families, their customs, everything they hold dear”(472). It struck Kesri that in a life time of soldiering he had never known what it was to fight for something that was his own, something that tied him to his forefathers. Paulette was in Hong Kong at the time where the sound of canon fire, though muted, was still menacing enough to keep the gardeners away from the nursery, and so she had to work alone. But it was impossible to ignore the distant thudding; there was a “concentrated menace in it, a savagery that made it difficult to carry on as usual”(473).

Neel’s firsthand knowledge of the Opium War led him to understand that a battle was a distillation of time, the impact of war radiating backwards and forwards through time, determining the future and also changing the past. He felt that his own place in the world had been decided on the battlefield of Panipat and Plassey which he earlier considered to be distant. Neel also observed how the common Chinese men started hating the Indian people for it was a fact that the black Indian soldiers were the cause behind British victory. One evening, after the battle was over, Neel was surrounded by a gang of urchins who chased him, shouting curse and obscenities; “there was a note of rage in the boys’ voices that Neel had not heard before... they identified him not as a ‘black alien’ but as a ‘traitor’”(401). They



were so enraged that they chased Neel and even threw a stone at him. Through Neel's experience the author exposes how the common Chinese people began to hate the Indian, thanks to the recruitment of Indian soldiers in British army. Ironically those Indian soldiers joined the British force only to earn a livelihood at the cost of tolerating utter humiliation and discrimination, and often at the cost of their lives. Neel's experience of staying on the Chinese owned ship *Cambridge* exposed to him the Chinese policy of management through discussion as opposed to the British policy of imposing rules. "The functioning of the *Cambridge* too was unlike that of a Western ship. There was no captain as such, but rather an officer whose position was like that of the *lao-dah* of a junk—mere a co-coordinator than a commander in the Western fashion. This suited the crew very well since most operational matters were left to them: decisions were generally arrived at by consensus which meant that the atmosphere on board was more relaxed than on most ships"(424). As Ghosh said in an Interview (*Hindu Literary Review*, June 7, 2015): "Historians have tended to write the military history of the war but Opium War was very much an Indian war—finances, transport vessels, Indian Parsis, Bohras". And yet, he confirms that he always tried to be fair to his characters, even the much-hated opium characters. The Ibis trilogy is thus a unique creation, revealing hitherto unknown historical facts in a thrilling fiction.

## Notes

1. To quote from the Epilogue of the novel, "(The) British expeditionary force as it advanced northwards in the direction of Beijing , successively attacking Xiamen, Zhoushan, Ningbo and Sanghai, thereby causing so much destruction and such extensive loss of life that the Daoguang Emperor was ultimately forced to authorize his representatives to capitulate to the invaders' demands"(609). As per these demands, the Treaty of Nanking was signed on 29 August 1842 on the ship HMS *Cornwallis* according to which five ports were opened to foreign trades and the Chinese government had to pay an enormous indemnity of twenty one million silver



dollars. The author provides details of the sources in different libraries which “Neel knew of but was unable to acquire”(613); the author, on the other hand, is able to draw on those sources as he “happens to be writing at a time of an extraordinary efflorescence of scholarships on many subjects that touch upon the experiences of the *Ibis* community”(615).

2. While refitting the ship *Zachary* discovered that “the ‘tween-deck, where the schooner’s human cargo had been accommodated, was riddled with peepholes and air ducts, bored by generations of captive Africans”(Sea of Poppies, 12). *Zachary*’s conversation with Monsieur d’Epinay reveals how the Europeans were trying to collect indentured laborers (21).
3. Even before the actual ship is described, it is visualized in the very beginning of the novel by Deeti. Later, it was accepted by the seasoned sailors that the vision of the ship was granted to Deeti by the sacred river Ganga, that the image of the *Ibis* had been transported upstream, like an electric current, the moment the vessel made contact with the sacred waters. “This would mean that it happened in the second week of March 1838, for that was when the *Ibis* dropped anchor off Ganga-Sagar island, where the holy river debouches into the Bay of Bengal”(10)
4. *River of Smoke* starts with the description of how Deeti, with her one-year-old son tied to her back, was trapped by a first rising storm while collecting bananas from the forest and unable to return to the plantation field near the bay, the isthmus having been cut off by the surging tide, she settled in the mountain cave which she later turned into a shrine. Besides drawing several sketches of Kalua on the walls of the shrine, she also sketched *Ibis* when it was caught in the whirlwind. “In Deeti’s depiction of it, the scene was framed as if to freeze forever the moments before the fugitives’ boat was swept from the mother-ship by the angry waves: the *Ibis* was portrayed in the fashion of a mythological bird, with a great beak of a bowsprit and two enormous, outspread canvas wings”(13-14). The author links her vision to a scientific observation, and offers thereby a touch of mystery to his own narrative of





hard historical facts. “This bespoke an understanding of the nature of storms that was, for its time, not just unusual but revolutionary; because 1838. The year of that storm, was when a scientist first suggested that hurricanes might be composed of winds rotating around a still centre—an eye, in other words”(20).

5. Though Edward W. Said speaks mainly of exile in early twentieth century, what he says is applicable to the forced exile of poor Indians to Mauritius and other places during the nineteenth century. Said has it, “Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted. And while it is true that literature and history contain heroic, romantic, glorious, even triumphant episodes in an exile’s life, these are no more than efforts meant to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement... (Exile) is produced by human beings for other human beings and...like death but without death’s ultimate mercy, it has torn millions of people from the nourishment of tradition, family and geography”(Reflections on Exile, pp.173-174)
6. Deenabandhu Mitra’s Begali play *Neel Darpan* written on the theme of forced plantation of indigo on the soil of Bengal revealed the tortures inflicted on the Bengali farmers.

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## **America's Quest for Spiritualism: Influence of Oriental Philosophy on Select American Poets**

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**Abstract:** Oriental philosophy has become a major inspiration for American myths, culture, ethnicity and most prominently American literature throughout the ages. The western notion of self and others gets merged when Walt Whitman, the representative poet of the nation, ventures to have a spiritual quest towards the Orient not to gain any materialistic prosperity but to achieve the eternal peace of mind through the Oriental spiritual hymns and culture. Emerson's poems, essays and speeches are full of allusions from the Oriental scriptures. The influence became dominating in Eliot's *The Waste Land* which is divided into five parts and the last three parts are directly named after the teachings of Hinduism and Buddhism. This paper has focussed how Oriental philosophies like Hinduism and Buddhism have influenced over the century on the thought, philosophy and writings of select American poets: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman and T.S. Eliot.

**Keywords:** Oriental Philosophy, Buddhism, American literature, Hinduism, Transcendentalism



Oriental philosophy has been a major inspiration for the Western literature most notably for American Literature in several aspects. American nationality, culture, ethnicity and most prominently American literature are deeply rooted into the spiritual and philosophical viewpoints of Oriental history, tradition, culture and religion. The Occidental dogma of self and others emerge lifeless when Walt Whitman, the representative poet of the American Literature ventures to have a spiritual quest towards the Orient to achieve the eternal peace of mind through the Oriental spiritual hymns and culture. America's association with the Orient is not only limited to their literature and philosophy, America shares a strong historical and cultural bonding with India since the origin of the American civilisation. Before the first European invasion, American literature was solely an orally transmitted literature in the forms of myths, legends, tales and lyrics. Only the Indian and tribal cultures were practiced by the tribes like Navaho<sup>1</sup>, Acoma<sup>2</sup>, Ojibwa<sup>3</sup>, Hopi<sup>4</sup> etc. They existed in a large number in America then and the people of the land followed their own religion worshipping different elements of nature as well as sacred persons. "There was no written literature among the more than 500 different Indian languages and tribal cultures that existed in North America before the first Europeans arrived." (Vanspanckeren 03) American folklore and mythologies were highly influenced with Indian tradition of oral literature and their stories also dealt with themes that corroborated with the themes of Indian mythology and tradition. One such focus was Nature's supremacy and her role in this Universe. One of the most famous myths of America titled, the "Turtle Myth" is an apt example to substantiate the Indian influence on the American literature and ideology. In the ancient times, Indians refereed America as "Turtle Island". It still continues to be the mythological name of North America. In a tribal community Ojibwa there is a belief regarding "creation myth". It illustrates on how once upon a time, the Earth was filled with water and there were all kinds

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<sup>1</sup> Quasi-Nomadic hunting tribe

<sup>2</sup> Tribal class whose main occupation was agriculture

<sup>3</sup> Member of an Algonquian people who lived in the west of Lake Superior in the ancient America

<sup>4</sup> Desert tribes living in the ancient America



of creatures in it except human beings. The Woman spirit of the Earth wandered in the form of cloud. She became lonely in this universe without any prodigy. So, one day the creatures decided that they should make a place for human beings. To implement this idea, they had to form a piece of land and therefore the turtle raised its back above the ocean to form a land. Thus, the Universe got a land and the ancient Native American knew it as "Turtle Island". American fascination for Eastern spiritualism is not limited to a particular span of time; it is rather an eternal process that still continues to exist. When the Western poets and philosophers failed to gain spiritual gratification in the world of sheer materialism and warfare, they took shelter to Oriental philosophy which still leads its followers towards the way of wisdom through simple living and holistic thinking. This paper focuses on how Hinduism and Buddhism, two major branches of Oriental philosophy have their influence on the works and philosophies of select American poets: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman and T. S. Eliot.

Emerson is known to have a great impact on the philosophy and thought of his contemporaries and also his successors. He brought Hinduism as a major influence in his writings. Some believe that he might have gone for a detailed study of Hinduism and Sanskrit literature while he stayed in Germany. It is also thought that his aunt Mary Moody Emerson brought to him several Oriental religious scriptures like the *Vedanta*, the *Bhagavad-Gita* and the *Upanishads*. Wouter J. Hanegraaff, in his book *New Age Religion and Western Culture* deals heavily with Emerson's take on Oriental religion and philosophy. He writes:

Buddhism remained alien to him, as to many of his contemporaries, and the same goes for Taoism. Confucianism, by contrast, was admired by Emerson for its ethical concern and common sense. But his deepest appreciation was for Hinduism, which he perceived (partly under the influence of the reform-Hinduism of Rammohun Roy's Brahmo Samaj, which had fascinated European and American Unitarians since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century) largely in terms of Advaita Vedanta. (460)



Emerson avoided any observance and ritual of Hinduism and his point of concentration was solely the divinity, the religion offers universally. Emerson's devotion to Oriental religion is apparent in many of his poems like "Brahma", "Hematreya" and "Maya". "Brahma" (1857) is a poem where he directly invokes the Hindu supreme God *Brahma*, the God of creation along with two other connected terms Brahman (the essence, or "soul," of the universe) and Brahmin (the Hindu priests). The poem is a blend of philosophies from "Katha-Upanishads", "Maitri Upanishads" and the spiritual teaching of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, according to which, the human soul exists with full vigour even after the mortal body gets deceased. A sense of unification between the creator and the creation is surging throughout the verses. Emerson indicates that the ultimate way to eternalise the human soul is through finding the true essence of Brahma. Emerson draws the theme and title of "Hematreya" (1846) from *Vishnu Purana*, an old Vedantic mythology. In "Hematreya", he brings in a sharp contrast between the mortality of human power and the immortality of the Earth. Hematreya is actually representing Maitreya, a character of *Vishnu Purana* who gets engaged in conversation with Lord Vishnu regarding the pride of the mighty Kings of the world and their ignorance about their mortality. Emerson's poem also takes the same theme in which Earth declares her superiority over the arrogant human beings.

Where are these men? Asleep beneath their grounds:  
And strangers, fond as they, their furrows plough.  
Earth laughs in flowers, to see her boastful boys  
Earth-proud, proud of the earth which is not theirs;  
Who steer the plough, but cannot steer their feet  
Clear of the grave. [Hamatreya: Lines 11-16]

Not only Emerson's poems, but also his essays are enriched with his Oriental ideas. In his noted essay "The Over-Soul" (1941), Emerson dealt with the divine nature of human soul,



an indomitable spirit which can only be perceived through moral action and spiritual practices. Emerson, upon his reading of Oriental philosophy was highly motivated with concept of eternal soul, as prescribed in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Emerson brought one of his poems named "Unity" as the epigraph of the essay. It is thought that Emerson started losing interest in his own religion after the death of his dear ones at very early stages: his first wife died only at the age of nineteen, his brother died at twenty nine and his son died before reaching the age of six due to scarlet fever. Though, he belonged to a highly religious family and even he was a religious preacher, his faith in religion started to get loosened for the tragedy he faced in his life. The circumstances made him restless and he devoted himself to study Oriental spiritualism for mental peace.

Walt Whitman is another American poet who largely dealt with Oriental philosophy. On various occasions, he acknowledged the contribution of Emerson upon his career. In 1855, upon reading the first edition of Walt Whitman's "Leaves of Grass", Emerson wrote a letter to Whitman to inspire him in his new sojourn as an artist. He wrote: "I greet you at the beginning of a great career, which yet must have had a long foreground somewhere for such a start." (Whitman, 6) Whitman also showed his gratitude to Emerson for what he included Emerson's letter in the next edition of "Leaves of Grass" along with twenty more new poems and his new lengthy letter to Emerson. "I say you have led The States there—have led Me there. I say that none has ever done, or ever can do, a greater deed for The States, than your deed." (Whitman, 172) Thus, if Emerson is the pathfinder to bring the Oriental spiritualism in his works, how can Whitman keep himself untouched by that philosophy? He reflects in his poetry Oriental religions like Brahma, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism etc. In "Song of Myself" (1855), he deals with rebirth, one of the core concepts of Hinduism and *The Bhagavad-Gita*. Christianity strictly opposes any idea of physical reincarnation of human beings but the poet brings the possibility of rebirth in his poems. Like the oriental poets and philosophers, he has cherished the desire to take birth again in this mortal world. In "Song of Myself", he writes



“We should surely bring up again where we now stand, And surely go as much farther,  
and then farther and farther.” (240)

“Song of Myself” can also be referred as the spiritual autobiography of Walt Whitman. The poet has expressed his quest for wisdom through distracting himself from the western civil society. In this regard, he suggests a close resemblance to the transcendentalists who believed in simple living in the lap of the divine Nature. In section 32 of “Song of Myself” Whitman wishes to live amongst animals rather than living with his own species. The ideas of reincarnation and transcendentalism gets merged when Whitman aspires to retreat into his previous form which he thinks to be an animal’s one.

“I think I could turn and live with animals, they are so placid and self-contain'd,  
I stand and look at them long and long.”[Song of Myself: Section 32]

He also expresses his strong desire to go for a remembrance of his pre-verbal and pre-human memories as a way to get relief of his present discontentment. According to the poet, the life of an animal is more “sacred” as they do not have any affinity for materialistic possession, they do not feel any discrimination among their own species due to race, caste or religion and they are free from the guilt the religion may bring to the species of humans. His verses simply reveal that he was a sole believer of the transience nature of human soul which does not have any decay despite of the physical ending of human or animalistic life.

I wonder where they get those tokens,  
Did I pass that way huge times ago and negligently drop them?  
Myself moving forward then and now and forever,  
Gathering and showing more always and with velocity, [“Song of Myself”: Section 32]



The poem has also been referred as a fruit of *Vedantic philosophy* of “self” and its relation to the whole cosmic. V. K. Chari investigated Whitman’s association with the Vedantic philosophy in his critical writing “Whitman in the Light of Vedantic Mysticism” (1964). He comments, “The Vedantic comparison is to be understood simply as a critical instrument, one that I have used to define and illustrate Whitman’s most basic ideas” (Preston 254). He also defended Whitman’s indulgence on the theme of “self”, which, according to him is not only the representation of Whitman as a man but also the universal concept of “self”. He utters “the theme of self, of relating the self to the world of experience, is central to the comprehensive intent of Whitman’s poems.” (Preston 254)

Roger Asselineau writes that Whitman bought many scholarly books on Oriental religion and philosophy like “William Dwight Whitney, *Oriental and Linguistic Studies: The Veda; The Avesta; The Science of Language* (New York, 1873), and J. Muir, *Religious and Moral Sentiments metrically rendered from Sanskrit*” (Preston 251). As a direct influence of Whitman’s growing interest on Oriental philosophy and spiritualism, he combined the Western thought with the Eastern philosophies in many of his later poems. Even he used many Sanskrit words directly derived from the Indian scriptures in his later poems. In his poem “Are You the New Person Drawn Toward Me?”(1860), Whitman used the word “maya” to mean illusion of this materialistic world. The concept of “maya” has been discussed in detail in ancient Indian Vedantic philosophy. S. Radhakrishnan., in his scholarly article “The Vedanta Philosophy and the Doctrine of Maya” defines the concept of “maya”:

.....the Absolute called Brahman [Soul] alone is real and the finite manifestations are illusory. There is one absolute undifferentiated reality, the nature of which is constituted by knowledge. The entire empirical world, with its distinction of finite minds and the objects of their thought, is an illusion (431)

According to Whitman, the glory, achievement and heroism are nothing but the illusion or “maya” which will fade away in the course of time.





Do you think I am trusty and faithful?

Do you see no further than this façade, this smooth and tolerant manner of me?

Do you suppose yourself advancing on real ground toward a real heroic man?

Have you no thought, O dreamer, that it may be all maya, illusion? [Lines 6-9]

His quest for spirituality also made him indulge through Oriental civilisation, culture and religion. This is the key point of his famous poem "Passage to India", published in the 1871–72 edition of *Leaves of Grass*. The three great engineering achievements (the opening of the Suez Canal, the laying of the transatlantic undersea cable, and the joining of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific railroads at Utah to produce the nation's first transcontinental railway) in 1860s in contemporary America led the nation to smoothen the westerners' desire to have a physical journey towards Indian subcontinent. Unlike his countrymen, Whitman was disinterested to this shorter passage to India; he intended to utilise these achievements to have the spiritual quest towards the East and ultimately towards God. He was highly attracted to the primitiveness of Asian and African countries and their fables, legends, gods, goddesses and the way of their living. Whitman was not dogmatic to possess any western metaphysics of self and others; instead of that he endeavoured himself to have a perfect blending of the East and the West, materialistic advancement and philosophical progress. He firmly believed that materialistic advancement is only possible if a man can devote himself to explore his soul.

Another poet of American origin is Nobel laureate, T.S Eliot, one of the most versatile writers in the canon of world literature. Though, he enjoyed the reputation of being a British poet, but it's his American roots that provoked him to follow America's ancient tradition. Like his predecessors, he was also a great scholar of Oriental studies. In his poem, "The Wasteland" (1922), he had taken direct allusions from Oriental scriptures mostly from the *Upanishads*. Published on the backdrop of the First World War, it has shown us the degradation of our modern waste land physically and morally and such degradation is still



going on with more promptness. One feels in the present circumstances the magic of his words and his prophesising power through his free verses in "The Waste Land." It's a unique piece that deals with the issues of Death and Sex; it also has other segments dealing with the knowledge of Human Psychology, Theology, Oriental Studies, Mythology, Natural Science, Environmental Studies, History, Gender Studies and Peace Studies etc. The poem is not just a piece of writing, rather an institution which teaches us how to cope up with this degraded civilisation and how to restore peace and prosperity into it. The titles of three major segments (The Fire Sermon, Death by Water, What the Thunder Said) are taken directly from the teachings of Buddha and the *Upanishads*. In "The Fire Sermon" he shows the relevance of Buddha's sermon in which he writes of how lust, especially sexual lust can bring the degradation and can lead us towards the apocalypses. "What the Thunder Says" creates a link between the spiritual death in the West with the probable way of salvation and revival through nurturing the hymn of peace still practiced in the East. He brings the connotation of the *Upanishads* where in a period of doubt and confusion all people demons and deities prayed to Brahma to restore life, peace and prosperity into their land. In his reply God answered them with the voice of thunder "Da, Da, Da" refers to "Datta"(Give), "Dayadham"(Sympathise) and "Damyata"(Control), the three qualities which people in the images of men, demons and angels should practice to find the way of salvation for their survival in the modern waste land. He has used some Sanskrit words directly from the *Upanishads* instead of translating them to maintain the actual essence of the word. The ending of his poem with Sanskrit hymn of the *Upanishads* shows his reliance on Oriental spiritualism, which according to him is the only way to restore peace and prosperity into this modern "Waste Land". In nutshell, his poetry aims at restoring life, peace and productivity into this spiritually barren land through the Oriental practice of simpler life and through the chanting of Oriental spiritual hymns. He asserts that prosperity and peace are not synonymous rather peace is more desirable in the present world. His advocating of 'Shantih shantih shantih"—the traditional ending to the *Upanishads* makes a strong appeal to the



whole human race to shelter upon the oriental spiritualism to convert this barren waste land into a land of peace leading towards prosperity.

Eliot's "Four Quartets" (1943), a series of four poems with interconnected themes, is a perfect specimen to evaluate Eliot's mastery over Eastern as well as Western culture and philosophy. Eliot has shown how an individual turns to be Universal with the proper understanding of the divinity within Nature and the Cosmos. With reference to the philosophers like Socrates and Oriental philosophical scriptures like *Bhagavad-Gita*, Eliot is able to surpass many complex thoughts into simple resolutions. The series of poems continue the same themes of "The Waste Land" regarding the suffering of humanity, their sources and probable solutions, but Eliot's dealing with religion and spiritualism is more mystical here. Even his over indulgence into religion sometimes brought to him harsh criticism. George Orwell criticised Eliot harshly for the resignation from his previous attitude and for his sudden turn into orthodoxy.

"Burnt Norton" (1936), the first poem of "Four Quartets", emphasises over the value of time in one's life through suggesting that Human beings have only control over present which should be utilised by him at its best. The poem also focuses the necessity of meditation to live as per the universal order. "East Coker" (1940), the second poem, shows the extreme suffering of human beings for the war and warfare. The last section of the poem emphasises the Christian Salvation with reference to the Christ's crucifixion symbolising the suffering as the way of probable solution of the tensions of modern humanity. The fourth poem "Little Gidding" (1942), a name refereeing to the 17<sup>th</sup> century Anglican monastery, shows how the spiritually barren human figures are at last taking shelter bellow the roof of the church for some rays of hope. The poem also suggests how the suffering of the modern humanity can be reduced with accepting both the harsh and crucial images of this world. Eliot has here followed Blake's philosophy that when "the fire and the rose" two contradictory images will get united, the peace can be restored in this world. These three parts are thematically



advocating Christian beliefs, rituals and the way of salvation in this modern world where people are almost spiritually barren. It is the third part of the poem, *The Dry Salvages* (1941), that shares the poet's strong association with Eastern belief through sharing the message of Lord Krishna to Arjuna in the battle of Kurukshetra regarding the confusion between deed and morality. When Arjuna was confused whether he would indulge into the war which would result the killing of his relatives, Lord Krishna advised him to choose the way of "Karma" without being concerned of its effect. Eliot bought the reference of Krishna and Arjun directly from the *Bhagavata-Gita* and in the third section of the poem "The Dry Salvages", he has repeated the same message. He suggested the mankind to give priority to their duties rather than thinking of its consequences. The poet thinks that, only change may come in this "barren" "waste" land if we can devote wholeheartedly into action with our fearless minds.

O voyagers, O seamen,  
You who came to port, and you whose bodies  
Will suffer the trial and judgement of the sea,  
Or whatever event, this is your real destination.'  
So Krishna, as when he admonished Arjuna  
On the field of battle.

Not fare well,  
But fare forward, voyagers. [The Dry Salvages, Section III]

Western poets, writers and thinkers started realizing the negative intoxication caused by Western materialism which only provoked the society to live for the personal gain and benefit. So, the poets and thinkers of this generation showed the certain apocalypse if human generation cannot be motivated towards spiritualism, a still existing practice in the Orient. Therefore, the influence of Oriental philosophy in present day's America is not limited within its spiritual quest; the influence has spread across the other spheres of life. Thousands of



Indians are living in the USA and in the American continent for several decades for their professional needs. Hence, a multilingual and multicultural country like India is day by day contributing a lot to the Native Americans' thoughts and beliefs. "Yoga", a popular Indian physical, mental and spiritual practice, is gaining popularity in America. Indian spiritual gurus often organise yogic camps in America and in other western nations. Modern days' Americans believe that through yoga, they can have a stress free life which is physically and mentally sound. According to "Yoga in American Studies", conducted by *Yoga Journal* and *Yoga Alliance*, there are presently 36.7 million US yoga practitioners (In 2012 there were 20.4 millions). The report also says that 34 percent of Americans are likely to start practicing Yoga in the next 12 months. In this way, one of the most economical and technological superpowers of the World is still following the trends of their native poets through taking shelter on Oriental practices of spiritualism. Thus, Oriental philosophy, most particularly Hinduism and Buddhism, not only play major roles on the works and philosophies of the nineteenth and twentieth century American poets, they have created a timeless appeal. From its very beginning to the contemporary times, the literature of the "Turtle Island" owed too much to the Oriental language, religion, myths, legends, epics and spiritual hymns and it reached its summit in the nineteenth and twentieth century in the verse and prose of Emerson, Whitman and Eliot. These poets had deep understanding of their own religion, culture and philosophy as well as that of the East. The references they had made from several Oriental texts in their own masterpieces mirror their affinity to Oriental studies. It is Emerson who started the tradition, Whitman who nurtured it in a more mystical way and finally, it was Eliot who transformed it into being universal.

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## **The Bright Side of Darkness from the Perspective of Jhumpa Lahiri in her 'A Temporary Matter'**

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**Abstract:** Jhumpa Lahiri's Pulitzer Prize winning *The Interpreter of Maladies* is a collection of nine short stories which is well acclaimed by the worldwide readers for its psychological portrayal of human beings' relationship. Every story of the book draws a sketch in which the author tries to put the colours of emotions of those Indians who migrate from their native land in search of identity, and encounter with different culture which is contradictory to their inherent ethics. These cultural conflicts often lead to unusual mental stability which affects the lives as well as relationships of human beings. The first story of the book 'A Temporary Matter' is based on the consequences of the culture conflicts that bring gloominess in the married life of its characters. Lahiri not only presents the mental instability of both characters who are concerned about their marriage but projects darkness as a panacea to cherish their lives once again. The aim of present paper is to explore Lahiri's portrayal of the psyche of the migrated Indian characters with their inherent cultures and ethics in its own sense. The author of the paper has opted the first story of Lahiri's *The Interpreter of Maladies* as a case study to trace the positive outlook of her for deploying darkness in the story and its role to save the demolishing married life of the characters.

**Key Words:** Cultural Conflicts, Darkness, Emotions, Married Life, Native Land, Positive Outlook.



The concept of globalisation has delimited the distance of the world, and it opened the numerous paths for every human being to get suitable opportunity for his livelihood in any part of the world. The migrates make efforts to adapt the culture of their inhabiting countries, and also try to get habitual with the mores of there. But the inherent culture makes them close to the spirit of their native countries, and originates the sense of cultural conflicts. They make every possible effort for sustaining their cultural identity, and the first generation of immigrant and migrated people inculcate the essential elements of their cultural inheritance to next generation in the alien land. There are the stream of Diasporic writers in the world literature, the second or third generation of immigrant and migrated people, who born and brought up outside their homeland, often create skilfully their creation as an objective with unprejudiced manner having the theme of their homeland, and the readers of across the world appreciate their effort and writings. Some Indian Diasporic authors, who have been nurtured in the culture of alien land but the spirit of Indianess has prevailed in their consciousness, like Amitav Ghosh, Anita Desai, Aravind Adiga, Bharati Mukherjee, G.V. Desani, Jhumpa Lahiri, Kamala Markandya, Kiran Desai, Meena Alexander, Raja Rao, Rohitan Mistry, Salman Rushdie, are famous for presenting the Indian sensibility in the world literature in the artistic manner. These eminent authors write in the perspective of India, and its culture and custom.

Jhumpa Lahiri (July 11, 1967), born in London and brought up in Rhode Island, is a second generation diasporic writer whose Bengali parents emigrated from India to England. Her parents got shifted to the United States of America when she was two years old. Seven seas far away from her homeland, having Indian parents and their longing for native land, developed in her keen sensibility for India and its issues which made her a celebrated author of Indian Diasporic writings, and, therefore, she wrote well acclaimed collection of nine short stories under the title of *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999). The famous critic as well as writer of Indian English Literature M.K. Naik and Shyamala A. Narain appreciates the book, “history in becoming the first Indian author to win prestigious Pulitzer Prize in USA for her collection





of short stories *Interpreter of Maladies*.” (Naik and Narayan, 36) Instead of this, the concurrent sensible thought for India and Indian family has been revealed from her other creations. She wrote her first novel *The Namesake* (2003), second collection of short stories *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008), and another novel *The Lowland* (2013), for which she had been short listed for Man Booker Prize, with the theme and consciousness of India.

The Indians, who migrate to the developed or First World nations in search of a better life, find themselves in the fringe of unfamiliar society, and struggle to establish their own identity in the alien land. Some of them find mental instability to cope up with this new culture and its ethics. Although, the children who take birth from migrants get benefit of better life and settlement in the First World but “their sense of identity borne from living in a diasporic community is influenced by the past migrant history of their parents or grandparents”. (McLeod, 207) This cross cultural instability of mind is the most prominent aspect of diaspora. Jhumpa Lahiri presents in her creations the voice of those Indians who are struggling between two varied cultures for making their own identity in America. Jaydeep Sarangi illustrates about Jhumpa Lahiri’s depiction of cross-culturalism that her, “short-stories are the gate way into the large submerged territory of cross-culturalism. It is a metaphor to share cultures..... Something that will allow them or us to share, instead of dividing, what is on either side?” (Sarangi 117).

Lahiri has poured the blend of diasporic existence and complex culture plight with different ways in every short story of *Interpreter of Maladies* which project a unique style and presentation of stories. The second story, ‘When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine’, is based on the year of 1971 in which the civil war of Pakistan took place to transform East Pakistan into an independent country known as Bangladesh. The story highlights the longings of a Bangladeshi scholar Mr. Pirzada, who visits America to study the flora of New England, for his war-ridden family in Bangladesh. ‘Interpreter of Maladies’ is the third story of the book in which American born Indian couple Mr. and Mrs. Das with their children visit to India to see



Udaigiri and Khandagiri, and, eventually, Mrs. Das narrates her life's dark secrets to their chauffeur Mr. Kapasi. The story of Boori Maa who suffers severe mental torments for her lost family, prosperity, land, and home is in the fourth story 'The Real Durwan'. The next story, fifth one, 'Sexy' is the best example of the ideal blending of two diverse cultures. Small boy Rohin's conversations with Miranda change the perspective of her, and help to overcome from an illicit physical relationship with a married man named Dev. The portrayal of the experiences of an Indian migrated couple, Mr. and Mrs. Sen, in America is in the sixth story entitled 'Mrs. Sen's'. Sanjeev and Twinkle's successful compromise for organising any task, despite of a lot of conflicts and contradictions in the outlooks regarding religion and believe, exhibits in the seventh story 'This Blessed House.' The eighth story 'The Treatment of Bibi Haldar' is based on an unwanted child conceived by Bibi Haldar after getting sexually assaulted. The infant child leads the protagonist from neurotic, spinster, and overwrought state of mind to normality. 'The Third and Final Continent', last and ninth story of the book, explores the struggling story of a narrator who presents his across the continental journey with aspiration of better opportunities. His struggles in the England make him mentally and physically strong to tackle every hostilities of diasporic existence, and earn respect in alien land.

The first story 'A Temporary Matter' of *Interpreter of Maladies* is depicted the monotonous and fragmented marriage life, and, which is, now, a temporary matter for an Indian Bengali married couple Shoba and Shukumar settled down in America. Although, it is visible through the opening of the story that Shukumar always stays in the home because he is a thirty five years old student in the University of Boston and, "trying to complete the final chapters of his dissertation on agrarian revolts in India." (A Temporary Matter 2) On the other hand, Shoba, a joyous and ambitious wife, and a perfect blending of Indian and American culture, has taken all the responsibilities of the home on her shoulder and going out for fulfilling the necessities of home. But, it is not the only matter of their solitary married life. Some psychological traumas are degrading the environment of their marriage life and



lead the communication gap between them. Jhumpa highlights these psychological changes in the behaviour of both the characters, “Shukumar moved her satchel and sneakers to the side of the fridge. She wasn’t this way before. She used to put her coat on a hanger, her sneakers in the closet, and she paid bills as soon as they come. But now she treated the house as if it were a hotel.” (6) They do not show any interest for each other’s company and, “had become experts at avoiding each other in their three-bedroom house, spending as much time on separate floors as possible.” (4) Once they receive a notice which inscribes, “for five days their electricity would be cut off for one hour, beginning at eight p.m” (1). Lahiri depicts this power cut as a ray of hope for the scattered married life of the Indian couple to reunite them once again with yarn of love and affection.

The couple has convinced to play a game in which every member reveals his secrets in the duration of one hour of darkness, and decides to expose the hidden truths of the lives. Shoba collects this act of game from her childhood memories in which they used to play such game in her grandmother’s house during the power cut. The presentation of Shoba’s reminisces about her childhood days signifies a strong Indian diasporic bond of Lahiri which connects her with the spirit of India and its culture. She admits herself, “I went Calcutta.....” because “I belong there in some fundamental way, in this ways I didn’t seem to belong in the United States.” (Melwani, 1) Although, darkness is a symbol of sorrowfulness, glumness, isolation and depression but it is the efficiency of a good writer like Lahiri to present a gloomy situation in the most positive sense, and she completely justifies this. She has psychologically used darkness in the positive sense and projected it as an essential tool to fill up the communication gap between the couple.

The power goes off as per its schedule and they sit first time, face to face, in the dark to share some communications with each others. This is looking like a turning point for their life through which they can rearrange their scattered married life. Shoba initiates to share her secrets as like the game of truth and dare. She discloses the first hidden truth about her life



that she secretly searched her name in the address book of Shukumar when she visited his house first time, and he was talking to his mother on “telephone in the other room” (A Temporary Matter 13) in their dating before marriage. Shukumar in his first term unfolds that he forgot to give tip to that waiter who rendered his service to them where they first time went out for dinner, “in the Portuguese place”, and he “went back the next morning, found out his name, left money with the manager” (14).

The purpose of Lahiri to select the period of power off for this game is to make able their characters to talk without facing as well as looking each other’s eyes. Darkness plays its psychological game, and gives courage to both characters to share their untold secrets which cannot be uttered during lighting hours. It also helps them to read each other’s mind, and creates curiosity for another secret which is going to come out. Himadri Lahiri extends her thought about the scene of darkness,

....the movement in the plot is symbolically achieved through interplay of light and darkness. In the light the characters prepare their faces to meet the faces that they meet. They conform to the social norms and personal expectations. But in the dark the curtain of inhibitions is ripped off and they are able to speak their minds and reveal their secrets. (Himadri 51)

Sometimes the couple, in the story, try to trace out each other’s gestures and beauty in the dark hour as Shukumar, “pictured” Shoba’s “face clearly in the dark, the wide tilting eyes, the full grape toned lips, the fall at age two from her high chair still visible as a comma on her chin” (A Temporary Matter 14). Moreover, it reveals from the story that the cause of Shoba and Shukumar’s degrading marriage is communication gap only, and the portrayal of darkness in the story represents that suitable platform through which both the characters willingly spent their time together and stay in touch with each other by sharing their emotions.



However, the act of revealing secrets, firstly, seems inane to the characters but with the passing time their avid interest to spend the hour together and listen each other emotions fascinates them to wait for dark hour. It indicates the disguised love and affection, which was emerging in the form of ignorance for them before this game, of characters for one another that being suffocated with their married life they take interest in the game of darkness, and this brings love and romance which had been vanished in their lives. Mukherjee observes, “The past, however bitter it may be, looks romantic and beautiful when viewed through the windows of present.” (Mukherjee 109) Shukumar’s curiosity as well as eagerness for Shoba and the game of darkness highlights from this thing that all day he,

had looked forward to the lights going out. He thought about what Shoba had said the night before, about looking in his address book. It felt good to remember her as she was then, how bold yet nervous she’d been when they first met, how hopeful. They stood side by side at the sink, their reflections fitting together in the frame of window. It made him shy, the way he felt the first time they stood together in the mirror. (A Temporary Matter 15)

The next night, after getting their supper at sharply eight o’ clock, the electricity goes and the house gets down in dark. They sit down on the snow patches steps outside of their house with the lighting of the burning candles. Both of them inquisitive about to spend their time with each other, and refuse to the company of their neighbour to walk a while in the fresh air of the dark evening for this. Shoba exposes that at one night, when Shukumar’s mother had visited their house after twelve years of the death of her husband for two weeks to give honour and to cherish the memories of her husband with her son and daughter in law, she “went out with Gillian and had a martini” after giving an excuse that she “had to stay late at work” (16). Shukumar emotionally remembers the visiting of her mother how the mother “cooked something his father had liked” (17) in the tribute of his father. In his turn, Shukumar admits fifteen years ago incident which gives him a sense of relief after sharing it



that he cheated on his Oriental Civilization exam in college, and in addition to this confession he says further,

It was my last semester, my last set of exam. My father had died a few months before. I could see the blue book of the guy next to me. He was an American guy, a maniac. He knew Urdu and Sanskrit. I couldn't remember if the verse we had to identify was an example of a *ghazal* or not. I looked at his answer and copied it down. (17)

At third night, Shukumar informs about the lost sweater-vest which had been given by Shoba to him on the occasion of their third wedding anniversary that he had exchanged it for the sake of cash at Filene's, and used that cash to had drink "alone in the middle of the day at a hotel bar" (18). Shoba in her turn informs Shukumar that, in their academic days, once after attending their lecture, she neither informed him about the tiny sticking piece of meat in his chin when he went to meet chairman of his department regarding "securing his fellowship for the following semester" (19) nor gave any gesture by touching her chin for this because she had got irritated with him due to some reason. The writer portrays, through the uttering of Shoba, the mood of an innocent girl who is unable to hide her emotions with the shifting of circumstances due to the purity of heart and admits flawlessly her mistake without any antagonism and hypocrisy. Shukumar, at next night, says that during Shoba's pregnancy he had unconsciously ripped a photograph of a woman who was advertising for stocking and "wore a white sequined dress, and had a sullen face and lean, mannish legs....." (18) from the fashion magazine which Shoba used to subscribe for reading and carried that photograph in his book for a week because he was longing for intensive desire for a woman and "he'd come to infidelity". Shoba shares her secret without commenting on this that she had not liked the sentimental poem which he wrote after meeting with her and published "in a literary magazine in Utha" (19).



The intensity of longing for darkness game can be measured by this thing that the next day, the morning of the fifth night, Shukumar got disappointed after receiving a notice regarding, “the line had been repaired ahead of schedule” but, according to his plan, he purchased the items for making shrimp *malai*, “along with a beeswax candle and two bottles of wine” from a store. Shoba, “hadn’t been to the gym tonight” and came home at seven-thirty, prior to her daily arrival, to spent some quality time with her husband. After reading the notice she suggests Shukumar, “you can still light candles if you want” (20). Shoba informs Shukumar in the electricity light, after eating shrimp and drink wine together with her favourite record of Thelonium Monk album in the light of beeswax candle, that she had been looking new apartment in Beacon Hill for last few days and already signed the lease of apartment because, “she needed some time alone” (21). Getting nervous by Shoba’s words, in his turn, Shukumar reveals fifth and last secret of the story which bound Shoba with his concealed love that he held their dead baby in his arms before cremation after arriving too late from Baltmimore where he had gone for attending a conference. He also reveals that that baby was a boy, and, “his skin was more red than brown. He had black hair on his head. He weighed almost five pounds. His fingers were curled shut, just like yours in the night” (22). Apart from these words, he says that he could not inform Shoba earlier about this because she wanted to keep secret the gender of their child before delivery. The portrayal of this episode as a climax of the story proves the understanding of Lahiri about human beings’ emotions as well as their relations. It seems that the intention of the author to depict this episode is, firstly, to highlight the pain of these parents who have lost their child during delivery, and pretend strong in front of each other but, in isolation, suffer for their child psychologically. The longings of Shoba and the explanation of Shukumar about the dead infant child drags her closer to her husband. Secondly, the determination of Shukumar to keep Shoba’s words, not revealing the identity of the child in terms of gender, helps her to realise his genuine love for her which is still far away from the artificiality and betrayal. The other secrets of Shukumar are not important for Shoba as much as he was the first who hold the infant child in his arms,



and still miss his child after spending a long times period. Lahiri exhibits the emotions of Shoba about her child as well as Shukumar as,

He had held his son, who had known life only within her, against his chest in a darkened room in an unknown wing of the hospital. He had held him until a nurse knocked and took him away, and he promised himself that day that he would never tell Shoba, because he still loved her then, and it was the one thing in her life that she had wanted to be a surprise. (22)

Although, the story concludes with the weeping episode of both the characters after knowing their secrets but it also exposes the formation of harmony between them. Their crying seems that they eradicate malaises of their degrading married life, and promising each other for sharing a happy life.

Lahiri's pragmatic vision creates darkness as an assistance to sympathise the married life, which was in the verge of ruin, and generates the interest in the life of characters. She also knows that the reason of miserable life is the apathy of characters in the communication, and sharing of words is the only possible way to solve any degrading situation. Therefore, she provides darkness to rejoin their emotions for each other, and brings charm into their life. It seems that Lahiri has changed the meaning of darkness in terms of Shoba and Shukumar's life because darkness provides brightness in their life that leads them towards the fresh light of morning for living a harmonious life.

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## V.S. Naipaul's *Half A Life*: A Search for an 'Identity' and 'Home'

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**Abstract:** With the dawn of human civilization the mankind has been surrounded from various kinds of fears, insecurities, mysteries and puzzles lying in the lap of nature. Their constant moving from one place to another bring in them the sense of 'up-rootedness' and 'exile'. To avoid their sense of insecurities they crave for 'space of belonging' and they constructed 'home' for them to achieve the sense of security. These two contradictory terms- 'exile' and 'home' have become symbols of two conditions of human psyche as they play the role of catalyst in forming the human nature. The concepts of 'exile' and 'home' have been two real spaces on which many novelists have constructed 'mansion' of their novels. V.S. Naipaul, belonging to the group of the post-colonial writers, is one of such novelists who penetrate human psyche of 'identity crisis', 'longing for roots', 'anger against slow and steady erosion of native values and cultures', 'struggle against racial discrimination and inequalities of power' in their novels. The theme of 'displacement and exile' and 'longing for roots and home' create the backbone of V.S. Naipaul's works. In modern world when the impact of globalization, international issue of cross-border-refugees' desire, worldwide nationality, broad cyber connectivity, voluminous internet accessibility, virtual classes, mega university are alluring the eyes of gadgets-driven, global-brand-bound, techno-savvy modern generation, the writings of V.S. Naipaul are true narrative of those denizens who are alien on their own spaces, landless on their own lands, refugee among their own colleagues, outsider among their own neighbours and marginalized at the border from their own centers. In such circumstances the study of V.S. Naipaul's *Half A Life*, provides new dimensions of identity in multicultural, multinational and multilingual world. The main thrust of this paper is two-fold: first, to study Naipaul's understanding of the identity crisis, the fear of 'perpetual exile' and



never-ending search for 'home' presented in his work *Half A Life* and the devices employed by him to investigate it in this novel; and second, to view the universal phenomenon of struggle between 'exile' and 'home' on greater scale.

**Key words:** Exile, Home, Identity crisis, Longing for roots, Postcolonism.

### **Introduction:**

In the aftermath of the political, social, economic, cultural and geographical dislocations that our century has generated as well as inherited all of us are exiles and longing constantly for 'home'. In the wake of the breakdown of traditional assumptions many writers had come to share the sense of the absurdity of man's situations, the sense of "the divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting" (Camus 1942). Camus looks the man as an exile in a meaningless universe and remarks, "*In a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. His is an irremediable*" (1942). The same feeling is expressed by Eugene Ionesco in 'An Essay on Kafka': "*cut off from his religious, metaphysical and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless*" (1942). The uprooted, dispossessed colonial, as well as the individual as an exile in an alien universe Naipaul's fiction speaks directly to both, one shadowed in the other.

V. S. Naipaul, the noble laureate of 2001 for literature, is one of the literary giants 20th century who are esteemed all over the world for their honest representation of harsh realities of human life. Being himself a product of post-imperialist society Naipaul's choice of themes basically refers to his states of mind. Starting with concerns of the 'self' and a small corner of the world, V.S. Naipaul's works have broadened their horizons to acquire an utterly contemporary and universal significance. V. S. Naipaul is an expatriate from Trinidad whose primary business as a novelist is to project carefully the complex fate of individuals in a cross-cultural society. He has written extensively about different aspects of post-colonial



society, but knowingly or unknowingly, whether he is writing a travelogue or a novel, he tends to end up dealing with the identity crisis of an individual. The oft-repeated themes of alienation and exile, in fact, reflects the nomadic feelings of V.S. Naipaul who despite his long stay of twenty seven years at Wiltshire Cottage in London, feels himself an alien and an outsider there. Even his long stay and professional success failed to motivate him to establish an emotional bond with the country of his adoption. His remark clearly reflects this: “London is my metropolitan center; it is my commercial center and yet I know that it is a kind of Limbo and that I am a refugee in the sense that I am always peripheral. One’s concerns are not the concerns of the local people” (Joshi 2003:84). Naipaul’s writings and interviews have always focused on the loneliness, sense of exile and alienation, the perpetual disturbance, the hollow in his heart. Though Indian by origin, he was born and brought up in Trinidad. He grew up in “multicultural society of Trinidad, peopled by migrants from four continents. He was part of a joint Hindu family with its rigid, clannish, and suffocating atmosphere. He was an alien in the midst of other aliens” (Chakroberty 2005:35). Later he migrated to England, but he could not find himself attached to anyplace. He feels that he is “eternally an outsider— an Indian in the West Indies, a West Indian in England, and as described by men –nomadic intellectual in the non descript third world” (Nagrajan 2002). In such mood he opt to make the whole world to hear ‘eternal note of sadness’ and ‘sad music of humanity’ through his novels since he believes that the agony, pangs and grief of marginalized outsider class of ‘wounded civilization’ are pains of whole humanity.

### **The Universal Phenomenon of ‘Exile’ and ‘Home’:**

Before proceeding to understand Naipaul’s perception and implication of the universal phenomenon of ‘Exile’ and ‘home’ we need to deconstruct these two terms socially, politically, culturally, spiritually and linguistically. Indeed ‘Exile’ and ‘home’ are two faces of the same coin; the full meaning of one can be perceived properly only in relation to the other. ‘Home’ is not simply where one resides. It is one’s identity whether it is associated with one’s national, cultural, spiritual, political, social and economical placement. ‘Home’ is where one belongs- it is the soil that has nurtured one's body and spirit. It is the language one



speaks and the food one eats; it is the trees and the flowers and the animals and insects and the rivers and mountains that have always been there; it is the rituals and the do's and don'ts the joys and the sorrows and all the sights, smells and sounds that lap one's childhood and form part of one's growing consciousness. 'Home' symbolizes one's sense of safety, security, integrity, devotion and dedication towards his 'self', family, neighborhood, community, society, workplace, nation and world. 'Home' is above all, that ambience in which one's childhood has flowered and matured into youth. This, needless to say, is an idealized concept of 'home' and as an ideal it is seldom fully realized.

'Exile', is literally an uprooting and often as withering in its effect on the mind and spirit which is deprived the sustenance it has drawn from native soil. Not uncommonly a sense of emotional alienation even in one's own country can lead to a desire for escape and this has often forced people into physical exile-artists and political idealists in particular. Such alienation, however, is usually a reaction against a particular social or political setup and often leads to an even stronger attachment to the unfulfilled ideal, usually finding an outlet in expressions of love for the land language. The situation in South Africa is perhaps a case in point. Gerald Moore writes in *'The Chosen tongue'*:

"The events of last forty years have alienated every South African of any compassion or sensitivity from the society developing around him. Most of them have taken refuge in exile." (2005:xv-xvi)

As Edward Said opines that 'exile' can be both 'actual' and 'metaphoric', 'voluntary' and 'involuntary'(1994:39). It is amply clear from the last point that physical violence is not the only force to cause exile, but subtler forms of compulsion can do the same as well. This can be seen in the case of intellectuals living overseas for education or research. 'Exile', according to Said propagated in his work *Representations of the Intellectual*,

is fundamentally tied to the notion of the intellectual. The connection with post-colonialism is not easily discernible in this case because 'exile' becomes



a larger political gesture to separate intellectuals from those who ‘toe the line’ and those who remain critically resistant to the authorities. For Edward Said these are ‘the nay-sayers, the individuals at odds with their society and therefore outsiders and exiles in so far as privileges, power, and honors are concerned. (1994:39)

Love of ‘home’ and the anguish of ‘exile’ have been among the basic human emotions in civilized societies. The ethos of the western world has been dominated by the Biblical myth of the banishment of Adam and Eve from their first abode of bliss. It is a powerful symbol of the feeling of exclusion, of exile, from some perfect home that seems to be deeply embedded in the human psyche and finds expression in the literature and mythology of many societies. Significantly, Adam and Eve as the first exiles place at the very heart of western man’s cultural history the feeling of alienation that is seen to be a twentieth century perception of man as an exile in an alien universe.

In the days when this was still a wide world, travel and communication were not easy and men lived in villages and towns in settled communities “within the security of their own societies” exile was generally a measure of political punishment. However, as their knowledge of their world widened, men began to leave the security of their home for travel, trade and conquest. Slavery, colonialism and war, all three have over the centuries contributed to making this a century of the homeless. The settler colonies of Australia, America, New Zealand and parts of South Africa and the slave islands of the West Indies created regions that were inhabited by people uprooted from other soils. In India, Africa and South-East Asia colonial education alienated men from their own culture and traditions and made them exiles in their own lands. Industrialization and urbanization also caused the people who had been rooted in their villages to move towards the city in search of jobs and prosperity. The anonymity of city life imposed on the villager as bleak an experience of exclusion as any exile can ever feel in an alien land. Homelessness seems to be the condition of modern man. Where is home for the Tibetans now? Where for the Palestinians? What of



those Indian Punjabis whose ancestral homes are now in Pakistan? Where is home for the Bihari Muslims in Bangladesh? The more endemic the experience of deracination, the more magical the connotations of the word 'home' appears. It becomes a symbol of all that has been lost, of ancient exile. Far from being a solitary and exotic figure, has become the type of modern man. 'Exile' makes for total self-awareness. In a study on writers in exile Andrew Gurr says of James Joyce: "He spent his life obsessively rebuilding his home in his art" (2006:15). About Conrad V.S. Pritchett writes: "...he was one of the great moralists of exile. And exile is not emigration, expatriation, etc., but an imposing Destiny" (2009:43). D.H. Lawrence is described as an "internal exile."

#### **Naipaul's Perception of 'Exile' and 'Home' and Their Representation in *Half A Life*:**

Naipaul's work is a sensitive response to this worldwide crisis of homelessness by taking into its sweep both the causes and the consequences of the situation. He has no comforting messages, only the bleak knowledge that in today's rapidly changing world the yearning for permanence can never be more than an unfulfilled ache- "everyone is far from home." It made him aware that he was using a form, and a language forged by one kind of society to depict a completely deferent society. He realized that he would have to seek his own literary tradition. The isolation of exile led also to an intense political awareness, to the perception that "*how much one's concerns in the world are founded on one's political assumptions about the world*" (2001:12). Looking enquiringly at the world around him he took increasingly to journalism. Naipaul's writing displays both the Joyce and the Conradian pattern of response to exile. He begins with an insistent return to the home territory in his early work-these novels are a meticulous reconstruction of the background and the birthplace he had rejected. In his later work he moves on to a Conradian meditation on "half-made" societies that seemed doomed to remain "half-made" and to question about the meaning of history and civilization- in short, like Conrad, he became "the moralist of exile" which was for him, as for Conrad, "not emigration, expatriation, etc. etc., but an imposing destiny ." All



these features can be perceived easily with minute observation of the text and pattern of his novel *Half A Life*.

Willie Chandran, the protagonist of *Half A Life* asked his father one day, “Why is my middle name Somerset? The boys at school just found out, and they are mocking me” (2001:1). In these opening lines of Naipaul’s novel *Half A Life* depicted agony of identity crisis and desire to know the ‘root’ or ‘home’ transforms him into a real crusader of making ‘a third space’, messenger of ‘multiple voices’ and prevailing force of ‘cultural questioning’ among post-colonial, diasporic and Afro-American writers in twentieth century. His novel *Half A Life* delineates with the theme of exile and alienation in detail. Through his protagonist, Naipaul tries to communicate the painful and traumatic experiences of an immigrant. The indefinite article “A” used in the title *Half A Life* indicates intensity of his desire to belong somewhere, to feel at home, to get rid of alienation.

This novel’s setting- a corner of India untouched by anti-colonial agitation- reflects Naipaul’s voluntary intention to create an ambiance where people aspire for knowing their real ‘space’ and asking ‘where do they belong?’ Indeed in this novel all characters seem to be in pursuit of understanding the eternal questions of –‘Who are we?’; ‘Where do we get our origin?’; ‘For what have we been descended here?’

The protagonist Willie Chandran is unaware of his name’s mystery from the beginning of the novel. After being questioned his father tells him not about the mystery of his name but also about himself (Willie Chandran's father) and his grandfather and his great-grandfather. This is indeed a story of four generations which realize the loss of their ‘origin’ and try to re-discover their ‘home’ among ‘the others’.

For Willie Somerset Chandran his name is his destiny. Half of his name does not belong to him, it is borrowed from the famous writer Somerset Maugham; his first name proclaims him as a Christian whereas his surname signifies his mixed ancestry. A probing look discovers the man is as much an amalgam of drastically different traits as is his name an





admixture of different and even antagonistic streams. William's search for the roots takes him backward because his roots are entwined with those of his father's. His story is set in post-independence India, then in London and then he travels to a pre-independence African country which is closely modelled on Mozambique and then for a brief period in Berlin. The first thirty five pages constitute Willie's father's story, the next hundred and two pages are a record of Willie's struggle for existence in London and the remaining pages (apart from a brief trariance in Berlin) record his life in Africa which may be appropriately described in Naipaul's term as the bush. Willie's travels bring him to many characters who are leading a half-life as exiles. He feels at home with people who are faceless because of the affinity he has with them. But these are all his chance acquaintances on whom he cannot depend whereas his incompleteness begins at home.

Firstly, we see that the grandfather of Willie Chandran's father was always in nostalgia of past memory of 'his flight and his fear of the unknown, only looking inward during those terrible days and not able to see what was around him'. Due to this reason Willie Chandran's father 'began to have some idea that this life' they were all living in the 'big town' around the maharaja and his palace couldn't last, that this security was also false'. Naipaul's cinematographic technique of 'flashback' seems to be very appropriate for this memorization of past. Like T.S. Eliot, Naipaul also uses 'pastness' of 'past' to re-construct the 'present'.

In the first chapter of the novel titled as 'A Visit from Somerset Maugham' Willie Chandran's father expresses his father's desire of identity promoting efforts where he desires for his son-Willie Chandran's father- to continue the climb he had begun, because for him (Willie's father) getting job in court was 'means of security, regard and treatment like little gods'. He says his father wish; "for my father it was as though he had discovered something of the security of the temple community from which my grandfather had had to flee" (2001:7).



Through post-colonial reading of the text we come to understand that V.S. Naipaul has been, throughout his life, against the stereotyping of the 'colonized' by the 'colonizer' in this case of the 'black' by the 'white' or of the 'Indian' by the 'English'. Better to mention these lines where Willie's father expresses his image changing process done of the English writer who had come to visit him in his process to get material for a novel about spirituality when Willie's father was in campus of temple on 'mute-vow':

They pretended to see me as the writer had seen me: the man of high caste, high in the maharaja's revenue service, from the line of people who had performed sacred rituals for the ruler, turning his work on a glittering career, and living as a mendicant on the alms of the poorest of the poor I felt I had become a social figure, someone at the periphery of a little foreign web of acquaintances and gossip. (2001:3-4)

Willie's father is typical voice of a post-colonial anguish to find out the meaning of his existence, the value of his existence in contrast to 'others' who are dominating the norms of the society. Although he is 'living securely at home, in the house of his father, the courtiers in livery' he is continuously tormented with the idea; "Here there was only the servile life around the palace of the maharaja" (2001:5). Further for making his separate identity, apart from his father's, moved with inspiration of Mahatma Gandhi's sacrifice; he himself adopts the way of making a sacrifice of himself 'which is to marry the lowest person he can find.'

In the process of self-sacrifice and attaining his 'self', he again becomes the subject of to 'homelessness'. He has thought he will protect the scholarship girl of backward and class-small and coarse minded almost tribal in appearance, noticeably black, with two big top teeth showed very white but due to opposition from society he had to leave his 'father's home' and live in the 'image-maker's compound of a neutral caste'(2001:10).

Again when Willie's father dismissed from the land tax department on the ground of corruption and initiation of school principal whose daughter was rejected by him, the



firebrand uncle of 'Scholarship girl' takes out a procession against the officials of the land Tax department. The concentration of conflict shifts from him to the class-conflict between the 'royal classes' to say 'the ruling' and 'the backward class', to say, 'the ruled'. In this sense Willie's father loses his position. Better to mention these lines: "And that was how, to my mortification and sorrow, and with every kind of grief for my father and our past, I become part of the cause of the backwards" (2001:15).

Form this unhappy union the utterly compelling character of Willie Chandran emerges, oddly like his father, naively eager to find something that will place him both in and a part form the world. On a scholarship from his father's friend of London Willie is drawn to England for his education. Here he faces the immigrant community of post-war London, its dingy West End clubs and lovely pavements. Naipaul shows us his inner feeling of making his 'space', his 'home' and 'identity' among unknown world where his previous 'self' is not known to anyone:

No one he met in the college or outside it knew the rules of Willie's own place, and Willie began to understand that he was free to present himself as he wished. He could, as it were, write his own revolution. The possibilities were dizzying. He could within reason, remake himself and his past and his ancestry. (2001:60)

Language, according to Habermas, is the medium of the socialization process and gaining upper hand over others (Jurgan 1992). Even Michal Foucault, the German philosopher has established the relationship of 'discourse' and 'power'. According to him, 'discourse' is not only shaped by 'power' but is also a producer of 'power'. Foucault expresses this view in his seminal work *Discipline and Punish*:

We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact, power produces; it produces reality. It produces domains of



object and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production. (1779:13)

Willis Chandran also adopts the same kind of tactics to gain power in the society as “he adapted certain things, he had read and he spoke of his mother as belonging to an ancient Christian community of the subcontinent, a community almost as old as Christianity itself. He kept his gather as a Brahmin. He made his father's father a ‘courtiers’. So playing with words, he began to re-make himself. It excited him, and began to give him a feeling power” (2001:61).

Even in the college his first friend Percy Cato suffers from homelessness and through his discourse, ‘I think, I even have an Indian grandmother tries to establish his identity’ enact. This sense of identity crisis moves throughout the novel. Willie’s sexual encounters with June a black woman and his desire to be lover of Perdita-the beloved of Roger and a white Lady, cannot fulfill his ‘inner void’. Even the exposure to the eccentric million of the English Writer and publisher makes him more thinking of his ‘homelessness’.

But it is Willie’s first experience of love with Ana might bring him the fulfillment he so desperately seals. In due course of time in London he marries Ana and desires to settle down in his ‘home’. His wife Ana leads him to her home, a province of Portuguese Africa, a country populated by desperate business men and their frosted wives; all certainly living out the last days of colonialism. There the image of ‘home’ and the sense of identity-crisis recur continuously in his mind. When his neighbor Luis has been probably kidnapped by guerrillas and found lifeless, her wife Graca could not weep. Willie recalls his past and thinks of a mission poem of ‘homelessness’ for this situation:

Home they brought her warrior dead,

She nor swooned nor uttered cry,

All her maidens watching said,



She must weep or she will die. (2001:223)

Even after spending long years of his life with Ana, he at last decides to take a divorce from her and says “I am tired of living your life.” So again the question of identity occurs in his mind. Although he has got a physical ‘house’ living with Ana in her country, he seems to be in search of a ‘Psychological home’, a place of his own identity. He expresses his gratitude to Ana for her devotion to him throughout his long journey of life by saying:

I know you did everything for me. You made it easy for me here; I couldn't have lived here without you. When I asked you in London I was frightened. I had nowhere to go.... I didn't know what I could do to keep afloat...It would still be your life I have been hiding for too long. (2001:224)

Ana answers him in the same vein of anguish and sense of identity-crisis; “Perhaps it wasn't really my life either” (2001:224).

Naipaul ends this novel at the same note of “to be or not to be” from where the novel has been started. The life journey of Willie Chandran and Ana with other characters is like the ‘Caravan’ of people of ‘no-where’ searching ‘a space’ for themselves. This existentialist theme “man is always an exile in a meaningless universe” (Joshi1994) makes this novel a divesting work of exceptional sensitivity, grace and humour.

What Sumitra Kukreti depicts for the character of Mr. Biswas, the protagonist of Naipaul’s masterpiece work *A House for Mr. Biswas* seems to be true for Willie Chandran of *Half A Life*:

It was his sense of alienation that motivated him to search for a house. House was a great need in his life, as it becomes a symbol of personal identity, solace, self-respect and independence, the elements he was deprived of throughout his life. He experienced the sense of belongingness for the first time in his life. It evoked sense of security in him and strengthened his



decaying relationship with the family. Here, he found himself in his own house, on his own half lot of land, his own portion of earth” (2007).

Willie's rejection of a vicarious existence has been seen as ‘coming of age’ of Naipaul's hero. The protagonists of Naipaul's fiction may be different persons but there may be sensed a thread of continuity in their fate and their limbotic status. Willie in Naipaul's twelfth novel may be in many ways different from Mohun Biswas in *A House for Mr. Biswas*, Ganesh Ramsumair in *The Mystic Masseur* and Ralph Singh in *The Mimic Men* but essentially they are all one as they present different aspects of the same cultural mindset.

### **Conclusion:**

The deconstructive study of V.S. Naipaul's work *Half A Life* leads us to the conclusion that in its depiction of love fulfilled and thwarted and in its vision of the half-lives quietly lived out at the centre of our restless world, V.S. Naipaul's novel brings its own unique illumination to another aspect of our shared humanity. His works derive their strength from his own life and the Swedish academy has very correctly recognized this in its Nobel citation: ‘his authority as a narrator is grounded in his memory of what others have forgotten, the history of the vanquished.’ For Naipaul the perpetual conflict between agony of ‘exile’ and security of ‘home’ is not only a separate realm of character creation but also a ‘wider space’ from where he gives voice to the ‘anguished dying mute mouths’; compels the whole world to listen ‘millions crying without sounds’. In his hands the theme of ‘exile’ and ‘home’ receives the universal outlook.

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## **An Ecocritical Appreciation of Selected Short Stories of Jhumur Pandey**

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**Abstract:** Ecocriticism as a critical mode of study looks at the representation of nature and landscape in cultural texts, paying attention to attitudes towards ‘nature’ and the rhetoric employed when speaking about it. Cheryll Glotfelty’s working definition in *The Ecocriticism Reader* is that “ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment”. If this definition is taken to be the trajectory of understanding the ecocritical paradigm, then Jhumur Pandey’s short stories attain a special significance. Primarily set amidst the tea gardens of Barak Valley, Jhumur Pandey’s short stories are overwhelming narrations of the intricate relationship between the natural environment and humans, the tea tribes in this regard.

This paper will attempt at analysing selected short stories of Jhumur Pandey from the ecocritical perspective and trace how literary texts reflect and inform material practices towards environment.

**Keywords:** Ecocriticism, physical, environment, natural, nature.

The working definition of ecocriticism by Cheryll Glotfelty in *The Ecocriticism Reader* states that “ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment”. This relationship between literature and the physical environment however does not pertain solely to the study of how the latter is represented in the former or how the latter impacts the former. Albeit, these are the primary equations for understanding





the ecocritical approach. But to confine ecocriticism inside the premises of representational studies would undermine a gamut of possible sociological implications and positions which Glotfelty calls the 'undervalued genre of nature writing'.

Nature writing thus, does not only constitute "green issues" but as Michael P.Branch et al explain in the 1998 collection entitled *Reading the Earth* that "ecocriticism is not just a means of analyzing nature in literature...but an extension of ethics, a broadening of humans' conception of global community...ecological literary criticism advocate for cultural change by examining how the narrowness of our culture's assumptions about the natural world has limited our ability to envision an ecologically sustainable human society" ("Letter",PMLA). So, ecocriticism as a genre of literary criticism does not simply look at birds, flowers, animals or the relationship between nature and literature as the general theme but also towards the various movements of theoretical analysis of the ways that thinking and talking about the natural world would interrelate with other discourses.

Jhumur Pandey's short stories in this regard come up as an interesting blend of nature writing. With the idyllic tea-gardens of the Barak Valley as setting, not only do the stories become representations of the ideal and classical pastoral but also contain signifiers which serve as markers for socio-ecological studies as well. This paper will however concentrate on two short stories—*Phuteche Shaluk er Phool* and *Sukh Gacher Galpo* and endeavour to analyse these with the aid of ecocritical tropes. Both these short stories have a classical pastoral opening describing the physical environment in its full glory thereby establishing the primary ecocritical trope of the pastoral. Both begin with the description of the central character in the midst of physical environment carrying on her regular works—the setting being the tea-gardens, it is only natural that the habitat would be a sylvan surrounding. However, the narrative does not simply restrict itself to physical descriptions alone but infuses within it various issues which torment/sustain the lives of the characters which again can be understood and analysed from the purview of certain ecocritical positions or stances.



*Phuteche Shaluk er Phool* is the story of Khepli Buri, an ageing woman belonging to a certain tea-garden who sustains through rummaging in the adjacent jungles for her food and lives an almost hassle free life humming throughout the day her favourite song—“phuteche shaluk er phool”. She does not have any great worry in life except for the occasional fits of sadness and longing for her son who has left the primitive way of tea-garden life and gone to live somewhere in Punjab and who never for once seem to have any worry or enquiry about her. But her whole world changes when one day, Polu, a self-proclaimed local leader of the tribe and a prospective politician informs Khepli Buri that the Panchayat seat for the elections has been reserved for woman and he intends her to contest for the poll. Polu also teaches her everything that is needed to say during canvassing because he fears that if she does not point out the suitable frames of reference during campaigning, she (the tea-tribes in this regard) might lose out to the wife of the estate’s manager who is contesting as Khepli’s opponent. So the simple and unassuming Khepli comes to know a lot about the politics whose sad victims they all are. So, the first inference that can be made out of this story is the presence of the contesting ecocritical debate of the Cornucopian versus the Environmentalist.

The cornucopians are people who believe that environmental threats posed by modern civilization and the dangers that these come with are nevertheless exaggerated and illusory and that free-market capitalist economy, population and technological growth, increase in the prices of commodities etc do not by any chance destabilise or harm the environment. Whereas the environmentalists are people who are not only concerned about environmental changes but also who wish to maintain or improve their standard of living as conventionally defined, and who would not welcome radical social changes contrary to the cornucopians. So, Polu, in this regard becomes a representation of the cornucopian vision who does not hesitate to adopt unfair and dishonest means for his own material gains. In the story, Polu is found to shuffle his wife’s educational documents to secure her a job in “Anganwadi”. Being an illiterate, he somehow manages to secure the post of President of the Governing Body of the local school and also knows all the tricks of forgery and embezzlement of government funds



and plans to do all these once he becomes the President of the Gaon Panchayat. Khepli Buri's son too becomes a representation of the cornucopian vision because apparently he left his birthplace in search of a better life, that is leaving behind the old world order and embracing something that is distant and opposite to the conventional way of living. The mention of another incident also becomes imperative in this discussion on the cornucopian position—Khepli Buri's sexual relationship with a "shaheb". Though it is not explicitly mentioned anywhere in the story whether it was a relationship of consent or otherwise but Khepli's son was born out of a wedlock and is fathered by a certain "shaheb" who apparently abandoned the mother and the child. This further strengthens the cornucopian stance, the basic of which lies in exploitation and the subsequent negation of the exploited.

Contrary to the aforementioned arguments, Khepli becomes a representation of the environmentalist position who lives in accordance to the tenets of sustainable development oblivious to the multifarious ways in which the world functions. Though she engages in day to day activities like occasional bickering with fellow villagers or gets tensed about her daily evening visitors not coming to her yard for tea, yet she goes back to constantly humming her favourite song "phuteche shaluk er phool". Her utmost grief of not hearing from her son too could not stop her from singing. Even when Polu officially declares her as the candidate for the presidential post of Gaon Panchayat, she subsumes to her song forgetting everything happening around her. This constant humming of the song relegate the presence or influence of any other world order in Khepli but a conformation towards her pristine societal order which in itself is environmentalist.

*Sukh Gacher Galpo* reveals more dense traits of the cornucopian environmentalist debate. It is the story of Rambasiya, an embodiment of the environmentalist order who constantly finds herself in the midst of cornucopian desires. Although belonging to the tea tribe community, she has golden hairs which hint at her having a European connection which again reveals the exploiter exploited binary. Rambasiya's clan being the marginalised environmentalist order could easily fall prey to the demands of the oppressing cornucopians.



Rambasiya too suffered her own personal tragedy like Khepli Buri having fallen in love with a mahout of a visiting circus company and subsequently ending up being pregnant with his child. Though she marries the mahout, he leaves her on the very night of their wedding. This mahout too is emblematic of the cornucopian vision—on one hand he along with the circus company can be charged for practicing “speciesism” (exploitation of physical environment on the assumption of human superiority) and on the other, he can again be convicted for exploiting Rambasiya, an environmentalist in this regard. But Rambasiya’s woes do not end there. Her grandson, Lakhinder appears as another cornucopian symbol and perhaps a more worrisome one because he reverts the old environmentalist order of his own society. Lured by the world outside, he refuses to resort to conventional farming and plans to open an electronic gadget shop. Moreover, he forces his grandmother to sell off whatever land they have in order to fulfill his dream.

In fact, the character of Lakhinder can be analysed from the ecocritical perspective of “pollution” which apart from the traditional meaning of the presence of harmful substances in excessive amounts also represent an implicit normative claim that too much of something is present in the environment, usually in the wrong place. Such a concept can be alluded metaphorically for Lakhinder who takes with too much seriousness everything that the modern world has to offer. At one instance, he even refuses to marry the girl Rambasiya chose for him citing that without an extravagant dowry he would not marry. When Rambasiya explains to him that such practices do not exist in their society, he promptly replies saying that “the world has changed and their world exists in dreams”. The narrative thus traces the continuous drift of Lakhinder from his roots to another world and finally ends with an explicit hint that he has taken up arms. But this drift has been channelised succinctly with pastoral rhetoric. So every time Rambasiya goes back to her thoughts about the past or about Lakhinder, she is interrupted by the chirping of birds. Both her past and her present, Lakhinder in this case are symbolic embodiments of cornucopia and the interruptions in these thoughts may be interpreted as her longing for the restoration of the environmentalist order.



Also, as Rambasiya goes on lamenting about Lakhinder, the narrative becomes taxed with another loss—a neem tree in the yard of Rambasiya's neighbour's house starts shedding leaves and at the end of the story she finds out that it has died. Again, towards the end of the story Rambasiya complains that human greed is destroying everything—the landscape, the pristine surroundings, the beauty and of course the values of the age old sustainable living.

Thus, it can be well understood that in *Sukh Gacher Galpo* there is an interplay of the dual rhetoric of the pastoral and the apocalyptic. The pastoral setting at the beginning of the narrative slowly gives way to the apocalyptic as Pandey graciously uses the analogy of Lakhinder to show how traditional values are subsumed with the advent of materialism and the resulting hint at apocalypse—the death of the neem tree – suggest an impending doom which would perhaps sweep human existence. But, unlike *Sukh Gacher Galpo*, *Phuteche Shaluk er Phool* maintains its pastoral element and ends with Khepli Buri's desire to retain the speck of environmentalism or the old world order. Glotfelty, Cheryll, and Harold Fromm ed. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. University of Georgia Press, 1996.

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## **Kiranjit's Journey from Oppression to Emancipation in *Provoked***

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**Abstract:** The story of Kiranjit Ahluwalia in *Provoked* is just as an ordinary one. She like thousands of other Indian women in India and around the world is a victim of domestic violence. But what makes Kiranjit stand-apart is that she found the courage deep within, which made her finally put an end to the constant abuse- by her husband. Kiranjit suffered brutality through the hands of her husband, a man who had vowed to love and cherish her till the very end. A man who not only betrayed her trust but also gave her pain and agony that will remain with her forever. But there is always a saturation point; finally after suffering for nearly ten years Kiranjit took a final stand. Resorting to violence and killing someone cannot be deemed as right solution to one's problems, but we were not in Kiranjit's place and we can't even imagine what it must have been like for her. One can only pray and wish that woman in similar situations are able to receive the support and assistance they require from their family and the system, and above all, the inner strength to say 'no' to domestic violence in the name of marriage. The task of this review is to outline the factors which are relevant to the occurrence of family violence and to the treatment of abusers and to apply this information in the context of the correctional system. The emphasis will be upon physical wife abuse and thus to a lesser extent upon other abusers (emotional/psychological and sexual abuse).

**Keywords:** *Provoked*, domestic violence, physical abuse, family honour, constant abuse.



## **Introduction:**

For many centuries violence (family, sexual, emotional, physical, psychological, verbal, etc) was considered a private affair subject to treatment as a crime only when resulting in severe injury or death. Recently it has been recognized as a serious social problem which needs intervention of criminal justice, social welfare and mental health agencies. Revelations of the prevalence of family violence and its effects on the well-being and development of its victims first came to light in regard to child abuse in the 1950's, later in the 1970's in regard to wife abuse and finally in the eighties concerning elder abuse.

Violence is produced by a host of biological, economic, demographic, cultural and psychological factors. The task of this review is to outline the factors which are relevant to the occurrence of family violence and to the treatment of abusers and to apply this information in the context of the correctional system. The emphasis will be upon physical wife abuse and thus to a lesser extent upon other abusers (emotional/psychological and sexual abuse).

Domestic violence is a huge problem behind closed doors. Everyone would agree that battering is bad for those on the receiving end. Further, one of the great tragedies of domestic violence is that children who grow up in homes where it occurs are far more likely than others to resort to the behavior themselves, continuing the cycle of violence into the next generation.

There are hundreds and thousands of women who receive violence from their partners, family, in-laws and many more. But the question is who is responsible for this violence? How can we eradicate this problem? It is we people, our society, our culture who is responsible for this.

The story of Kiranjit Ahluwalia is just as an ordinary one. She like thousands of other Indian women in India and around the world is a victim of domestic violence. But what makes Kiranjit stand-apart is that she found the courage deep within, which made her finally put an end to the constant abuse- by her husband. Kiranjit suffered brutality through the hands of her husband, a man who had vowed to love and cherish her till the very end. A man



who not only betrayed her trust but also gave her pain and agony that will remain with her forever. But there is always a saturation point; finally after suffering for nearly ten years Kiranjit took a final stand.

Kiranjit after marrying Deepak got beatings from her husband. He tortured her even on small things. It was the daily routine for Kiranjit to get abuse: sexually, verbally, most importantly physical from her husband. The day after their lavish wedding (paid for by her family), Deepak threw her suit case against a wall at his mother's home, where the couple were to live, "He started kicking the suit case and the skirting board, which made a frighteningly loud noise... I told Deepak that I had asked her to get the case. He told me to keep quiet, and said that he knew his sister better than I did" (Ahluwalia 73-74). Her life was like hell. A girl born and brought up in an Indian culture was caught up in the culture, family which was alien to her. But she tried her best to save herself and her family.

She bears the pain for the period of ten years. She tried to leave the relation but each time the concept of family *izzat* (honor) came in between her abuse and family. She knew that her society and family will not accept her. According to the theory of *learned helplessness* by Lenore Walker, Kiranjit was suffering from the learned helplessness. She was helpless against the forces which she faced in a country alien to her. On the other hand Deepak abused her regularly because it was due to the behaviour he learnt from his family, as Jensen says in her book *Social Learning and Violent Behaviour* that human behaviour is learned. He learnt to be violent from his family, from his father. As culture is transmitted from one generation to another, same the behaviour of being violent was transmitted from Deepak's father into Deepak. On the opposite side Kiranjit behaved in a sober, calm and passive manner because it was what she learned from her mother as per the theory of learned behaviour. She was helpless. According to the theory of learned helplessness, constant abuse strips out the will of women to leave the relation. same is the case with Kiranjit. Due to constant abuse from Deepak, she was unable to leave because her will power was striped due to abuse. Furthermore, there were other reasons which stopped Kiranjit to escape from the





cage of Deepak; the other reasons being her children, her family *izzat* (honour) and her culture, religion and society.

There was a pattern of abuse she received from Deepak. From the beginning of her marriage she received battering but it was so much acute. According to the theory of Cycle of Violence by Walker, there are three phases of battering in the life of a victim. In the first phase, the abuse is not that much acute. In the second phase, the battering becomes acute and even there are injuries on the body of a victim. Same on applying the theory of Walker, on the life of Kiranjit, she received the abuse on the same pattern of theory as depicted in the theory of Cycle of Violence.

She was also suffering from the Battered women syndrome, a theory given by Lenore Walker in her book *The Battered Women Syndrome*. She received constant battering from her husband and in-laws which lead her to be helpless. Kiranjit suffered for a long period of violence. Life seemed to have become one endless cycle of abuse, beating, thumping, shouting, banging, screaming, breaking crockery, for her. She was abused by her husband like anything. He used to hit her every day. He used to hit the children, he used to spit on her. From the very first day of marriage she received beatings from Deepak.

After analyzing the character and behaviour of Deepak Ahluwalia, his character can be related to a 'Cobra', a category of batterer. Walker in her book, *The Battered Women Syndrome* calls the batterers like Deepak as 'Cobra'. A Cobra is the type of batterer who not only batters his partner but he also does some other criminal acts, as Deepak did.

From the very beginning of her marriage Deepak showed his true colours. He appeared to be a paranoid, disturbed man, who accused his wife and mother because of silly things. The humiliation started soon after the wedding. It was the beginning of 10 years of violence and sexual abuse. Deepak was obsessed about controlling Kiranjit's behaviour. But after ten years one night it was all over when Kiranjit got provoked and she tried to hurt Deepak, but in that accident Deepak was burnt to ashes. One of the major cause of her provocation was getting of physical abuse from her husband. Not even a single day passed when she did not get beatings from Deepak. For ten years she lived with a sense of fear.



Violence for long leads to psychological disorder or we can say a victim gets psychologically abused as well. A person remaining in an abusive relation always remains in fear, so did Kiranjit. Her psychological made to take up drinking, because she didn't want to bear more pain. But it was unbearable that night when she got provoked and killed her husband. The fury, that she had suppressed so for many years came flooding to the surface and consumed her. She couldn't see an end to the violence. She decided to burn him back to make him understand what it meant to get hurt. But her husband got burnt and died, which lead to the freedom of Kiranjit. For the act of killing her husband she was sentenced to life imprisonment by the English court, not knowing that she was provoked for the killing act.

Thousands of women are there who are victim of domestic violence but it is they who have to work to get out from that trap of violence. It is up to an individual how long she can bear the pain. Life of a woman becomes hell only when there is a man like Deepak Ahluwalia. He was a kind of person who used to change his mood within seconds. He wanted to dominate Kiranjit in every respect, sex, work, family etc. For ten years he did not even feel for her. He hurt her each and every moment of her life, either physically or mentally.

Kiranjit's experience is an indictment of our society, of our families, our schools and our legal system; of the failures at the highest level of government to recognize domestic violence, rape and sexual abuse as a gross violation of women's human rights, perhaps the most widespread form of human rights abuse across the world. The only way to conquer this problem is to educate women and try to inform people how harmful domestic violence is. The women trapped in such situations need help and attention of all kind of people. The children born and living in such families are the victims of the violence, they need help too. Also, don't lose your hope anytime in any situation; a spot of light could brighten the darkness of life at any moment , the same as Kiranjit Ahluwalia's was.

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## **Life Skills: Fundamentals of Life**

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**Abstract:** Life Skills is a term used to describe a set of skills acquired through learning or direct life experience that are used to help individuals and groups effectively handle problems and questions commonly encountered in their daily life. In practice, many skills are used simultaneously. For example, decision-making involves critical thinking, e.g. “what are my options?” and an assessment of our values, e.g. “what is important to me?” Ultimately, it is the relationship between different life skills that leads to powerful behavioural outcomes. Life skills help adolescents to transit successfully from childhood to adulthood by healthy development of social and emotional skills and helps to weigh pros and cons of the situation, hence, act as a mediator to problem behaviour. This research paper aims to study the various life skills essential for an individual to make informed decisions, communicate effectively and self management skills that may help an individual to lead a healthy and productive life.

**Keywords:** Life, Behaviour, Communication skills, Adolescence, Management.



## **Introduction:**

The term Life Skill Education, is being widely used nowadays but it is often used interchangeably with livelihood skills. But the two are different. Livelihoods skills as the name suggests, are skills, related to generate income to fulfill one's household/individual economic goals.

These skills basically involve vocational skills, business management skills etc, where as life skills encompasses all the dimensions of human life, be it economical, social or psychological.

World Health Organization (WHO) in 1993 defined life skills as, "the abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with demands and challenges of everyday life" (72).

'*Adaptive*' means that a person is flexible in approach and is able to adjust in different circumstances. '*Positive behavior*' implies that a person is forward looking and even in difficult situations, can find a ray of hope and opportunities to find solutions.

UNICEF defines life skills as, "a behavior change or behavior development approach designed to address a balance of three areas: knowledge, attitude and skills" (72).

Life skills are essentially those abilities that help promote mental well-being and competence in young people as they face the realities of life. Most development professionals agree that life skills are generally applied in the context of health and social events. They can be utilized in many content areas: prevention of drug use, sexual violence, teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS prevention and suicide prevention. The definition extends into consumer education, environmental education, peace education or education for development, livelihood and income generation, among others. In short, life skills empower young people to take positive action to protect and promote health and positive social relationships.



Self-awareness, self-esteem and self-confidence are essential tools for understanding one's strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, the individual is able to discern available opportunities and prepare to face possible threats. This leads to the development of a social awareness of the concerns of one's family and society. Subsequently, it is possible to identify problems that arise within both the family and society.

### **Key Life Skills:**

Life skills are a large group of psycho-social and interpersonal skills, which can help people, to make informed decisions, communicate effectively and self management skills that may help an individual to lead a healthy and productive life. With life skills, one is able to explore alternatives, weigh pros and cons and make rational decisions in solving each problem or issue as it arises. It also entails being able to establish productive interpersonal relationships with others. It enables effective communication, for example, being able to differentiate between hearing and listening and ensuring that messages are transmitted accurately to avoid miscommunication and misinterpretations

### **Ten Core Life Skills as laid down by WHO:**

1. Self-awareness
2. Empathy
3. Critical thinking
4. Creative thinking
5. Decision making
6. Problem Solving
7. Effective communication
8. Interpersonal relationship



9. Coping with stress
10. Coping with emotion

1. **Self-awareness**-It includes recognition of 'self', our character, our strengths and weaknesses, desires and dislikes. Developing self-awareness can help us to recognize when we are stressed or feel under pressure. It is often a prerequisite to effective communication and interpersonal relations, as well as for developing empathy with others.
2. **Empathy** -It means to have a successful relationship with our loved ones and society at large, we need to understand and care about other peoples' needs, desires and feelings. Empathy is the ability to imagine what life is like for another person. Without empathy, our communication with others will amount to one-way traffic.
3. **Critical thinking** -It is an ability to analyze information and experiences in an objective manner. Critical thinking can contribute to health by helping us to recognize and assess the factors that influence attitudes and behavior, such as values, peer pressure and the media.
4. **Creative thinking** -It is a novel way of seeing or doing things that is characteristic of four components – fluency (generating new ideas), flexibility (shifting perspective easily), originality (conceiving of something new), and elaboration (building on other ideas)
5. **Decision making** -It helps us to deal constructively with decisions about our lives. This can have consequences for health. It can teach people how to actively make decisions about their actions in relation to healthy assessment of different options and, what effects these different decisions.



6. **Problem solving** - It helps us to deal constructively with problems in our lives. Significant problems that are left unresolved can cause mental stress and give rise to accompanying physical strain.
7. **Interpersonal relationship**-These skills help us to relate in positive ways while interacting with people. This may mean being able to make and keep friendly relationships, which can be of great importance to our mental and social well-being.
8. **Effective communication** –It means that we are able to express ourselves, both verbally and non-verbally, in ways that are appropriate to our cultures and situations. This means being able to express opinions, desires, needs and fears and it may mean being able to ask for advice and help in a time of need.
9. **Coping with stress**-It means recognizing the sources of stress in our lives, recognizing how this affects us, and acting in ways that help us control our levels of stress, by changing our environment or lifestyle and learning how to relax.
10. **Coping with emotions** -It means involving recognizing emotions within us and others, being aware of how emotions influence behavior and being able to respond to emotions appropriately. Intense emotions like anger or sadness can have negative effects on our health if we do not respond appropriately.

### **Importance of Life Skill Education:**

- Life skills help adolescents to transit successfully from childhood to adulthood by healthy development of social and emotional skills.





- It helps in the development of social competence and problem solving skills, which in turn help adolescents to form their own identity.
- It helps to weigh pros and cons of the situation, hence, act as a mediator to problem behavior.
- It promotes positive social, norms that an impact the adolescent health services, schools and family.
- It helps adolescents to differentiate between hearing and listening and thus, ensuring less development misconceptions or miscommunications regarding issues such as drugs, alcoholism etc.
- It delays the onset of the abuse of tobacco, alcohol etc.
- It promotes the development of positive self-esteem and teaches anger control

### **Criteria for using Life Skills:**

- It should not only address knowledge and attitude change, but, more importantly, behavior change.
- Traditional "information-based" approaches are generally not sufficient to yield changes in attitudes and behaviors. For example, a lecture on "safe behavior" will not necessarily lead to the practice of safe behavior. Therefore, the lecture should be substantiated with exercises and situations where participants can practice safe behavior and experience its effects. The adult learning theory emphasizes that adults learn best that which they can associate with their experience and practice.
- It will work best when augmented or reinforced. If a message is given once, the brain remembers only 10 percent of it one day later, and when the same



message is given six times a day, the brain remembers 90 percent of it. Hence, recaps and review are required.

- It will work best if combined with policy development, access to appropriate health services, community development and media.

### **Methods of teaching life skills:**

The method used in teaching of Life Skills builds upon the social learning theory and on what we know of how young people learn from their environment; from observing how others behave and what consequences arise from behavior. It involves the process of Participatory learning using various methods:

- Class- room discussions
- Brainstorming
- Demonstration and guided practice
- Role plays
- Audio and visual activities, e.g., arts, music, theatre, dance
- Small groups
- Educational games and simulations
- Case studies
- Story telling
- Debates
- Decision mapping or problem trees



## **Conclusion**

To conclude, we can say that Life skills are the beginning of wisdom which focuses on behavior change or developmental approach designed to address a balance of three areas-knowledge, attitude and skills.

Life skill education is a value added program which aims to provide students with strategies to make healthy choices that contribute to a meaningful life. It helps adolescents to understand their self and to assess their skills, abilities and areas of development. It also helps adolescents to get along with other people and adjust with their environment and making responsible decision.

The main objective of life skill education is to enable the learner to develop a concept of oneself as a person of worth and dignity. Life skill education is a basic learning need for all individuals. Various skills like leadership, responsibility, communication, intellectual capacity, self esteem, Interpersonal skill etc. extends its maximum level, if it is practicing effectively. We need to create life skill education as the cornerstone of various youth programmers and an integral part of our formal education process.

As it is rightly said:

I read, I forget, I discuss, I remember, I do, I inculcate.

Life skills enable individuals to translate knowledge, attitude and values into actual abilities i.e. what to do and how to do it, given the scope and opportunity to do so. Life skills education involves a dynamic teaching process. The methods used to facilitate this active involvement include working in small groups and pairs.

Life skills can serve as a remedy for the problems as it helps us to lead a better life. It is a need of the society and every education system should impart it as a part of its curriculum



as it is capable of producing positive health, behaviour, positive interpersonal relationships and well being of individuals.

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## **Journaling, Labeling Theory (V2)**

(Juxtaposition Style)

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Breaking news this just in,

1:15 PM December 15, 2013,

I found out labeling theory

has a personality.

It has impact of its own.

I love today because I

found out I have a mental illness.

Formally, diagnosed,

now I am special.

Shrink, Dr. Pennypecker, knows me well.

We visit 15 minutes every 3 months.



I have known him for 9 months.

Simple sentences just make more sense.

Simple sentences make me feel more secure.

After 9 months he says, "I've sort of figured  
you out, you are a manic depressive, stage 2 hypo-mania."

I ask my shrink, "can I cast my vote?"

In this PM news, I gave him permission.

Life is a pilgrimage of pills.

I cast out my net to catch myself,  
save myself.

Life is a pilgrimage of prayers.

Note: it could end here.

He does not know the difference  
between manias, verses six shots of vodka.

I suffer from a B-12 deficiency.

I need extra thiamine symptoms psychosis.

I place my lid down on forsaken table,  
foreskin, I forgive.

A dead shrink, middle of the road.



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I crack my knuckles,  
pass sleep two next night.  
Creativity flows fragmented.  
I kick gravesites up then down.



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## Compliance

**Michael Lee Johnson**

Poet, editor, publisher,

Freelance writer, &

Amateur photographer,

Itasca, Illinois, USA

I'm no Leonard Cohen  
smarter than Rod McKuen.  
I can't talk you into anything  
until you get that damn car  
fixed, the brakes, duct tape  
the muffler sounds with gorilla glue,  
hubby gone your business grows,  
your children leave,  
that house sold  
karate those kids intramural  
for me to get lucky  
with you, a rabbits foot  
and your open compliance.





## Goodbye

**Sergio A. Ortiz**

Poet & Founding Editor

Undertow Tanka Review

Puerto Rico

### 1. Of Illusion

You wrote: *D e s i r e*  
in the tablet of my heart.  
I walked  
for days and days  
crazy    aromatized    and sad.

### 2. Of Night

In the loving night, I grieve.  
I pity his secret, my secret,  
I interrogate him in my blood for a long, long time.  
He doesn't answer  
and does like my mother, who closes her eyes without listening to me.



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### 3. **Of Goodbyes**

It's not to be said.

It comes to our eyes,  
to our hands. Trembles, resists.

You say you'll wait—you wait— from then until . . . .

And know goodbyes are useless and sad.



## At midnight

**Sergio A. Ortiz**

Poet & Founding Editor

Undertow Tanka Review

Puerto Rico

When August is about to end,  
I think about the leaves that incessantly fall  
from calendars. I believe I am the tree of calendars.

Every passing day, leaves me wondering  
if the one who loses a father is an orphan,  
if a man who loses his wife is widower,  
what name do we give the loser?  
What do we call an idler of time?  
And if I myself am time,  
what shall I name myself,  
if I lose myself?

Day and night, not Monday or Tuesday,  
or August or September. Day and night  
are the measure of how long we last.  
To open and close our eyes is to last.

At this hour, every night, forever,  
I am the one who lost the day.



## Overabundance of Books in Market

**Durgesh Verma**

Student And Social Worker,

Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapeeth University, Varanasi

"On the turn,  
I've found  
an overabundance of books  
in the market !  
I've heard .....  
There characters are being sold -  
in some relations,  
in some selected installments. ....  
Some has filled with reasons.  
Some has filled with superstitions.  
Some has guided the paths.  
Some are seeking the ways.  
Some has for equations.  
Some has for clarification.  
Powerless words on paper  
are moaning in acute torture.  
Wound of such scratch  
that are not coming on tongue.  
Some are stumbling  
due to anomalies of characters.  
Some are shrinking & blushing



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as they're too scared with spellings.

As if, buried in the pages,  
worn saree of bookbinding.

The middleman is recovered  
the desired auctioned amount.

It's the worst crime !

The buyer  
becomes offender.

As finally he does confess.!!"



## Phenomenal Awakening

**Ashish Kumar**

Research Scholar

Department of English & European Languages

Central University of Himachal Pradesh

Dharamshala, Kangra, Himachal Pradesh

Stillness of Night-Town slept deep  
I Awakened by unknown asleep...  
Looking- Moon, Beside Me  
Floating, Dancing and Twinkling,  
I touched its face-  
With my hands,  
It smiled a bit,  
But shy much more.

Cold night of grueling thoughts,  
Showered sadness and pain,  
Travelling by uncertainties of sky,  
Clouds of boundaries blurred,  
No language, no nation, Before 'I'

Shortly-  
It passed as Dream,  
But, with no more dream,  
Dissolving 'me' in cosmos...



## **To be or not to be?**

**Anam**

Student M.A. English

Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi.

Standing at the critical juncture of life where teenage is fading like a pale leaf of the autumn,

The lass carries a burden of unbearable pounds above her bottom.

The passage which connects the neocortex with the bloody pumping machine is blocked with soots,

Lack of mobility has exiled her twins with capital [H] into distant islands of coots.

Which one to chose? No, the question is which one to drop? As both impresses her in alternative turns,

Where one is the earth pulling with gravity, the other horizon with desires that constantly churns.

The damsel then compares the load on a clinging scale to a make a choice on that lonesome night,

Without realizing the impotency of her larvan state- that despises the surface with effeminate wings to flight.

Disheartened, disintegrated she now crawls through the surface like broken strings of pearl,

Infirm breasts with honest gestures that dances to the dirge of the mirror girl.



## WHO AM I?

**Anam**

Student M.A. English

Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi.

A lump of promiscuous flesh trolling down the streets?  
Or the 'heavenly noor' conversing The Messiah bowed on her feet?  
The dusky sun overpowered by the penetrating darkness?  
Or the pole-star guiding the adrift vastness?  
The burnt ashes of my forefather's interments?  
Or the struggling fetus of my parents ferments?  
The blackest raven with an ominous eye?  
Or the paired mynah knotting a fortune-tie?  
The wailing dirge for the wind's maid?  
Or the vocal flute in the classical trait?

WHO AM I?

A lump of flesh, the heavenly noor, the dusky sun, the pole-star, the burnt ashes,  
the struggling fetus, the blackest raven, the paired mynah, the wailing dirge and the vocal flute.  
Nature's mate,  
Yes, I am all insensate.  
'God in ruins', says Emerson,  
I say 'Big Bang's disambiguation'.





## **There's A Message In The Rain**

**Nosheen Kapoor**

Ph.D Scholar

Department of English and Cultural Studies,  
Panjab University, Chandigarh

Droplets pour down, reminding us to look up  
the usual spread sky is no longer there to greet us  
But on its vacant lot sooty fuzziness fills.

The street hawker with burdened eyes  
pulls up the tarapulin on his means  
the day has ended for him.  
His movement betrays an off-hand cheerfulness  
that unknowingly slips out of his pensive fate.

While the dancer shakes open the door  
to run out and discover a music unheard  
but known.

The silent poet, full of words till now,  
leaves the pen.  
Rain washes his muse away and cripples  
his craft as he stares,  
rapt, at the watery drill outside.  
Too much to say yet too little known,



how.

She, who speaks has no one to listen,  
rejoices!

The curl of her smile seems to invite  
the rounded drops and kiss her lips shut.  
She is quiet because it's raining or is it  
raining because she is quiet?

A black umbrella floats through mid-air.  
The stick dissolves into a wrinkled hand and  
a flicker of life emerges, snailing through muddy pits  
and overfilled roads.  
The faint pallor in the eyes remembers  
the glint of youthful rains.

Is all gone?  
How can it be, when the rain returns?

The rain returns  
the rain returns..  
the rain pours...  
the rain pours..

Far away a numbing streak  
flashes,  
Skies thunder and tremble like ashes.  
A woman runs across fields and moats



A man on the awashed water floats  
Readies to unbreathe and soar the  
depths of motley darkness and  
like the rain return as a drop.

Gasping and gushing with no moon  
above, she strives to keep her promise.  
The ground beneath her lashes her feet,  
slips and caves in.  
Leaping and lunging on enormous  
stretches of slush, she delves deeper  
and deeper into her promise.  
In a trance and soothed by the rain  
her eyes shut out the cosmos,  
left behind.

Splitter, splatter and splat – beat the  
toddlers' hearts.  
Happiness of the world abounds  
in a foamy ditch  
The children with their joy  
wreck the heavenly order  
As others are intoxicated  
by a dampened slumber.

Lingering in a corner of a house  
sickening odour crawls up to the  
Old widow.



She smiles to know that the rain returned  
There's no one here now, she tells the rain  
No on that the rain seeks and can nudge.  
Only her.  
The rain curls on her feet  
and both await the parting.

Drops and downpour continue  
to renegade the night.  
Enchanted -  
The night forgets to leave and  
the day awaits its reckoning.  
The sun somewhere imprisoned  
perspires while the readies to write  
another day.



## A Writer's Dilemma

**Neha**

Freelance poet and writer  
Beldih lake, Jamshedpur

A writer's dilemma is  
a dilapidated construction  
of imagination  
formed with words,  
that neither stick together,  
Nor fall apart  
and ready to engulf  
the very existence of the bard.

The lush tranquil views,  
chirping spring and mourning winters  
go unnoticed.

The struggle to capture  
sanity and insanity ends  
in tumultuous despair.

Alas! these treacherous words,



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forsake the bard when imagination runs wild.

They play Judas,

and make the imagination drink

from the poisoned chalice,

Killing the heart and soul of it.

Yet again

The curtains of nothingness

Wrap the glory of the unsaid.



## **Stop Comparing, Be Unique**

**Dr.Ujjwala Kakarla**

Professor

English and Board of Studies, Chairman  
Guru Nanak Institutions Technical Campus  
Hyderabad

There lived a docile, well-to-do nuclear middle class family amidst quiet vicinity of a tiny town constituting a little cute girl, Lovely and her Parents. Lovely was a decent, coy, good, diligent and bright girl keen and devoted to her studies and work while her parents were simple, pious and noble couple bound to their ethics holding high aspirations on their only daughter. It was a blessed, happy, peaceful and respectable family in the neighbourhood with strong fervour for social serviceability. All the other families lived cordially and amicably, loved and cared one another like a single family despite of differences in culture, caste or religion. Lovely was highly appreciated for her beauty, conduct and brilliance in academics from her neighbours and friends.

Unfortunately, a new family comprising a young girl Hima and her parents set foot in the neighbourhood adjacent to Lovely's family. Unlike other families in the neighbourhood Hima's family was quite indifferent in their attitude and outlook. Hima's mother was an uneducated woman with a fat tummy and snake like fiery eyes radiating indifference, envy and hatred in her feelings and expressions. She loved to compare every small thing taking from caste to religion, status to external possessions and children's education with other families in the neighbourhood. Nobody liked the family unlike the intimacy they had with Lovely's family.

Hima's mother was an envious and jealous woman who hated the neighbours being together and intimate with Lovely's family. She wanted to dominate the whole neighbourhood in every aspect by proving her supremacy. Her eyes fell on the pretty girl Lovely who was



praised and loved by all in every aspect which she couldn't bear as she wanted her daughter to be at a superior level being praised like Lovely. She started creating divide and rule tactics among the neighbours spreading misconceptions among them by deriving sadistic pleasure when families used to quarrel and become disunited. Hima developed a sense of hatred towards Lovely to compete and out beat her in every way to prove her supremacy unable to bear her mother's humiliation.

In every indoor or outdoor game the children of the neighbourhood used to play Hima used to dominate them with her rigidity, cruelty and hoax by making Lovely to be her target. By influencing her other friends against Lovely by hook or crook Hima used to utter lies to her mother that Lovely had spoken and behaved violently with her. Hima's mother used to take the complaint to Lovely's mother about her child's behaviour by tempting the other children in the neighbourhood to prove it to be the truth. The poor innocent Lovely was a sweet girl who was naïve towards using such abusive words. Lovely's mother used to feel shocked by listening to the complaints on her child and the reputation getting spoiled. She used to beat Lovely however the girl used to plead her mother that she was ignorant and has been made a scapegoat.

The situations turned violent day by day when Lovely got distracted mentally and couldn't concentrate on her studies. She used to cry and cry thinking about her parents who have become rigid to understand her and how she was beaten for no fault of hers. Slowly her academics began to decline and she became psychologically moody and isolated immersed in her own world. Lovely's parents became concerned of her and that pain led them to a spiritual Guru who gave them the initiation to be his disciples who moulded them to become mentally strong and vigorous in perceiving and experiencing the situations without reacting and becoming emotional.

When Lovely's family was in deep pain Hima's mother was feeling very happy and Hima was excelling in every aspect proving her superiority in the neighbourhood. After a few





years Hima completed her Engineering and with a great pomp, luxury and grandeur she was married to a software engineer working abroad. That's the end of Hima's goal and success in life.

That pain of humiliation Lovely's family bore transformed them spiritually and nothing could tempt them now; neither the people nor the situations, external status nor pleasures except God and His service. Lovely slowly regains her mental strength and energy, completes her education in due course of time, becomes a great and popular spiritual leader by striving towards worthwhile goal and purpose in life leading a fruitful and peaceful life serving and uplifting the mankind.

Hima's life was filled with lot of anguish when she left abroad when she gave birth to mentally retarded children, a lifelong punishment and pain she had to bear. Her mother lost her sense of physical vision owing to high diabetes feeling painful to walk to a shorter distance and no one to care and look after. Even now amidst such pain and suffering Hima's mother didn't stop comparing but still jealous of seeing the popularity of Lovely and the pain her daughter is experiencing. Hima could out beat Lovely externally in every way but she couldn't compete with her spiritually. That's the deep anguish that Hima's mother experienced in the past, experiencing in the present and will be experiencing in the future. Amidst plenty of external comforts and status Hima's family still remains desperate, envious, unsatisfied and unfulfilled leading an empty and purposeless life.



## Made For Each Other

**Dr. Ujjwala Kakarla**

Professor  
English and Board of Studies, Chairman  
Guru Nanak Institutions Technical Campus  
Hyderabad

Once two pilgrims were travelling towards their destination; the Kingdom of God. One being the 'tiny soul' and the other being the 'body' marching ahead on their journey with great pace and momentum meet each other unknowingly at the junction of adventure. Feeling fatigued during the course of their journey, they wanted to relax and refresh amidst the beauties of serene nature overwhelmed with deep silence. Being ignorant and strangers to each other the natural instinct in them gushes forth the desire to know each other and communicate. They involve in a dialogue to know the purpose of each other's journey, their destination and the direction in which they had to travel and finally come to know that their purpose of journey, destination and direction are one. Slowly, their euphonious dialogue turns into a moot to prove each other's supremacy during the continuity of their journey.

**Soul:** I am such an itty bitty thing in the universe twinkling like a star invisible to common man's naked eyes. Mankind feels difficult to know and realize my mysterious nature and form.

**Body:** I am seen in various forms easily and identified by the mankind. The greatness lies in being seen and getting identified but not in being unseen and hidden.

**Soul:** I am such an adventurous thing in the existence that even great scientists and cosmologists fail to discover my origin.



**Body:** I am made of five potent elements of nature; earth, air, water, fire and sky that magnetizes and beautifies me physically. I am more attractive with my physical form to tempt and attract the mankind.

**Soul:** However, tiny and unseen I am but I am the most potent thing comprising the powers of mind and intellect. The real beauty lies in thinking and judging but not in physical appearance or attraction.

**Body:** I am a beautiful chariot with sack of bones and muscles. My sense organs symbolize the racing horses that can see, smell, touch, hear and speak. A thing devoid of sense organs is futile.

**Soul:** I am the mighty and vigorous charioteer sitting in your bag of bones and muscles. The chariot devoid of a charioteer is absurd despite of sense organs that cannot be functioned or controlled.

**Body:** You are just a hidden and dependent thing in the universe and without my presence you can neither think nor sense and feel anything. There lies my supremacy.

**Soul:** I am an immortal thing in the universe and nothing can destroy me. Neither the fire can burn me nor the water can drown me; neither the wind can blow me nor any weapon can destroy me. But your mortal form can be easily destroyed by the elements of nature from which you are formed.

**Body:** However, I may be perishable but I am bound to birth and death cycle in the Universe that I attain various mortal forms if one form gets destroyed. You remain stagnant without any change. I am quite supreme to you in nature.



As the two pilgrims were totally immersed arguing with each other suddenly amidst great thunder and lightning they heard the divine voice from the skies

Speaking: O' foolish and ignorant pilgrims you are not the strangers in the universe fighting to prove your supremacy. You both are the companions and twins made for each other in this mysterious creation to serve the same purpose and reach the same destination. You are created in the existence to know and realize each other's specialities and act together as one being to reach the Kingdom of God and experience His Bliss.