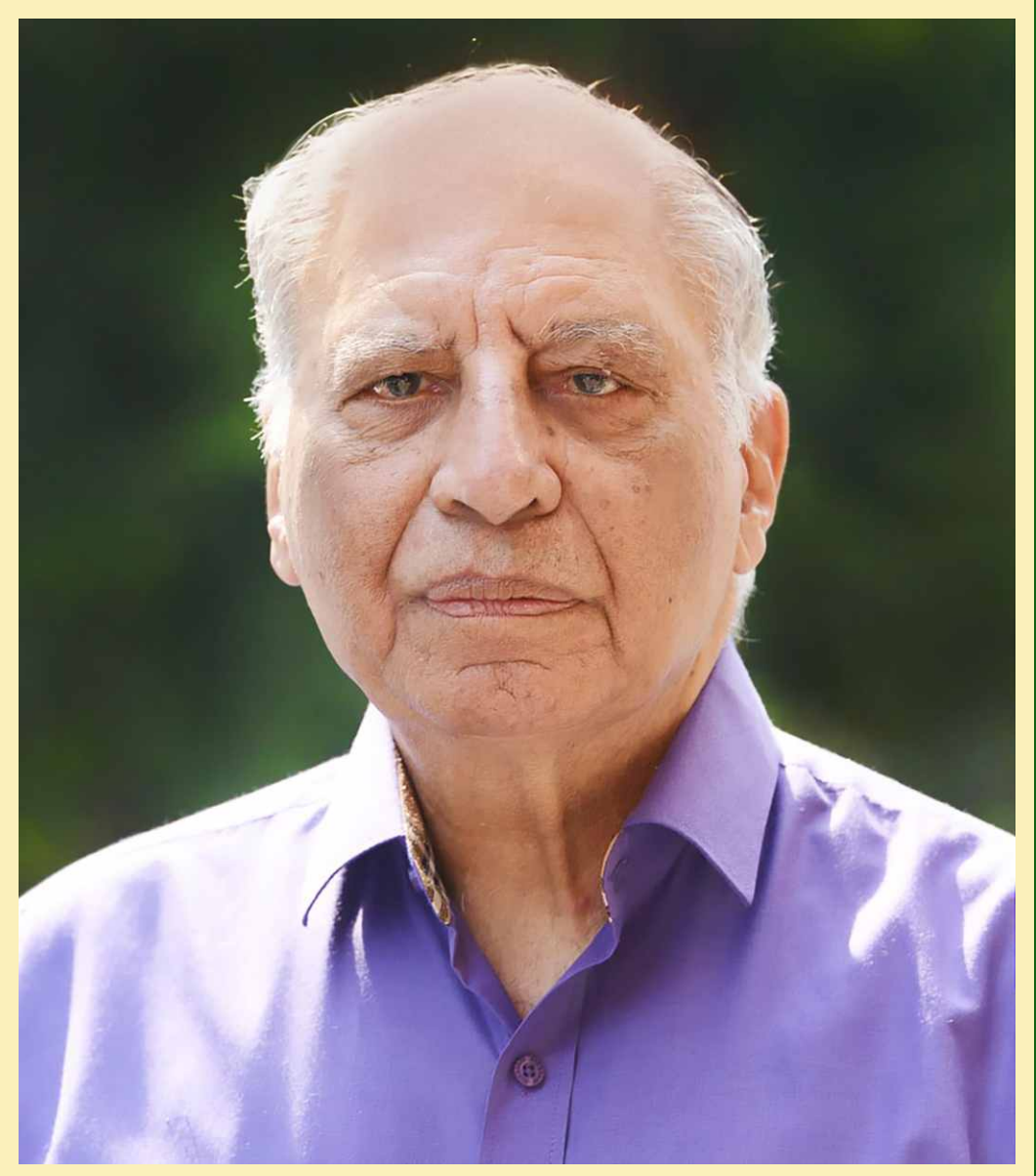


# ROCK PEBBLES

(The 1<sup>st</sup> English Literary Magazine of Odisha)

DECEMBER - 2024 • Vol. XXVIII • No. IV



**A Peer-Reviewed Journal of Arts & Humanities**

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Padma Shri Keki N. Daruwalla (1937 - 2024)  
Noted Indian English Poet & Short Story Writer

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### **Editor speaks.....**

It is our moral obligation to acknowledge the literary contributions of the great celebrities without whose efforts literature would not have reached its current heights. This is the moment to reflect upon and honour these voices. One such voice is Keki N. Daruwalla.

Keki N. Daruwalla, one of India's prominent contemporary poets, occupies a significant place in the nation's literary landscape. His poems are characterized by vivid imagery, profound philosophical insights and a deep connection to both the natural world and human emotions. His poems speak universal truths and are deeply rooted in the Indian context. Born in 1937, Daruwalla's works reflect a blend of personal experiences and broader societal themes with a focus on history, politics and the complexities of human condition.

His poetic voice is often marked by its lyrical precision and intellectual rigor. Daruwalla's verse frequently engages with the tensions between the individual and the collective, exploring questions of identity, freedom and justice. His evocative depictions of rural India and its landscapes infuse his work with a powerful sense of rootedness. At the same time his work transcends geographic boundaries resonating with the global human experience

Having served as a civil servant, Daruwalla has been a witness to many critical moments in post-independence India and this historical consciousness permeates his writing. His distinctive style has earned him numerous accolades, including the Sahitya Akademi Award and the Commonwealth Poetry Prize. Daruwalla remains a significant literary voice, one whose contributions continue to reverberate within and beyond the realms of Indian literature. His works serve as both a testament to the evolving complexity of Indian society and as a rich, reflective exploration of the human psyche.

However, the pulsating voice was silenced with his passing on September 26, 2024. Rock Pebbles, the 1st English Literary Journal of Odisha pays tribute to the literary genius for his immense and lasting contributions to the world of literature. ■

**Chief Editor**

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## Dynamics of Intertextuality : Situating *Influence* and *Intertextuality* in K.N. Daruwalla's Poetry

Bishnu Charan Dash

The concepts of intertextuality and influence have been integral to comparative and historical methods of study and research ever since the emphasis of T.S. Eliot on 'historical sense', which involves not only a perception of the pastness of the past, but also its continuation in the present. In Eliot's scheme of things, the past is never dead or obsolete; rather, past and present are equally important segments of time precisely because they 'ceaselessly condition' and 'reshape' each other. While saying so, Eliot tends to vindicate his historical\cultural consciousness apart from vindicating his concept of tradition. To him, no poet or artist can have his/her separate existence and complete meaning alone in isolation from his or her predecessors. In other words, the significance of poets and their works in the present become complete and meaningful only when they are juxtaposed for comparison and contrast with the dead poets, artists, and their creations/ works of art. It is Eliot's 'historical sense' that forwards the efficacy of 'influence', 'intertextuality' and comparative criticism. Eliot observes:

"The historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within the whole of literature of his own country has simultaneous order". (*Tradition and Individual Talent*, 1974: 17).

The incontrovertible importance of influence is further fortified by the French school of comparative literary criticism. In this connection, one is reminded of the French critic Paul Van Tighen's emphasis on influence and reception. In his book *La Literature Comparée* (1931: 118), Tighen's viewpoint is brilliantly elaborated by the American comparatist H. H. Remak, who holds that, in influence study, there is a direct causal relationship between the giver and the receiver. Remak further observes that, in such types of discourses, the onus lies in reception and the art of reception, which involves a meaningful negotiation between the giver and the receiver. On the other hand, Harold Bloom, in his seminal book *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973), characterizes influence as a complex, intertextual process and psychic dynamism that involves both anxiety and a creative challenge to accept, accommodate, or revisit others' influence by adding a new color or dimension to it. While

doing so, Bloom argues, a writer is bound to be prone to anxieties of being influenced. For instance, Shelley's *Adonais* falls under the influence of Wordsworth's *Ode: Intimations of Immortality*, whereas Shelley's influence can be located in Tennyson, Matthew Arnold, and Thomas Hardy. In his essay "Poetic Origins and Final Phases," Bloom further maintains that poetic influence entails both love and strife. Poets tend to think of themselves as stars because their deepest desire is to be an influence rather than to be influenced; but even in the strongest, whose desire is accomplished, the anxiety of having been formed by influence still persists (David Lodge: 220).

The concept of 'tradition' embodying 'historical sense,' and the 'theory of influence' and the 'anxiety of influence' can be correlated with the theory of intertextuality propounded by Julia Kristeva back in 1960s. Intertextuality is as such grounded in the idea that all texts are influenced by or borrowed from previous authors/ texts, thereby vindicating the interconnected negotiation between two different texts, one shaped by its relationship with the other. The dynamics of intertextuality involve the techniques and composition helping in repeating the early text, allowing quotations to fit into the framework of a new text. This technique has become inviolably essential to comparative literature and comparative cultural criticism. Since Eliot's emphasis on tradition with special reference to historical sense, Julia Kristeva, a critic belonging to the school of poststructuralism, established the theory of intertextuality in relation to influence on the ground that a reader's approach to a new text is aided by pre-existing knowledge about previous texts. It adds a new dimension and meaning to the interpretation of text. Whereas Ferdinand de Saussure claims that signs gain meaning through structure in a particular text, thereby transmitting meaning directly from the writer to the reader, Kristeva argues that text is always filtered through quotes, which bring previous meanings with them, and then the influence of other texts on the reader's mind adds a special significance to the interpretation and meaning of a text. For instance, the moment a reader comes across a new poem on tiger or lamb, he or she is immediately reminded of William Blake's poems "The Tiger" and "The Lamb", selected from "Songs of Innocence" and "Songs of Experience". Intertextuality recognizes this mental connection of the present with the past through a process of correlation and aesthetic association. M. H. Abrams calls intertextuality a creative means used to signify the multiple ways in which a literary text is inescapably linked to other texts through allusions and citations. To be precise, intertextuality adds new meaning and aesthetic significance to a literary text through assimilation, transformation, absorption, and interconnectedness with other literary texts of the past. Peter V. Zima adds yet another feature to the dynamics of intertextuality by negotiating intertextuality and influence with intercultural exchange, with emphasis on the interplay of social factors. Intertextuality then becomes an indispensable segment of cultural discourse. On the basis of the above theoretical formulation, it would be profitable and proper to examine Daruwalla's poetry in terms of influence and intertextuality.

Modern Indian English poetry in the 1970s and 80s witnessed a markedly significant development beyond the periphery of individual self to the wider spectrum of national

culture, myth, history, environment, landscape, and many more ways of perceiving social reality. The contributions of Jayanta Mahapatra, Shiv K. Kumar, Arun Kolatkar, and K. N. Daruwalla bear brilliant testimony to this fact. A police officer by profession as he was, Daruwalla (1937-2024) was essentially a poet of 'lived reality', who tended to transcend the narrow domestic walls of parochialism and regionalism, romanticism and the 'maudlin mind' of sentimentality. A seasoned realist as he was, Daruwalla tended to showcase through his poetic representation the misery and suffering, disease and death, violence and contemporary harrowing circumstances in which the common Indians lived and faced riot-ridden situations. At the same time, like Nissim Ezekiel, Daruwalla brought to the fore the futility, artificialities, hypocrisy, and complexities of the decaying modern civilization, religion, and culture through the dichotomy between urban space and rural space, between the spiritually sterile wasteland of Banaras ("Octopus city") and an ideal world of purity and spirituality of Varanasi signified by the holy river Ganga. His poetic corpus ranges from the *Under Orion* (1976), *Apparition in April* (1971), *Crossing of Rivers* (1976), *Winter Poems* (1982) to *The Keeper of the Dead* (1982), *Landscape* (1987) and *A Summer of Tigers* (1996). Though researchers have thrown some light on his mythic imagination, philosophical bent of mind, love for landscape and landscape ecology, memory and desire, love and marital happiness, migration and dislocation, institutionalized corruption and decadence of culture with contemporary ethical awareness, no systematic study is discernible regarding the dynamics of intertextuality and anxiety of influence on Daruwalla and his literary creations. The present paper therefore tends to intertextually negotiate the select poems of Daruwalla with those of T.S. Eliot, Ted Hughes, Nissim Ezekiel, S.T. Coleridge, William Blake, and the Indian epics and Puranas. The onus lies in not merely juxtaposing the poems or poets but more predominantly in showcasing Daruwalla's engaging interest in negotiating poetry with myth, religion, and rituals with a contemporary twist and modern orientation.

Though Daruwalla professed the Parsi religion and completed his MA in English from Punjab University, he was a voracious reader, and his Indian sensibility was sharpened by Indian philosophy, mythology, Vedic and Puranic texts, and classical Sanskrit traditions. Obviously, then, while negotiating intertextuality and literature, one has to identify and locate various Indian as well as Western texts, myths, philosophies, history, culture, and even contemporary events in Daruwalla's literary corpus. There is no denying the fact that, in his poetry, one finds a confluence of Indian and Western cultures—from the Parijat tree, pilgrimage to Badrinath, and boat ride along the Ganga to the river silt, fire hymn, Percy Hall II, the man of the sea, the hawk, and the death of a bird. There are copious allusions to Indian myths, customs, and rituals in his poetry, and these allusions not only manifest his Indian sensibility but also more predominantly carry the modern readers forward to intertextually negotiate with their ancient past and cultural heritage of India. Needless to say, myth and philosophy, religion and rituals play a powerful role in enriching Daruwalla's dynamics of intertextuality. For instance, references to Gayatri Mantra, Dasaswamed Ghat, Vrindaban, Pancha Tirtha, Yogashan, Panda, Ashram, Varanasi, Ganga Ghat, Percy Till, and Fire Hymn arouse the cultural consciousness of the Indians and prompt them to engage

in intertextual negotiation. An intertextual negotiation of a few poems of Daruwalla will suffice in this regard.

In his *Apparatization in April*(1971), Daruwalla applies his intertextual dynamics through the mythical projection of geographical landscapes, the Lokayat philosophy of a, and allusions to Karna, Kunti, and Yudhishthira, three important characters from the *Mahabharata*. In the poem, readers locate a dichotomy between materialistic pleasure and righteousness (dharma), represented by the materialistic philosopher Carvak and the king of Indraprastha, Yudhishthira, respectively. The victory of Yudhishthira (good) over Duryodhana (evil) in the battle of the Mahabharata is vividly presented through the negotiation of myth and intertextual dynamics. Whereas the victorious Yudhishthira receives acclamation from all quarters, the angry and defeated Carvak curses him and throws hot ashes on his face. The intertextual negotiation between Daruwala's poem and the grand epic, The *Mahabharata*, offers both ethical and aesthetic delight to the modern reader through its visual descriptive appeal:

“He stands rooted, a father figure, his arm aloft,  
holding a tribesman's curse. Before he brings it down,  
hot ashes on the victor's face” (*Carvak*).

The curse on Yudhishthira, followed by the latter's desire to commit suicide, culminates in Carvak's burning to death by violent Brahmins, which not only saves Yudhishthira but also puts an end to Lokayata philosophy. The story of unfortunate death is available in the *Shanti Parva* of the *Mahabharata*. While intertextually negotiating his poem with the story of the grand Indian epic, Daruwalla also deconstructs the myth by comparing his physical death and the death of Lokayata philosophy with the unjust and unkind killing of Karna by his brother Arjuna. It is the intertextual and mythic negotiation between the two texts that tends to add novelty and aesthetic grace to a discourse, which is further interlaced with the Kunti-Karna-Surya episode of the Mahabharata,( *Adiparva* 1.165-1.1047). Daruwala writes:

“As flesh and name are ushered to the flame, you wind up like Karna.”

In yet another poem from the volume *Apparitization in April*, the poet characterizes Karna as an ideal man and hero who stood by his friend Duryodhana even after knowing from Krishna his real birth story. In the *Adiparva* of the *Mahabharata*, it is stated that Karna, the great hero and the great giver, was born to Pandu's wife Kunti and the sun god and was abandoned by his mother in a basket in the river Ganges out of fear of society. Daruwala has capitalized the entire Karna episode in his poem “Karna” and reserves all sympathy for the unfortunate great warrior, giver, and human being who was ostracized by society. Marginalized as Suputra and Radheya, Karna was adopted by the fishermen, the charioteer of Hastinapura, Adhiratha, and his wife Radha. The entire poem bears true testimony to the influence of the grand Indian epic, and Daruwala's art of intertextual negotiation provides social, moral, and humanitarian lessons to modern readers:

“Radheya, you were dead before the falcon arrow found you.  
We can’t forget you in a hurry, Karna.”

There are a fairly large number of poems in which Daruwala inevitably warrants intertextual negotiation. For instance, the poem *Shiva at Trimanshan* demands an intertextual reading of poetry in relation to Hindu myth, philosophy, and religion connected with Shiva. The serenity and calm of peace and landscape obviously remind readers of the meditation-minded and peaceful nature of Shiva. In much the same way, Daruwala’s poems on wolf and hawk, snake and tiger can be intertextually correlated with Ted Hughes’s *Hawk Roosting*, William Blake’s *The Tyger*, and D. H. Lawrence’s *Snake*. There is no denying the fact that in the poem *Hawk* he is under the profound influence of Ted Hughes, and intertextual negotiation reveals that both poets are interested in animal imagery and a telling contrast between the world of the hawk and the corrupt world of men. Daruwala’s *Hawk* epitomizes the spirit of protest against anarchy, lawlessness, regression and exploitation of the human world. The poet realistically presents the dual vision and his hawk, like Wordsworth’s Skylark and Keats’ Nightingale, ascends the ethereal world and also keeps watch on his chaotic anarchical world of corruption represented by the society. His Hawk envisages a democratic world of equality and justice bereft of discrimination. The modern readers do locate in Daruwala’s poem the repressed anger of the alienated modern man represented by the hawk. On the other hand, Ted Hughes’ poem *Hawk Roosting* is a monologue by the self-styled dictator of violence who sits at the top of the tree complacently closing its eyes. The physical prowess of its body and a dangerous propensity to control and terrorize the whole world characterizes the Hawk:

“My feet are locked upon the rough bark.  
It took the whole of creation.  
To produce my foot, my each feather  
Now I hold creation in my foot.” (*Hawk Roosting*)

Hughes’s Hawk is the apostle of terror and death, and no one can challenge his right:

“I kill where I please because it is all mine.  
There is no sophistry in my body.  
My manners are tearing off heads.  
The allotment of death.” (*Hawk Roosting*)

Unlike Daruwala’s ‘Hawk King’ and its art of hawking/preying with a swift movement riding and ascending wind from the sky, Ted Hughes’s Hawk does not envisage an ideal world nor does it permit any change in the static world of chaos, anarchy, and disorder. What it wants to control like a ferocious modern dictator is the valley of death:

“The sun is behind me.  
Nothing has changed since I began.  
My eye has permitted no change.

I am going to keep things like this.” (*Hawk Roosting*)

Needless to say, both Ted Hughes and Daruwalla present through animal imagery the world of chaos, confusion, and violence in the aftermath of the Second World War. But the juxtaposition of their two poems on hawk reveals that Hughes’ Hawk is a ruthless hunter and that Daruwalla humanizes the hawk embodying/emphasizing the double role of the hawk as a hunter and as a rebel against unjust socio- political order thereby championing the cause of equality. Daruwalla’s Hawk looks like an Indian angry young man unable to control his destructive passion and protest against unabated corruption, exploitation and extortion which have eaten into the vitals of Indian society. Like Keats’s *Nightingale*, it flies higher and higher in search of an ideal world of democracy bereft of corruption and exploitation, hypocrisy and chicanery. Daruwalla portrays with increasing humanisation the Hawk as an angry young Indian, rebelling against the harsh and unproductive earth:

“The land beneath him was filmed with salt: Grass- seed, insect, bird.  
Nothing could thrive here, but he was lost in the  
of his gyre, a frustrated parricide on the kill.” (*Hawk*)

Unlike Hughes, Daruwalla has growing sympathy for the non-living world of birds and animals and his poem tends to explore how pitiless human world domesticates Hawks for their consumption, which turns the Hawk’s natural hunting into a ritual of torture culminating in death. The Hawk’s natural predation is aptly contrasted with anthropocentric attitude of the human world that exercises ruthless cruelty on nature. The contrast between the wild Hawk signifying freedom and joy in natural landscape and the domesticated hawk trapped and blindfolded by the ruthlessness of the human world constitute the most interesting segment of Daruwalla’s poem which is absent in Ted Hughes’s *Hawk Roosting*. An intertextual negotiation through juxtaposition reveals this fundamental difference, which is evident from a slightly different title in Hughes’s poem, though Hawk remains the central metaphor in both the poems. In one, the hawk is portrayed as the epitome of violence, death and destruction, and in another, readers locate a passionate and rebellious hawk ready to overthrow the oppressive tyrant for wiping out the reign of violence, tyranny, and corruption-

“I will hover like a black prophecy. Weaving its moth soft cocoon of death.  
I shall drive down with the compulsive thrust of gravity trained for havoc, my  
eyes focussed on them like the sights of a gun.” (*Hawk*)

In the poem *Death of a Bird*, Daruwalla’s dynamics of intertextuality can be vindicated by juxtaposing his poem together with S. T. Coleridge’s romantic ballad *The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner*. In both the poems, readers locate unwanted onslaught on nature and innocence which disturbs nature’s balanced state of peace and beatitude. In both the poems, the killing of the albatross and the male monal bird invited nature’s rage and fury, leading to the suffering of the hunters. In Daruwalla’s poem, the hunter launches a hunting expedition along with his wife and in the forest killed the male monal when he was in passionate love with his female partner. The hunter did not take pity on the lovemaking monals and fired on

them, leaving the male monal dead. The hunter felt no regret for his heinous act, and the moaning sound of the female monal did not win the stony heart of the hunter who finally found the female bird dead in an' ash grey 'dawn. Daruwalla's eco consciousness is here coupled with his sympathy for true lovers-

“The realm of nature was badly disturbed  
With bird-bloods on our hands we walked, and as the sky broke into rags  
Of mist, why did our footsteps drag?” (*Death of a Bird*)

Similarly, Coleridge's ancient mariner killed the innocent albatross thereby inviting rage and fury of nature, which forced the mariner to sincerely repent for the crime. Daruwalla has taken insights from Coleridge's romantic ballad to enrich the romantic framework of his poem. Precisely speaking, in both the cases, man's onslaught on innocent creatures of nature has led to suffering and moral punishment. Interestingly, an Indian reader may feel prompted to correlate the death of monal couple with the epic poet Valmiki's first flowering of poetry, which centres round the innocent killing of the male crane by a hunter that subsequently led to the death of the female crane out of shock and separation. Valmiki, who was initially observing the love of the crane couple with immaculate joy was poignantly moved to tears at their unfortunate death and poetry oozes out in form of anger and curse:

“You will find no rest for the long years of eternity.  
For you killed a bird in love and unsuspecting.”

With his engaging interest in Indian mythology, philosophy, religion and classical literature, Daruwalla might not have overlooked Valmiki's above quoted powerful lines about love and onslaught on nature. Behind the poem “Death of a Bird”, the influence of Valmiki and Coleridge therefore stands incontrovertible.

One more instance of ‘influence’ and ‘intertextuality’ can be located through juxtaposition of Daruwalla's and DH Lawrence's poems on Snake. The former's poem *Snake* tends to explore the interaction between man and nature, which constitutes an important feature of ecocritical discourse. Daruwalla captures the ambivalence centering around the snake- an epitome of spirituality ( snake being worshipped as god in India mythology or religion) and a symbol of fear and death. In Lawrence's poem, the snake is increasingly humanized, as it visits the water-trough of the poet like a sophisticated guest with aristocratic vanity and upper class gesture, whereas the poet stands with a picture in his hand like a common man. After sipping water from the poet's water with full satisfaction, the snake flickered its forked tongue and majestically looks like a god thereby igniting the poet's anger and cruelty. The poet's moral conscience pricks him in that his behaviour towards the snake is unwanted and outrageous and that he killed humanity by hunting the happy and peaceful snake. Daruwalla is influenced by D.H. Lawrence's ambivalence between hospitality/humanity and cruelty towards an innocent snake symbolizing nature. Like Lawrence, Daruwalla shows dual attitude towards the snake. The human instinct/emotional

self-prompts him to love the snake, whereas the rational self reminds him that the snake is a symbol of poison, fear and evil and therefore deserves to be killed.

The intertextual trajectory takes a new turn in Daruwalla's poem *Tiger* that immediately reminds the readers of William Blake's *Tyger*. What is worth-noting about Daruwalla's poem is the note of negation. Blake presents the tiger as a paradoxical creation of God - now burning bright with illumination in the deep forest to dispel darkness and the next moment terrifies the human world by its fiery eyes and fearful symmetry:

"Tiger! Tiger! burning bright  
In the forests of the night  
What immortal hand or eye  
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?"

The various visual descriptions like 'burning bright', 'forests of the night', 'fearful symmetry', 'fire of thine eyes', 'what dread Hand', 'what dread feet', 'deadly terror', all signify the fact that Blake's Tiger is a miraculous and mysterious creature made by God with quasi-mystical significance. Throughout the poem, the poet has created an aura of mixed feeling, or what W.B. Yeats calls later in his poem *Easter 1916*-"a terrible beauty is born." In the aftermath of the French Revolution, the tiger seems to be like Shelley's 'Wild West Wind', a revolutionary figure of terror and fear. Blake is troubled with a pertinent question as to whether the same God created both lamb (symbol of innocence) and tiger signifying fear and destruction:

"When the stars threw down their spheres  
And water'd heaven with their tears,  
Did he smile His work to see?  
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?"(*Tiger*)

Through the intertextual negotiation between Blake's poem and Daruwalla's poem *Tiger*, it is observed that the Indian poet interrogates the miraculous power and quasi-mystical significance of Blake's Tiger. Blake's Tiger - the paradoxical possessor of both beauty and ferocity- is replaced by a helpless tiger defeated by the anthropocentric and utilitarian modern man. With the lens of an eco-critic, Daruwalla presents the helpless condition of the tiger population in the backdrop of deforestation and destruction of natural landscape:

"The tiger isn't burning bright  
Either in shadow or in sun.  
The Tiger family is thinning.  
Two by two and one by one." (*Tiger*)

While keeping in mind Blake's concept of the tiger as the embodiment of duality, 'beauty' and 'ferocity', Daruwalla has replaced Blake's art of romanticization and mystification, and prefers to demystify and demythologize tiger as a helpless subaltern. His tiger does not burn bright in the deep forest of the night, nor does it move freely and happily as there has

been massive deforestation besides hunting, poaching and shooting by the utilitarian man who produces medicine by grinding its bones to powder for the sake of profit. The Poet vehemently criticizes the modern man's attitude to nature and her creations. To him, the modern man possesses a sick soul, bereft of love, sympathy and kindness for the animal world. The tiger, often called 'Forest King' is now crushed to dust under the cruel clutches of the monstrous men:

"The tiger is not burning bright...  
In the forests of the night....  
Or in the wilderness of day  
We need to understand his plight." (*Tiger*)

Thus, an analysis of some selected poems of Keki N. Daruwalla in comparative perspective reveals the fundamental fact that influence and intertextual negotiation constitute a significant segment of Daruwalla's poetic imagination. What is equally important to note is that influence is not mere blind imitation, but a stepping stone to novelty and an altogether different type of representation/ recreation which vindicates Daruwalla's originality on the one hand, and his respect for the tradition and past cultural heritage encompassing India's vedic, puranic, classical mythology, philosophy, epic poetry, beliefs and rituals on the other. At the same time, it is further noteworthy to observe that Daruwalla's ingenious application of the dynamics of intertextuality not only facilitates negotiation between two texts written at two different points of time by two different writers, but also, more predominantly, vivifies, ennobles as well as transforms both the texts with new comparative insights and orientation thereby justifying literary discourse as a cultural discourse as well.

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# K.N. Daruwalla's Poetry: A Paradigm of post 70s India.

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The paper attempts to peep through the volumes of poetry and short stories left behind by K.N.Daruwalla, the celebrated poet of the IWE. A paradigm of post 70s India, its socio political and cultural dimensions that find a space in his stupendous works reflecting insights of life, Wit and realism is endeavoured to muse in the occasion of his bidding goodbye to the world recently. Some of the major themes and Indian idioms of everyday life of immediacy of experience are analysed through the lens of both primary and secondary sources. The methodology adopted is a combination of archival research, analysis of discourse, and critical evaluation. The discussion shows the craftsmanship of a poet of event poems or camera poems whose Poetry has been a voyage through terse realities of life as a policeman and hence, often it is full of incisive phrases, irony and satire, experiential imagery, rhetorical devices and skilfully condensed ideas. Thus, a firsthand personal observation and experience of corruption in public life, social vices, the period of emergency and political change over of 70s, lacuna of the system, impact of postcolonialism and postmodernism, identity crisis, the follies and foibles turn into a pen picture shifting it from personal to universal experience.

**Key Words:** History, Identity, Imagery, IWE, Myth, Themes, Poetry.

## **Introduction (Background):**

The night of 26 Sep 2024 was the last night in this world for the celebrated policeman turned poet, Keki.N. Daruwalla. 'The death of poet, writer and former IPS officer Keki N Daruwalla at 87 on 26 September has left writers of Indian English poetry saddened as he was an especially revered, kind and supportive mentor'(Bombaywala). The background speaks of the poet's career graph and making of the poet very briefly. Born in 1937 at Lahore, his family migrated from Pakistan due to partition and settled at Junagarh, Rajasthan, initially. He studied in Government College, Ludhiana. Having bagged a master's degree in English from the Punjab university, he joined the Indian Police Service in 1958 and retired

in 1995. He has left nine volumes of poetry; the very first one, *Under Orion* in 1970, he established himself as distinguished poet of the IWE. The fifth volume, *The Keeper of the Dead*, brought him the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1984 and the sixth, *Landscapes*, gave him world fame through the Commonwealth Poetry Prize for Asia in 1987.

His *Collected Poems 1970-2005* was published from Penguin India in 2006. As a recognised writer on international affairs and a reviewer of creative writing, he could spare time for three volumes of short stories, a novella, two collections of poetry for children and, a travelogue of a car-trekking *Riding the Himalayas* (2006) mapping the journey from the Siachen Glacier in Ladakh to the eastern Himalayas. He joined the Cabinet Secretariat in 1974 and subsequently, in 1979, he was appointed Special Assistant to the Prime Minister in 1979. In 1980, was part of the Commonwealth Observers' Group for the Zimbabwe elections. As a distinguished retired policeman, he was appointed as Chairman, Joint Intelligence Committee. As a Parsi Zoroastrian and migration to Hindustan certainly was an indelible experience to his memory what he has reflected in his varied themes in the volumes of poetry that are analysed in the discussion part endeavouring to make a fair assessment of the poet and his contribution to Indo Anglian poetry.

**Objectives of the Study:** Indian Writing in English is a genre that has gained momentum in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and Daruwalla occupies a place of prominence as a critic of life of his time. The primary purpose of the study is look through the vision of life and socio-political scenario of India. His treatment of imagery, witty expression, commentary on everyday life on street, offices and market places, Indian idiom, landscape, environment are reflected succinctly that assigns him so markedly distinct place as one of the major voices in Indo-Anglian poetry. The study also examines Daruwalla's stylistic pattern in novels that gives insights into his use of vocabulary, imagery and literary patterns.

**Methodology:** The methodology adopted is analytical and critical. The primary and secondary sources are gauged through critical lens. Discourse analysis and archival research methodology are followed in discerning the varied themes, imagery, terse phrases and poignant language out of his different volumes of poetry.

**Discussion:** The poet as 'a critic of his age' (Meet author) and the poet in making carries with him an experience of migration, peering eye of a policeman, literary sensibilities of Indian soil, a cameral mind sharpened in administrative and intelligence positions and a remarkable aesthetic elegance. His works present social realism of the period and chronologically, he has twelve volumes of poetry namely, *Under Orion* (1970), *Apparition in April* (1971), *Crossing of Rivers* (1976) *Winter Poems* (1980), *The Keeper of the Dead* (1982), *Landscapes* (1987), *A Summer of Tigers* (1995), *Night River* (2000), *Map Maker* (2002), *The Scarecrow and the Ghost* (2004) *Collected Poems 1970-2005* (2006), *The Glass blower: Selected Poems* (2008) and *Fire Alter* (2013). *Under Orion* (1970), *Apparitions in April* (1971) and *Winter poems* (1980) depicts Indian socio-political problems of corruption, hunger, death, human tragedy and he assumes the role of a moralist to put the real picture

uncensored to the people. *Crossing of Rivers* (1976) earned him praise as a mature poet of the height of poets like T.S. Elliot, who attempted to sprinkle fresh water to the degrading society that can bring fresh morality and vitality of a dynamic age. 'Hunger74' from the *Winter poems* (1980) depicts the human suffering out of paucity more realistically as he wished to be very true to his calling as a man of the milieu for, he admits: 'my poetry is earthy and I wish to consciously keep it that way' (Meet author).

Indian paradigm as put forward in his earlier collections of 70s and that brought him national and international fame reflects the issues of everyday life on streets and markets that go unnoticed by us yet they nag us constantly without any remedy. Hence, some the major themes what he loved to draw our attention to are discussed under the critical lens beginning with the problem of migration as the poet himself is a migrant from Lahore in his growing age and certainly the scourge of partition is natural for him to hum about. The poem 'Migration' that came as a curse of migration shows the physical, psychological, economic and emotional losses of a vast majority as he writes: Migration is always difficult:/Ask the year 1947. /Ask the chronicles themselves...

Plague and drought are compared to the persecution of Partition while drawing our attention to the wounds of migration though the history of human civilisation is the history of migration yet, the occurrence of it on compelling circumstances can be a scar that cannot be erased ever. The most painful thing is that one has to bury his/her past memory as the very identity is bartered away and we struggle within our own soul for the lost- self that is akin to diasporic situation and we still smile and cheer keeping the scar covered.

The identity crisis of the migrants has been a new struggle within the own country and we could see it through in our day-to-day life in present time too as we, in search of livelihood or convenience, keep migrating to different states each with new language, dialects and cultural variations. For migrants of the East and the West Pakistan are but Indians yet, they are perhaps still struggling for one or the other reasons, one such is postcolonial schism. The quest for identity has been a major theme in entire commonwealth nations and literature but one that specially resonates in the Indian context is its plurality of languages, cultures, traditions and so forth and writers like Daruwalla have sought to address it frankly as he held that life must find expression in creative work:

...A work of art must hit you in the gut...  
Your words will mirror life  
have no worries on that score  
for truth and beauty,  
are embedded, sir, in life ("Dialogues with a Third Voice," *Under Orion*).

It is a fact that the best literatures or artistic productions take into account the need of human life and it not only delights, but also upholds the values and solves the immediate problem and contextually, it is corroborated in the comments of Christopher Hampton:

Poetry does not exist in a vacuum. Its utterance is determined by the language and the sensibility of each poet, which in turn is rooted in the language of his community and the conditions which define the life of that community. Poetry, in other words, is as deeply involved in the structure of the world it is part of as the individual poet. To deny this ... is to abdicate responsibility, to evacuate one's position as a member of society and to advocate self-interest as the principle governing one's rights and attitudes. But the poet can no more afford to ignore the implications or those "interests and causes . . . outside oneself" than he can the imperative issues they raise about the nature of his place in his world, without in some fundamental way diminishing his power to speak as a witness for his world and its needs. He cannot afford, that is, to turn his back upon conditions that define his own roots (Qtd. Prasad).

Thorn and stubble were the stuff for the poet to steer through as the time of seventy's India is also a period of emergency and hence, in that period poetry for him was not beautiful flowers rather, something that strikes the consciousness. Political disturbances in the period may well be recalled following the 'emergency' of '75. Roychowdhury recalls: "The goal of the 21-month-long Emergency in the country was to control 'internal disturbance', for which the constitutional rights were suspended and freedom of speech and the press withdrawn" and Jhumur in her paper echoes the same: "Of course Mrs. Gandhi did not choose a democratic or ethical way out following the court mandate and the increasing opposition pressure. Mrs. Gandhi justified the imposition of Emergency on three grounds. Firstly, India's stability, integrity, security and democracy were endangered following the disruptive character of the JP movement". Darualla himself accepted the disturbing effect of emergency in clear terms in conversation with Urna: "My poetry moved with "history", sounds pompous, I know. But we moved towards a draconian state, Mrs. G's Emergency, and *Winter Poems*, came out. I had moved to Delhi, and my brother Jal died. All that comes out in what you write, drips in". *Winter Poems* resonates with the poet's inner anguish in a bleak landscape of social and political corruption, death and distortions, draught and devastation. Winter symbolises decay; an arid, dry climate with scanty sunshine which shrinks and freezes. He was deeply pained for the misuse of state power to curtail freedom of press what he calls a dark rumination on a dark decade. Here, the poem, "The Angelic Orders" posted in Instagram may well be recalled for the scenario of geo- political situation of our country.

Heaven's Intelligence Officer (seconded from the IB) reports to God  
activities of the Rebel Archangel...

We need to pat ourselves and raise a drink  
To friends—rhinos are thriving, Indians call them genda,  
Hyenas are doing well, strength lies in numbers.  
Indian broke in, Sir how about agenda?  
Simple, said Archangel, we're not fussy.  
We just want an end to democracy.

Daruwalla, upheld the socio- political and cultural reality of the period who stands in the same category of the authors like, Wole Soyinka, Pablo Neruda, Achebe, Octavio Paz or V.S. Naipaul. All of these writers represented their time with bold voice and unwavering faith and hope for a better future for the world at large in as much as their works transcend the narrow geographic boundaries. His background as a top cop and foreign trips on government duties provided him ample food for thought and reflection what finds place in his unsparing phrases and words as words are the power to bring transformation. His tone is controlled yet satirical and words unbiased, sparing none from his critical gaze whatever deformity and distortions came his way. Daruwalla's poetry is not to shy away from reality; rather, it is a tool for socio-political-cultural change, an aesthetics that regenerates and recreates the society. It is for upholding human dignity, bettering our earth and a justful ambience for one and all.

Poetry as genre of literature, is aligned entirely with the world of happenings and reality. It is a structure that heightens our sense and sensibilities as to the world we inhabit and the world that makes for life. The poet's method of perception and exploration of the world in general and India in particular was his use of razor-sharp expression and acute observation of themes in a language that translates consciousness into speech for his concept of creative writing is: "There is no code at the heart of the play or the novel, a code crying out to be broken. The poem or the play is itself the code. The form is the meaning. The articulation and the manner of the articulation are a part of the contents, inseparable, conjoined" (Daruwalla). The codes are woven fine in his themes succinctly. The rich tapestry of themes expresses the complexities of Indian society, its economic and political scenario, customs, traditions and history. The paper delves now into certain prominent themes that that makes him special in the category of IWE.

The major themes are permeated with Indianness and Indian sensibilities with a language rooted to Indian flora and fauna. His oft-quoted poems like, 'The Ghaghra in Spate', 'Crossing of Rivers' 'Vignette Poems', 'Collages', select poems from the *Winter Poems* (1980) and so forth are rooted to the soil. Memory and the bygone eras occur recurrently as the experiences of the past is indelible upon him what he makes use of in shaping his creative works for the present. The major themes as written by Nahata follows: "From history and memory to identity and belonging, nature and the environment to power and injustice, Daruwalla's poetry and prose offer profound insights into the human condition, inviting readers to confront uncomfortable truths about the world we inhabit and imagine alternative futures". 'The Landour Cookbook' and 'Poona Traffic', Daruwalla employs historical references and personal memories that lets one look back at the past as moments of flashback.

The imagery is vivid and language is everyday tongue yet, charged with poetic sensibilities that transports one to different periods of time with nostalgic feelings. Historical perspectives are a way of critiquing on contemporary life and politics inviting one to witness the history in making and its effect and a comparison with the present, thus, shaping one's

fresh outlook on life and identity. 'Crossing the Border' and 'The Rusted Hand Grenade' highlight the issues of partition of 1947, impact of colonial oppressions, postcolonial schism and indiscriminate violence. Daruwalla, a migrant himself, interrogates the rationale of such historical events that left an indelible scar on the people's psyche and it is carried through generations as the migrated people suffer so much in life, right from an identity crisis to livelihood! 'A Summer Tale' and 'A Hindu Wife in Kabul,' are diasporic experience that moves beyond the national identity and it stimulates the readers for a search of universal acceptance against any discrimination in a global community today and it reminds Tagore's vision of the same more than a century back: "Where the world has not been broken up into fragments/By narrow domestic walls..."

Postmodernism and postcolonialism and their offshoots already spread in the literary world during seventies era and Daruwalla too was inspired by the basic tenets of anti-essentialism, anti-foundationalism and anti-realism in questioning certain validity of myth and beliefs prevalent in our traditions through the volumes of poetry of the period. For example, 'Crossing of Rivers' with the central metaphor as the sacred river, the Ganga the poet portrays it as sacred as well as its ugly sights. The river bears the sign of life and death, of birth and rebirth yet all around dirt and corruptions as people earn their livelihood on the dead. 'Boat-Ride Along the Ganga', the ghats and surroundings are shown as to their pitiable and moribund state with dirt, disease and pollution. Hindu rituals like pindadan, yoga and asana and gayatri mantra find reference as the terms of the tradition as it is. Varanasi is pictured in another poem that is reduced to corruption now. He prefers to show things the way they are against an exaggerated golden tomorrow and the mythic dimension is to show things through deconstruction. Temple priests are not immune to his critical observation as 'Shiva at Lodheshwar' (Under Orion) depicts the greedy and hypocritic priests:

every hour the gates are closed  
the litter on the floor is swept  
into sacks and taken to the Mahant  
who lies petrified, the legs stricken  
watching the sacks unstitched  
the currency notes sorted from the pulp  
of flowers, sandal and oblatinal food.

Along the vast landscape and its social-economic-political life Nature and the environment were an important subject reflecting the poet's concern for the Nature and its preservation. The beauty of Nature is contrasted with its decay due to human intervention and pollution. 'Hawk' is symbolic and ironical with images and condensed phrases of exploitation society and its system. Hawk's preying is cruel, but it is crueller to be preyed and caged by people as the natural right of the hawk is violated. 'Wolf' is the blend of myth and reality in which metaphorically, Daruwalla speaks of his journey of life from innocence to experience. The poem refreshes his nostalgia as he slept with such stories but his daughter in modern times disbelieved. Daruwalla's poetry also reminds the environmental degradation and the need

to preserve it as ‘The Sea at Dauphin Island’ and ‘The Oldest Lemur,’ open our eyes to the loss of ecological balance because of pollution, deforestation and climate change affecting the natural world and human lives. Here, the poet as a moralist puts forth an ethical question about the justification of irrational human intervention into environment that affect one and all and we leave a polluted world to the posterity. Kashi and Varanasi, the temple of Badrinath, the holy city Haridwar, landscape of the north India and the Ghats of Ganga are some of the prominent locales featuring hills, rivers, people, traditions, customs, valleys, plains, plants and trees, all are cloaked into the crude reality of the time and an appeal for change through the poetic craftsmanship.

In a rapid changing society corruption of all sorts permeated Indian life what is witnessed by the poet as policeman and the same is laid bare for ushering in change. Oil, tablets meat, fish, food items- all can be adulterated and sold for money. A bastard can be legalised by bribing the priest. Big players of money lure police officers into corruption for gaining advantages and favours. Even Daruwalla is (Winter Poems) offered to see a blue film. Prasad mentions: “What is lamentable is that ‘decent chaps too are corrupt,’ and corruption is likely to reach a new height in India. Daruwalla comes up with a satirical hypothesis: If we had plague/ Camus -style/ and doctors searched for the virus /there would be black-market in rats. Daruwalla is deeply moved by the gigantic proportion of corruption in India. The monologue of a bandit discloses the callousness of police officials in curbing the obnoxious plans of criminals and bandits, rather, there is a nexus between them.

Daruwalla’s poetry, replete with irony and satire, vices and corruption, paradoxes and ironies projecting his philosophy of life is also filled with a recurrent theme of death as a centre of his consciousness and as a policeman he witnessed so much of violence and death that shook his conscience to delve into it through poetry for ‘poetry is where his voice finds its most profound expression’ (Mallik). His poems are a blend of personal philosophy and historical insight, often expressed through the themes of identity, belonging, corruption, exile, violence and death. His violence-ridden consciousness, perhaps that crept in his mind in the boyhood during partition of 1947 followed by mass killing and mass exodus and subsequently firsthand experience of it as an IPS officer. He also possessed a great love and sympathy for the natural world and its creatures that is epitomized in ‘Crane’, appealing for it ‘a vale of compassion/ where none is harmed’ and it also sums up his view of humanity as to find meaning in apparently meaningless world amid all chaos and disorder. His obsession with death finds mention in ‘Ruminations—I,’ *Under Orio*: I can smell violence in the air/ Death I am looking/ for that bald bone-head of yours! At the fag end of life when the poet is beset with ailments of old age, he shared four new sonnets with ‘The punch magazine’ in 2021, along with a short note: ‘Writing is a life by itself, with the ages thrown in’:

Does it even matter? /I can’t walk away! /Once upon a time, /my bravery gave me glory-

now I curse my mortal folly. /The moors tremble beneath my feet/as if destiny  
herself sees the tragedy in me-/with each step, /She whispers cruelly, /of the fate I  
cannot escape (Old age).

Of late, the grip of fate engulfed the poet in Sep 2024. Daruwalla's death drew reverences from pan India. His passing away is a permanent loss for the community of writers who drew his inspiration and encouragement.

### Conclusion:

Daruwalla's broad range of subjects included myths to modern classics and colonialism-postcolonialism to contemporary social- political-economic dimensions with a keen awareness of people and places. In his prolific career his verse of home truths smeared with razor sharp wit, irony, satire, conspicuous imagery, coinage, Indian idiom sprinkled upon social sensibility, socio-political corruption, violence, death, myth and human suffering were highly incisive, penetrating and true to life. His Indian reality was grounded in the firsthand experience as a top cop and intelligence officer of the country and as a master craftsman, his camera poems were intended to expose all hypocrisies, vices, identity crisis, false beliefs, social evils, conflicts, follies and foibles. The honest and critical gauze exposed corrupt government officials, doctors, policemen, politicians, priests, people, nurses, rituals and so forth. The poet as a humanist and reformer endeavoured to demonstrate his poetic acumen depicting the grim reality and undiluted truth of Indian society prevalent in seventy's decade and its continuity in subsequent decades, thus, sharing his poetic approach with the noted modern poets like Jayanta Mahapatra, Nissim Ezekiel and A K Ramanujan of IWE. The stalwarts of literary circles, academics, scholars and the common people recall Daruwalla's presence of mind, quintessence of Indian sense and sensibility, immediacy of language, wit, warmth of relations, support as mentor, power of magic with words in prose and poetry, weaving the past and present with the dust and drift of history and myth so succinctly that one is transported at once from local to universal and from the time present to perennial. Thus, Daruwalla has etched a lasting place as one of the major voices in Indo-Anglian poetry. ■

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# The Poetic Oeuvre of Keki N. Daruwalla

Chittaranjan Misra

Daruwalla combines forensic observation with poetic vision. He examines objects exploring their traces while choosing them for their metaphoric purport. From the beginning Daruwalla has used metaphors and images of violence choosing backdrops of death and atrocities. As a major Indian English poet of the country, he has contributed to the emerging style and texture of Indian English Poetry. His unique appeal comes from the themes of death and disaster laced with images of violence. The major reason behind this is ascribed to his experience of being in the Indian Police Service and bureaucracy. The paper tries to locate and highlights such images and their contexts taking into account his overall poetic output and biography.

**Key Words:** Daruwalla, Indian English Poetry, Police, Migration, Demonstration, bureaucracy, Riot, State Apparatus

Keki N. Daruwalla (1937 – 2024) is one of the seminal poets who have shaped and enriched the new field of literature referred to as ‘Indian English Poetry’ today. Their predecessors like Sri Aurobindo (1872 – 1950), Rabindranath Tagore (1861 – 1941) and Sarojini Naidu (1879 – 1949) who wrote poetry in English before the independence of the country had followed the style and structure of British romantic poetry in highlighting spiritual and universal human values. Poets like Daruwalla guard against reiterating romantic and metaphysical mode in highlighting contemporary reality and exploring immediate socio-cultural contexts and history. The new poets of the early independence period tried to articulate their individual voices in a postcolonial space. Daruwalla belongs to the group of these poets that included Jayanta Mahapatra, Nissim Ezekiel, A.K. Ramanujan, Kamala Das, Gieve Patel, A.K. Mehrotra and R. Parthasarathy. In the introduction to Nissim Ezekiel’s *Collected Poems* John Thieme refers to the widely known version of the making of ‘Indian verse’ in the second half of twentieth century:

“Nissim Ezekiel was at the center of the group of poets who inaugurated the modernist revolution in Indian poetry in English. “He adds: “when Ezekiel returned to India in 1952, from London where he had lived since 1948, he brought with him a poetics that challenged the lyrical Romanticism of preceding generation of Indian poets; and along

with like-minded contemporaries such as P. Lal, R. Parthasarathy, and Keki Daruwalla, he replaced a tendency towards mystical obscurantism, of which Sri Aurobindo is seen to have been particularly representative, with an insistence on precision of expression and a sceptical rationalism that advocated a break with the past.” (Ezekiel 2005:xix)

Daruwalla’s poems have been published in collections like *Under Orion* (1971), *Winter Poems* (1980), *The Keeper of the Dead* (1982), *Crossing of Rivers* (1985), *Landscapes* (1987), *A Summer of Tigers* (1996), *The Map-maker* (2002) and *Collected Poems* (2006). Apart from poetry he has published two books of his fiction.

A brief note on his biography seems to be relevant here as the varied experience he has gathered in life unlocks the key to understanding the distinct tone and imagery of his poems:

“Keki Nasserwanji Daruwalla was born in Lahore to a Parsi family on 24 January 1937. Before the Partition of India, his family left undivided India in 1945 and moved to Junagarh and then to Rampur in India. As a result, he grew up studying in various schools and in various languages.

He obtained his master’s degree in English Literature from Government College, Ludhiana, University of Punjab spent a year at Oxford as a Queen Elizabeth House Fellow in 1980–81.

He joined the Police Service in 1958. Working as a police officer offered him various opportunities to work in different parts of the country. He witnessed the harsh realities of life from which he drew the substance for his literary pursuits. appointed in the Uttar Pradesh cadre of the Indian Police Service (IPS).

Subsequently, he resigned from the IPS to join the Research and Analysis Service (RAS), the internal cadre of R&AW. Within R&AW he rose to the rank of Special Secretary. He retired as chairman, JIC in 1995. . He won Sahitya Akademi Award in 1984, and in 1987, bagged the Commonwealth Poetry Prize (Asia Region), and was awarded Padmasri in 2014.” (Web) He died at a Delhi hospital a couple of months ago at the age of 87 on 26 September 2024.

The fact that he was in Indian Police Service and later in Research Analysis Wing (R&AW) the foreign intelligence agency of India made him trained in tackling violent mob, political protest, combating terrorism and safeguarding the country’s strategic interest and security. Moreover, the experience he had earned through challenges on the professional front helped him enrich his poetry constructing imagery related to violence and brutalities. One may think of war poets in this context who have dealt with issues of death, courage, nationality and love aesthetically fusing the real experience of war in their poetry. Wilfred Owen depicted the horrors of war while serving in the British Army during World War I and Isaac Rosenberg, another English poet wrote about trenches.

Daruwalla's poems like 'Curfew'—'In a Riot-Torn City', 'Poems from the Tarai'(Under Orion), 'Routine'(Apparition in April), 'Curfew 2', and 'Walking to the Center'(Winter Poems) are some examples where the poet seems to have fused real life experience . "He brings alive the worlds of riot and curfew, sirens, warrants, men nabbed at night, lathi blows on cowering bodies, 'the starch on your khaki back', soda bottles and acid bulbs waiting on the rooftops, press communiques."(Sarang 21)

Daruwalla combines forensic observation with poetic vision. He examines objects exploring their traces while choosing them for their metaphoric purport. The poem 'Routine' presents a scene of police mob encounter which is performed according to police procedure. The repetitive pattern of operation does not allow any space for emotional reaction. The colonial uniform of the force during British period incompatible to Indian hot climate keep them apart and distanced from the civilians of their own country. Balachandran says: "On rare occasions, the poet clashes with the policeman and professional angst sets in. Routine, a 1971 poem, describes the scene of police firing and concludes: "Depressed and weary we march back to the lines." Balachandran connects the spirit of the poem with a later poem of Daruwalla: "Five decades later, in Swamy and Friends, describing the tragic death of Father Stan Swamy in prison, he writes: "If you had no mai-baap, you were left to fate; no bail, more jail". (Balachandran 2004

Daruwalla in Swami and Friends reiterates the same theme of police apathy that continues in India even though the country has been independent for decades:

Nothing will happen, those who wrote lies  
in charge sheets, those who denied him bail,  
those who were heartless in jail  
and didn't let him have a straw to drink  
they just let him sink.

On his death bed, let it be noted  
they'll all be promoted.  
(Liveware, April 26, 2023)

In this poem he speaks about the tribal people uprooted from their culture and lost in a maze of religious and political representations. Ultimately the use of guns, secessionist ideas and repressive measures confound them as regards their rights. The poem boldly refers to prominent political figures and succession of prime ministers of the country. While the issues of their rights are foregrounded by activists, Stan Swami, a leading activist is arrested for his links with terrorists. The poet does not say whether the arrest was politically motivated. He is more concerned about the 'heartless' and apathetic people who manage and control prisons and prisoners. The bureaucratic system has its own momentum despite the baton of power changing hands.

The poet is acutely aware of the indifference a system or mechanism perpetuates itself. Even while talking about stars, moon and planets in the poem 'Notes from the Underground' he feels as if there was an 'astral bureaucracy' operative:

but often the stars  
go about their office routine  
in the night sky  
like glum bureaucrats  
this astral bureaucracy  
is even more baffling in its ways  
than our central ministries.  
In auto mode Rahu gets into the act;  
So does the moon debris that swirls  
around Saturn and forms its rings.  
Then what has to happen, happens.  
That's what happened to you. (Web)

It is interesting to observe how prison metaphor extends to deeper perception. In the poem 'Bars' :

If you want to feel  
hemmed in, you'll be hemmed in.  
Look for scars  
you'll be full of scars.  
Even light can turn  
into a cage.  
The cage of light  
has seven bars. (Web)

The feeling of being boxed in or hemmed in is symbolic of the fear a victim of a totalitarian regime harbours. It is the police who hem someone in as a matter of routine whenever a demonstration or violence takes place. When state apparatus seeks to completely control the thoughts and actions of the people such situation arises. The poem seems to convey the threat to human freedom and apprehension of confinement not only in real terms but as a mental state, a sense of distress.

From the beginning Daruwalla has used metaphors and images of violence choosing backdrops of death and atrocities. Lines from the poem 'Ruminations' included in the collection "Under Orion" can be cited as a corroboration: "I can smell violence in the air / like the lash of coming rain / mass hatreds drifting grey across the moon / It hovers brooding, poised like a cobra / as I go prodding ratholes and sounding caverns / looking for a fang that darts, / a hood that sways and eyes that squirt a reptile hate." (Mani 2024)

With reference to another poem in the same collection, 'Death by Burial', he "used farce to depict the madness of communal riots. The hapless, cornered man at the heart of the

poem contemplates a cruel choice: ‘death by fire’ (Hindu funerary rites) or ‘death by burial’ (Muslim funerary rites). His 1971 collection *Apparition in April* featured the haunting, much-cited ‘Routine’ where Daruwalla condemns state and police complicity within the context of Hindu-Muslim violence. “It is well rehearsed: I alone / point my barrel into them as I squeeze the trigger / The rest aim into the sun!” The ‘well-rehearsed’ role played by the narrator’s colleagues thus allows the perpetrators a free hand.

As the years of police service piled on, Daruwalla’s verse became even more withering in its assessment of Indian society and politics. The trifecta of corrupt politicians, opportunistic elites and craven-obedient policemen started featuring more prominently.”(Mani 2024)

In the poem ‘Jottings’ included in his collection “Winter Poems” he refers to the cruel ways the administration employs in managing a famine-stricken area:

“Cables are flashed from the outposts / ‘Food riots! Send Rice Specials at once!’ / From the capital word bounces back / ‘Silo owners have gone off for the night. / Dispatching armed police instead.’” (Winter Poems)

Daruwalla has written poems on the miserable plight of people during famine and pestilence. His *Al-Azhar Lecture* is a poem on pandemic. He refers to the plague of 1350 that travelled from China to Europe. While people died in large numbers the Sultan of Egypt became richer. Even though people die he speculates about the possibility of the inflow of non-Muslim people unaffected by plague. The Treasurer feels that the amount of tax levied on non-Muslims will bring more money to the state treasury. The poet asks:

“Can we blame the State Treasurer  
If, as he prayed, he asked Allah  
for more plagues and more unbelievers?” (Web)

The inhuman side of state machinery has always been put to question by Daruwalla that find ironical expression in different contexts ranging from past civilizations to present times. In ‘The Poseidonians’ he takes the readers back in time and speaks about the way the Poseidonians of Greek origin were barbarized by Rome. Despite the loss of ‘Agora’ and ‘Acropolis’, despite the loss of their language they observe one Greek festival to remember their ancestors and lament aloud. Similarly, there is a travel into history in ‘Migrations’ written against the backdrop of partition. Back-trekking to Sargoda or Jhelum after 1947 people find their own houses occupied by strangers. The line “Mother used to ask; don’t you remember my mother?” suggests the intensity of emotion digging into memories buried in the frozen past. Mother reminds of motherland. The poem emphasizes how always difficult migrations are compelled by drought, plague, war and riot.

Images of birds and animals are used in Daruwalla’s poems as signifiers of violence. Hawk, wolf, fish, bees are constructed as instruments of assault and combat. In ‘Fish’ the scales of the fish seem to be a kind of armor and its curved snout looks like a scimitar snout. In

‘Suddenly the Tree’ the bees rise like a swarm of passions from the waxed remains which gives an impression of “a drone of straining engines”.

In ‘Wolf’ the sulphury bodied wolf with its black snout and extended paws metaphorically enters into the poet’s consciousness. It reminds one of Ted Hughes’ poem The Thought Fox.

Goutam Karmakar in ‘The Poetic Cosmos and Craftsmanship of a Bureaucrat Turned Poet: An Interview with Keki N. Daruwalla enquires about the poem “Hawk,” Daruwalla replied that the poem”critics think is derived from Ted Hughes’ poem. I read Ted’s “Hawk” after I had written mine. My poem goes into politics, modern day politics in the end. There is a background to it as well, autobiographical. In the end the hawk becomes a metaphor, a proxy for state power. Another point is being made here; human cruelty is worse than what predators in the wilds inflict on their victims. It is the same point I am making in “Wolf” – the slaughter of wolves, and gun barrels now hedging my daughter’s dreams. “My mother said/his ears stand up/at the fall of dew/ he can sense a shadow/move across a hedge/on a dark night;/he can sniff out/your approaching dreams;/there is nothing/that won’t be lit up/by the dark torch of his eyes. /The wolves have been slaughtered now. /A hedge of smoking gun- barrels/rings my daughter’s dreams.”(Karmakar 2017:255)

In Daruwalla’s poetry the poet emerges from the policeman transcending the barriers of the occupation. His exposure to extreme situations during his career as a police officer and a bureaucrat has enriched his poetry. His understanding of the predatory human instincts and ways of taming them find apt expression through all his anthologies. He will be remembered for the unique ways he has portrayed human suffering. ■

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Dr. Chhittaranjan Misra with noted Indian English Poet Keki N. Daruwalla in a literary festival at Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

# Navigating the Tensions of Tradition and Modernity: A Reading of Keki N. Daruwalla's *Keeper of the Dead*

Chittaranjan Bhoi

Keki N. Daruwalla, one of the celebrated names in contemporary Indian poetry who has left an indelible mark on the literary landscape with his distinct voice and profound engagement with both the historical and the personal. Daruwalla has been celebrated for his ability to weave together intricate layers of meaning, drawing on his deep understanding of Indian culture, history, politics, and human nature. His poetry is characterized by a striking blend of formality and informality, intensity and restraint, clarity and ambiguity. This article explores the complexities of human life and psychological turmoil of displaced millions during partisan. It further examines Keki N. Daruwalla's *Keeper of the Dead* as a reflection of the tensions between tradition and modernity in postcolonial India. The poem, through its vivid imagery and complex themes, explores the clash between ancient cultural practices and the challenges posed by contemporary realities. The protagonist's journey into the past, symbolized by his encounter with the dead, serves as a metaphor for India's struggle to reconcile its rich historical legacy with the rapidly evolving demands of the modern world. The study highlights how Daruwalla uses the motif of death and the symbolic "keeper" to explore the cultural identity, where the old and the new coexist uneasily. By analyzing the poem's structure, language, and thematic concerns, the article argues that *Keeper of the Dead* encapsulates the existential dilemmas faced by individuals caught between the pull of tradition and the forces of modern change.

**Key Words:** complexities, ambiguity, partisan, displacement, undercurrent

## Introduction:

Keki N. Daruwalla was born on January 12, 1937, in Lahore, which at the time was part of British India. The partition of India in 1947 led to his family's migration to India, and they settled in Mumbai. Daruwalla's early life was marked by this dislocation, which was to become an important theme in his later work. As a child of the partition, his poetry often reflects the complexities of identity, displacement, and the scars of history.

Daruwalla's academic background played a significant role in shaping his literary sensibilities, and he began to develop a keen interest in poetry during his college years.

Though Daruwalla's professional life took him in different directions-he worked as a civil servant in the Indian Police Service (IPS)-he always maintained a deep connection to poetry. His career in the police service exposed him to the harsh realities of life in India, which would later inform his poetic sensibilities. His experiences with law enforcement and his exposure to the social-political challenges of post-independence India added a layer of complexity to his writing, contributing to his reputation as a poet deeply attuned to the undercurrents of his time.

### **Conflict and Displacement**

One of the most prominent themes in Keki N. Daruwalla's work is the theme of conflict, especially the psychological and emotional turmoil that comes with displacement. His personal experience of migration due to the Partition of India in 1947 provided him with a unique perspective on the trauma and identity crises caused by such events. Daruwalla's early poems grapple with the horrors of partition and the ways in which it irrevocably altered the lives of millions of people.

In his poem "The Migrant," Daruwalla captures the restlessness and uncertainty that accompanies the experience of exile. The migrant in this poem, a figure caught between two worlds, embodies a state of constant movement and displacement. The migrant's identity is fluid, not fixed, and the poem speaks to the loss of a stable sense of home and belonging. The sense of fragmentation and alienation that runs through the poem echoes the larger trauma of Partition, a defining moment in the collective history of India.

### **Human Nature and Violence**

Daruwalla's poetry is deeply engaged with the darker aspects of human nature. His experience in the Indian Police Service, particularly his tenure in the volatile regions of Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir, provided him with firsthand exposure to violence, cruelty, and the complexities of law and order. His poems often address the relationship between power and violence, and the ways in which individuals and societies cope with aggression and conflict.

In poems like "The Execution," Daruwalla contemplates the morality of violence and the notion of justice. He is not interested in presenting a black-and-white narrative but instead explores the nuances and contradictions inherent in human behavior. His poems frequently question the very nature of justice, examining how it can be both an instrument of order and an expression of cruelty. His poetic gaze does not flinch from the brutal realities of the world, but neither does it lose sight of the human frailty that underlies these actions.

### **Historical Consciousness**

Daruwalla's work is deeply embedded in the historical and cultural contexts of India. His poetry is often seen as a response to the post-colonial condition, where the legacies of British rule and the aftermath of Independence continue to shape the nation's consciousness. His poems are concerned with the weight of history, particularly the impact of colonialism, the Partition, and the subsequent development of the Indian nation-state.

The poem “The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier,” for example, draws attention to the sacrifices made by ordinary soldiers in India’s wars and the often-overlooked costs of nation-building. Daruwalla’s historical consciousness does not remain confined to India alone; he also engages with global issues and events. His poem “A Soldier’s Letter” explores the futility of war, echoing the disillusionment of soldiers caught in conflicts they neither started nor understand.

In works such as “The Portrait of a Lady,” Daruwalla reflects on the symbolic weight of history and the role that memory plays in shaping collective identity. The poem speaks to the ways in which the past continues to haunt the present, reminding us of the unresolved tensions that linger even in the most seemingly stable societies.

### **Nature and the Environment**

In addition to his engagement with human conflict and history, Daruwalla’s poetry is also notable for its vivid depictions of nature. His love for the natural world is evident in his exploration of landscapes, the physical world, and the human relationship to the environment. However, unlike poets who write about nature with idealism or romanticism, Daruwalla’s portrayal of nature is more often stark and contemplative, reflecting the larger human drama playing out against the backdrop of the earth.

In poems such as “The Bull,” Daruwalla captures the raw power of nature and the brutality of the animal world. The bull becomes a metaphor for human strength, but also for the violence that nature itself embodies. Nature in Daruwalla’s poetry is not merely a source of beauty; it is also a site of struggle, survival, and conflict. His keen observations of the natural world, combined with his philosophical and psychological insights, give his poems a layered and textured quality.

### **The Urban Landscape and Modernity**

Daruwalla’s poetry also engages with the modern, urban landscape, particularly the bustling, chaotic environments of contemporary India. In many of his poems, the city becomes a metaphor for modernity itself—full of contradictions, complexities, and tensions. The urban world, with its noise, its crowded streets, its shifting identities, and its sense of alienation, serves as a backdrop against which Daruwalla explores the nature of human existence.

In poems such as “The City,” he reflects on the anonymity of urban life and the ways in which individuals are often lost in the vast expanse of the city. The modern world, for Daruwalla, is a site of paradoxes: while it offers opportunities and progress, it also fosters alienation and despair. The urban setting, with its overwhelming scale and impersonal nature, becomes a metaphor for the disjointed and fragmented identities of modern individuals.

## **Daruwalla's Style and Poetic Technique**

One of the most striking features of Keki N. Daruwalla's poetry is his mastery of form and language. His poems are often marked by their precision and economy of expression. While his early work was more formal and structured, his later work shows a growing fluidity and experimentation with form. Daruwalla's ability to switch between traditional forms like the sonnet and more free-flowing, contemporary verse speaks to his versatility and his engagement with both the past and the present.

Daruwalla's language is direct, yet richly evocative. He uses vivid imagery, often drawn from his experience of India's diverse landscapes, cultures, and histories. His poems are never overly ornate or decorative; instead, they cut to the heart of the matter with sharp clarity. His choice of words is calculated, and each image he presents carries a weight of significance. The subtle use of symbolism and metaphor allows him to convey deep emotional and psychological truths without resorting to overt explanations.

His poetry is also marked by its careful attention to rhythm and sound. Daruwalla's command of meter, his use of enjambment, and his nuanced handling of pauses and breaks in the verse all contribute to the musical quality of his work. Even when addressing grave subjects, he manages to create a cadence that reflects the complexity and gravity of the themes he explores.

## **Daruwalla's Legacy and Contribution to Indian Poetry**

Keki N. Daruwalla is widely regarded as one of the most important poets writing in English in India today. His contribution to Indian poetry cannot be overstated, as he has played a crucial role in shaping the landscape of contemporary Indian literature. His work stands at the intersection of Indian and global literary traditions, drawing on both Western and Eastern modes of expression to create a unique voice.

His poems offer a deep exploration of the human condition, offering insights into the nature of suffering, identity, and the search for meaning in an ever-changing world. His engagement with history, politics, and culture gives his poetry a social relevance that resonates with readers in India and abroad.

Furthermore, Daruwalla's work is an important part of the ongoing conversation about the place of English in Indian literature. As a poet writing in English, he bridges the gap between the colonial past and the post-colonial present, drawing on English literary traditions while addressing the particularities of Indian experience. His work exemplifies the ways in which Indian poets have both embraced and subverted the English language, using it to articulate uniquely Indian stories, histories, and concerns. Keki N. Daruwalla's poetry is a testament to the power of language to capture the complexities of human existence.

## **Critical Analysis of "Keeper of the Dead"**

Keki N. Daruwalla's poem "*Keeper of the Dead*" is a profound exploration of the

themes of death, memory, and the transcendence of the human soul. As one of India's prominent poets writing in English, Daruwalla is known for his precise language, intricate imagery, and deep engagement with both personal and collective histories. In this poem, he delves into the grim yet inevitable reality of death, using vivid imagery and symbolism to reflect on its role in the human condition.

The title itself is laden with meaning. The "Keeper" suggests a figure of responsibility, authority, or care. In the context of the dead, the "keeper" could imply an entity who maintains the balance between the living and the dead, guarding or preserving the remains of those who have passed. This could be interpreted as a metaphor for memory, history, or even the spiritual forces that govern the transition from life to death.

In one sense, the "Keeper" may symbolize death itself or the personification of a guardian who ensures that the dead are treated with respect and dignity. Alternatively, it could point to the role of the poet, who is often seen as a keeper of stories, histories, and legacies, thus preserving the memories of the deceased.

The central theme of *"Keeper of the Dead"* is the inevitability and omnipresence of death. Daruwalla does not romanticize death, but instead confronts it directly. The poem's stark tone suggests a recognition that death is a constant, and perhaps even an indifferent, force in the natural world. Death, in Daruwalla's treatment, is not just a physical cessation but a powerful force that shapes human existence, memory, and cultural practices.

The "keeper" in the poem could represent the idea of a caretaker who must ensure that death's power remains unchallenged, constantly maintaining the boundary between life and death. In this sense, Daruwalla raises questions about how human beings cope with death, and whether we, as a society, allow ourselves to reckon with it fully, or whether we merely consign it to rituals and abstract conceptions.

Daruwalla's imagery in the poem is stark and concrete, which heightens the emotional impact of the subject matter. The "keeper" of the dead could symbolize someone who is tasked with overseeing the physical remnants of those who have passed on, yet the poem also evokes a more philosophical reflection on what it means to keep the dead in the memory, in the culture, and in the psyche. Additionally, the imagery of "keeping" the dead could also point to the tension between life and death. The act of keeping may suggest a deliberate attempt to hold on to something that is ultimately uncontrollable. The keeper may be someone or something trying to preserve a fleeting moment of life, yet aware that such preservation is an illusion.

A deeper existential current runs through the poem. Daruwalla touches upon the human desire to make meaning in a world that will ultimately forget us. The "keeper" is both a protector and a custodian of memories, something that underscores the tension between forgetting and remembering. This reflection on memory — the act of remembering the dead, preserving their stories, their names, their legacies — reveals an anxiety over the passage of time and the fragility of human existence.

Moreover, the poem can be read as a meditation on the human condition, where the dead are not just physically buried but also “kept” in the minds and hearts of the living. Through this lens, the poem speaks not only to the dead but to the living, urging them to consider the ways in which they preserve their own identities and how they are shaped by the memories of those who have gone before them.

As in much of Daruwalla’s work, there is an implicit suggestion that the poet himself is a keeper of sorts — a keeper of the dead in the sense of preserving the past, of giving voice to those who no longer have a voice, and of recording the histories and experiences that might otherwise be forgotten. The poet’s task, then, becomes one of maintaining the memory of the dead, not just through literal acts of remembrance, but by ensuring that the narratives of their lives — with all their complexities and contradictions — continue to resonate in the present. In a broader sense, Daruwalla might be suggesting that the poet’s role is not merely to describe the world as it is, but to engage with it in a way that ensures the continuity of the dead in the world of the living.

The poem also touches on the philosophical idea of what happens to the dead after death. Is there a finality to it or do they linger in some form? Are the “keepers” of the dead also keepers of the soul, of memory, of meaning? The question of whether death is a definitive end or a continuation of some kind of spiritual existence is raised but left unresolved, suggesting that this uncertainty is part of the human condition itself.

The keeper’s role, in this sense, is not just about the dead but also about the living, for it is the living who must come to terms with the dead. They are the ones tasked with finding meaning in the face of mortality, and in that sense, the keeper might also be seen as a guide or teacher who helps the living understand their own place in the cycle of life and death.

## Conclusion

Keki N. Daruwalla’s *Keeper of the Dead* presents a meditation on mortality, memory, and the human need to preserve and honor the dead. Through vivid imagery and a careful handling of language, Daruwalla crafts a poem that invites readers to consider the delicate balance between life and death. The figure of the “keeper” becomes a symbol not just of death’s inevitability, but of the ways in which we, as human beings, engage with the past, with memory, and with the legacies of those who have gone before us.

The poem’s existential reflections invite readers to reflect on their own relationship with death, memory and the legacies they hope to leave behind. It suggests that the dead are never truly gone as long as they are remembered by the keeper, by the living and through the stories they leave behind. ■

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# Keki N. Daruwalla's Poetic Orb : A Study of his Social Realism and Imagery

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As a painter is with colours, so is a poet with words. Poetry is a rhythmic experience, a melodious apprehension of organic or inorganic substances of the human surroundings in relation to the phenomena of natural world. It differs from all other forms of expression as it uses a cultivated language to fill in the radars a fresh awareness of the known and unknown ranges of experience after giving them a vivid sensuous pleasure that terminates in a message. If the poetry of Keki N. Daruwalla is observed through this lens one may conclude that Daruwalla's excellency lies in his mastery over the uses of images. His images are very natural as clouds are in a rainy season. They are strikingly original and very integral to the theme. And it is because of his use of social realism and images in his poetry observed in and around us that he is regarded as one of the prominent poets in the postcolonial era. His substantial contribution to modern Indo-Anglian poetry makes him prominent in the world of creativity. One of the most significant voices in Indian poetry Keki sheds light through his work, illuminating the world of English poetry. He has a very wide range in his selection of themes. New horizon since 1964, when his first composition saw the light of day, he has been actively engaged in exploring new vistas. As his creative world saw the dawn in the independent India, all the themes under the sun around him were the focus of his poems and with the passing years he grew in stature. He has proved himself to be a unique modern Indo-Anglian poet by using unique themes and style in his poetry. In Daruwalla's diction and phraseology we observe his command over the English language as other Indo-Anglian poets such as Nissim Ezekiel, A.K. Ramanujan, Jayanta Mahapatra and R. Parthasarathy. A recipient of Sahitya Academy award for his collection of poems *The keeper of the Dead* and Commonwealth Poetry Award for *Landscape*, Daruwalla has proved that Indian literatures are in no way lesser to their counterparts in the English speaking countries.

Daruwalla's selection of themes has a very wide range. His profession of a police officer, ranging from his career in Indian Police Service, rising to become a special Assistant to the Prime minister in International Affairs and an officer in cabinet secretariat till his

retirement, brought him in close contact with varied situation and experience. He, thus, put his routine experience in poems such as 'Routine', 'Curfew', 'Curfew-2', 'The Beggar', 'The Ghaghra in Spate', 'Rail Road Reveries', 'The Epileptic', 'Death by Burial', 'Fire-Hymn', 'In a Riot-Torn City', 'Al-Azhar Lecture', 'Underwater Notes' and many more. His wide range of themes helped him for his wide range of imagery. Daruwalla's imagery has imparted excellence to a high degree. He is, in fact, a master of building up imagery which came spontaneously. All the images are brought directly from first hand observation or from perception of some extra-ordinary aspects of real life. Very keen and minute observation of the society has helped Daruwalla to express his concern for the victims and misfortunes. His treatment of the day to day problems and issues of life has always remained original. His imagery in poetry has always been embellished with realism and originality. His use of imagery has enriched and extended the range of his poetry. Vilas Sarang, in his 'Anthology of Indian English Poetry' observes –

“Many of Daruwalla's poems are laden with information, too much information. Part of it may achieve the status of significant poetic image or even of symbol. But one wishes that Daruwalla had work more with selective imagery, condensing and distilling his material with more compact metaphor.....”

There are innumerable sources from which Daruwalla has drawn his imagery. His sources have been sometimes usual and sometimes unusual but all are realistic. All the imageries used by him have been suitable and relevant to the theme his imagery comes as naturally to him as words for building up of that imagery. His outlook is broad. He readily admits to critics' charges of being too much of a landscape poet taking into his aesthetic stride the sight and sounds of England, Yugoslavia, Helsinki, Stockholm, Volgograd and Moscow which he has visited for reciting poetry. His thematic canvas transcends the boundaries of India and stretches itself into the rest of the world. His poem 'Alexander Crosses the Hellespont' gives us the picture of Cairo ('where he had gone to drop his card and call on the Pharaoh' the more organized Turks, and their hotels 'Oтели', 'Thais lodged in Hilton', Asia and Europe. The poem 'Sixth Muharram', 'Lucknow' gives us the picture of the Muslim ritual of mourning on the eve of Muharram. Through this poem Keki wants to satire the shady political vendettas in India.

Daruwalla's imagery has always been characterized with real life description. 'Routine' is a fit example of it. The poem has been filled with imageries recounting a confrontation between a platoon of police men and a large crowd of agitators. The police officer ordered his men to load their guns, as the mob did not disperse. Pointing his barrel at the crowd the officer ordered his men to fire. While the other fired in the air he fired at the crowd, as a result of which one man of the mob was hit and fell dead. The happening was merely a routine affair. Such incidents have taken place many a time earlier and it had been well rehearsed. As Daruwalla was a police officer his observation of such incidents was very keen and precise. And such observation has its impact on his creative orb.

‘The Ghaghra in Spate’ is also one of Daruwalla’s best poems known for use of imagery. The poem is just like the pictures of a scene of disaster taken from various angles by a photographer with a powerful camera. Like other poems this poem too is based on his own observation. We have the picture of the Ghaghra looking like a heap of mud in the afternoon, and as black as over stewed coffee in the evening and in the night like a wound caused by the lash of a whip. To the poet the moon is red because she is having menses. Then hardly in a period of twenty minutes has the flood arrived causing panic among the people living close-by. The poem gives us the picture of the flood water rushing into the nearby village, devastating the mud-and-straw cottages and the cottagers taking shelter on roof tops which are yet to be affected. There, too, they are in panic. The flood drowned a buffalo and its dead body rises to the surface of water. All these visualize us with multi-dimensional pictures being taken during the flood.

Daruwalla’s poetry is sometimes embellished with unusual imagery too. In his poem ‘The Beggar’ we come across a very unusual but a very vivid description of a beggar. The beggar sits there standstill with the same unchanging, timid light in his eyes. Time circles round him like a kite circling round a dying being or a dead body. When the poet writes

“Maggots, moments, worms  
Crawl like changing seasons  
He is a straw Buddha with sperm”

we come across a very unusual and vivid picture of a beggar at any public place.

The following lines from the poem ‘Pestilence’ is a testimony of Daruwalla’s craftsmanship and his preciseness in observing the things and incidents around to use as imagery.

“They are palanquin-bearers of a  
Different sort on the string -beds  
They carry no henna-smeared bodies  
Prone upon them are frail bodies  
Frozen bodies delirious bodies  
Some drained of fever and sap  
Some moving others supine  
Transfixed under the sun.” (“Pestilence”)

Sometimes the imagery used in Daruwalla’s poems is so unusual that we feel it difficult to visualize the images/incidents. In ‘Revolt of the Salt Slaves’ it becomes very difficult on the part of a reader to make out the salt minds or the type of work done by the workers there. The first stanza of the poem gives us a very contrast picture of black slaves and masters with white sunlight, the rocks of salt and the salt-columns. The brief imagery of the chastisement administered to the slaves by the supervisors with the use of whips without mercy is remarkable. Then comes up the picture of revolt where the slaves would enjoy a sense of triumph even for a few hours.

Sometimes Daruwalla's unusual pictures are accompanied by authenticity, keen observance and accuracy. 'The Epileptic' is an illustration of use of such imagery. The picture of epileptics being attacked by sudden fits is authentic but the reaction of others to it is unusual, for not many of us have witnessed such an incident on road. Along with the attack of epileptic fits to the lady, the poet gives us the vivid picture of the sense of guilt by the rickshaw puller, her husband trying hard to open the woman's closed mouth by putting a gag between her teeth, traffic on the road coming to a halt, the inquisitive crowd of people gathered round the woman-some fanning her, some rubbing her feet to bring back to her senses - and last but not the least is the strict professional attitude of the doctors. People's reaction has been truly portrayed:

"They fanned her, rubbed her feet, and looked around  
For other ways to summon back her senses."

Daruwalla is a very perfect artist in the use of imagery. Even he can build up imagery with the use of metaphors. In 'The Unrest of Desire' the idea expressed is an abstract one but the imagery used has been much concrete. Unrest of desire manifested in eyes; a mask being thrust upon a face; the salt-blood being probed with an insistent tongue; a desire being pressed down with the weight of coils of bones or slabs of cement, bison and stag being traced on a wall with a charcoal-all these concrete picture have been built of with the genius use of metaphorical language which makes the poem remarkable.

However the critic M.K. Naik says-

"Daruwalla's favorite images are those of violence disease and fire". His poem 'Before the World' is a fit example where he has used fire, bird, forest, lighting as imaginaries. The imagery of fire has been a bi-product of Daruwalla's parsi language. He writes-

"Fire is holy especially for Zoroastrians  
but before fire too  
there was life.  
Before the Bowstring  
and flint arrow says,  
there was life."

The poem gives us the picture of change in the seasons and new flowers blooming in the meadows. The poem talks about the generics of man fire and universe.

The poem 'Fire-hymn' also gives us a clear evidence of Daruwalla's craftsmanship in imagery which becomes the reason for the success of the poem. In this poem too 'fire' imagery has been used when the boy beholds the half burnt fingers of a dead and draws the attention of his father. The father told that, when fire fails to perform the task fully, some limbs or portion of a limb remains half-burnt. We also come across the imagery of a heart-rending parsi costume of exposing the dead bodies on 'Tower of Silence' to be eaten up by birds of prey. The poet has very aptly condensed the facts and ideas in the poem using the imagery.

The poem 'Underwater Notes' gives us many pictures taken from Daruwalla's first hand information. The imagery used towards the end of the poem has been significant and touching.

"It was very hot, and a woman called to Tsomo  
riding a yak couldn't rein him in,  
as the yak made straight for the lake.  
She kept sounding 'riri, riri', 'stop, stop' in  
Tibetan,  
but the yak went in and they both drowned."

His 'Al-Azhar Lecture' gives us the through picture the plague of 1350 which trapped China across the Pamirs, Egypt as well as Europe causing tens of millions of death. The imagery of such a horror when Twenty thousand died each day in Cairo is really a heart touching representation. The poem also gives us the picture of the rich people exploiting the poor during such a situation. And when common people die it is the ruler who succeeds the property owned by them.

All the above discussion has been on visual and kinesthetic imagery. Daruwalla is also a master of auditory imagery. In his 'Death of a Bird', the birds' scream while mating and the poet's barrel speaking one word of lead, the female bird rising and crying in terror and going even a thousand feet below where the river was roaring with other jungle-sounds- all these here have been remarkable example of auditory imagery. The use of terms such as aroma, stench and nausea in the poem 'Rumination' are the examples of olfactory imagery. In the poem the speaker can smell violence in the air which hovers brooding and poised like a cobra.

The poem "The City" represents the true theme of urban alienation, where individuals are detached from each other and their surroundings. The stark contrasts between wealth and poverty in urban India transmitting a sense of displacement and bewilderment, reflecting the chaos and confusion of urban life get reflected in the poem. The city is described as a 'labyrinth' of despair, emphasizing its complexity and disorienting nature.

KN Daruwalla's poetry is known for its social realism, which reflects his observations of the world around him. Daruwalla takes the theme for his poetry from the characters, incidents and things around him. They seem as if very closely known to the readers living around and speaking to them. Many of his poems highlight the struggles of the marginalized and the poor, exposing the harsh realities of economic inequality. They speak of the experience of the poverty stricken people of the land to which he belongs. And it is because of the poverty that inequality prevails. Daruwalla mouthpieces the voice of the marginalized. He critiques social injustices, such as casteism, corruption, and exploitation, revealing the darker aspects of Indian society. Daruwalla's poetry explores the experiences of migrants and the urban poor, capturing the dislocation and disillusionment that often accompany these processes.

Daruwalla's poetry paints vivid pictures of India's cities, highlighting the contrasts between wealth and poverty, modernity and tradition. He often uses natural imagery to contrast with the harsh realities of urban life, highlighting the disconnection between humans and the natural world.

Overall, KN Daruwalla's poetry offers a powerful and unflinching portrayal of social realism, highlighting the complexities and challenges of modern Indian society. His poetry is a reflection of contemporary society, offering a nuanced and unwavering depiction of the complexities and challenges of modern India. His work is characterized by a strong sense of realism, which is evident in his depiction of urban life, social inequality, and the human condition.

Daruwalla's poetry often explores the contrasts between wealth and poverty in urban India. In poems like 'The City' and 'Urban Landscape', he paints vivid pictures of the city's streets, highlighting the disparities between the haves and have-nots. His imagery is stark and uncompromising, revealing the harsh realities of urban life:

“The city's streets are a labyrinth of despair  
Where the poor are lost in a sea of concrete  
The skyscrapers rise like giants, indifferent  
To the struggles of those who live in their shadow”

Daruwalla's poetry is also concerned with the human condition, exploring themes of love, loss, and longing. In poems like 'The Refugee' and 'The Widow', he offers powerful portrayals of individuals struggling to survive in a society that often seems indifferent to their plights. His characterization is nuanced and empathetic, revealing the complexities and vulnerabilities of human experience:

“The refugee's eyes are a deep well of sorrow  
A reflection of the losses he has suffered  
He carries his belongings in a small bundle  
A reminder of the life he left behind”

## Conclusion

KN Daruwalla's poetry is a powerful reflection of contemporary society, offering a nuanced and unflinching portrayal of the complexities and challenges of modern India. His use of realism is closely tied to his poetic form, which allows him to capture the disjointedness and fragmentation of urban life. Through his poetry, Daruwalla challenges readers to confront the harsh realities of social inequality and injustice, offering a powerful critique of the society in which we live. His work is characterized by a strong sense of realism, which is evident in his depiction of urban life, social inequality, and the human condition.

Thus, we can conclude that Daruwalla's poetry is filled with imageries-vivid, realistic and original. And in fact, his use of imagery is so vast that it became difficult on my part to place them all in this seminar paper. A poet's imagery generally shoots out from his own

experience. Consequently, it is found that most of the images used in Daruwalla's poems have sprung up from his experience as a police officer. KN Daruwalla's poetry is a powerful reflection of contemporary society, offering a nuanced and unflinching portrayal of the complexities and challenges of modern India. His use of realism is closely tied to his poetic form, which allows him to capture the disjointedness and fragmentation of urban life. Through his poetry, Daruwalla challenges readers to confront the harsh realities of social inequality and injustice, offering a powerful critique of the society in which we live. In a research article "Keki N. Daruwalla's Poems: A Unique Coherence of Themes and Craftsmanship" Md Ataur Rahaman states "Most of the poems of Daruwalla border on post independence social realism, of say, violence, misery, corruption, hypocrisy etc. A conscious artist and craftsman Keki N. Daruwalla is sparingly critical about the moral degradation and decadence in the 20th century India. Interestingly, the poetic excellence of Daruwalla establishes a unique interrelation between the poetic mechanism he employs and the themes he deals with. His poetic competence is such that when he deals with violence, he uses expressions dealing with violence. In this sense he is nearer to many English poets like Lord Alfred Tennyson and Thomas Gray. Tennyson and Gray have used similar expressions while trying to create elegiac effect. Not only this, Daruwalla's morbid preoccupation with death reminds us of Emily Dickinson and his supernaturalism reminds one of S. T. Coleridge. His use of broken images in his poems reminds us of the poetic technique of T. S. Eliot." ■

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# Influence of Natyashastra in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions*

Nisha Singh

This paper explores the profound influence of Natyashastra, the ancient Indian treatise on dramatic arts, on Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's novel *The Palace of Illusions*. Through a close analysis of narrative structure, character development, and thematic elements, the present study demonstrates how Divakaruni employs principles from Natyashastra to reimagine the epic Mahabharata from Draupadi's perspective. The research highlights the integration of rasa theory, the concept of abhinaya, and the use of dramatic time in shaping the novel's emotional landscape and storytelling techniques. By examining the intersection of classical dramaturgy and contemporary literature, this paper argues that Divakaruni's work serves as a modern embodiment of Natyashastra's enduring relevance in Indian storytelling traditions.

**Key Words:** Abhinaya, Feminist retelling, Indian literature, Mahabharata, Natyashastra, The Palace of Illusions, Rasa theory.

## Introduction:

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* (2008) stands as a remarkable reimagining of the Mahabharata, one of India's most revered epics. This novel, narrated from the perspective of Draupadi, offers a fresh and feminist interpretation of the ancient tale. While much scholarly attention has been devoted to the novel's feminist themes and its reinterpretation of mythological characters, less focus has been given to the underlying structural and aesthetic principles that shape its narrative. This paper argues that a significant influence on Divakaruni's storytelling technique can be traced back to Natyashastra, the ancient Indian treatise on dramatic arts attributed to the sage Bharata.

Natyashastra, believed to have been composed between 200 BCE and 200 CE, is a wide-ranging text that frameworks the principles of dramatic composition, presentation, and aesthetics. Its influence extends far beyond the realm of theater, permeating various forms of Indian art and literature. This study aims to establish how Divakaruni, consciously or unconsciously, employs key concepts from Natyashastra in crafting her novel, thereby creating a work that resonates deeply with Indian aesthetic traditions while simultaneously

appealing to a contemporary global audience. Before delving into its influence on *The Palace of Illusions*, it is essential to provide a brief overview of Natyashastra and its key concepts. Natyashastra is divided into thirty-six chapters, covering various aspects of dramatic arts, including acting, dance, music, and poetics. Some of the most influential ideas presented in this text include: Rasa Theory, Abhinaya, etc.

At the heart of Natyashastra lies the concept of rasa, which refers to the aesthetic flavor or emotional essence that a work of art aims to evoke in its audience. Bharata identifies eight primary rasas: shringara (love), hasya (laughter), karuna (sorrow), raudra (anger), vira (heroism), bhayanaka (fear), bibhatsa (disgust), and adbhuta (wonder). A ninth rasa, shanta (peace), was later added. Abhinaya refers to the art of conveying meaning through expression. Natyashastra outlines four types of abhinaya: angika (bodily gestures), vachika (speech), aharya (costumes and makeup), and sattvika (involuntary physical reactions to emotions). One of the most significant ways in which Natyashastra's influence manifests in Divakaruni's novel is through the application of rasa theory. The author skillfully weaves different rasas throughout the narrative, creating a rich emotional embroidery that engages readers on multiple levels.

The shringara rasa, or the emotion of love, plays a central role in *The Palace of Illusions*. Divakaruni explores this rasa primarily through Draupadi's complex relationships with her husbands, particularly Arjuna and Karna. The author delves deep into the nuances of romantic love, portraying its various shades from passionate desire to tender affection. Draupadi's unfulfilled love for Karna is described with a poignancy that exemplifies shringara rasa: "I'd never forgotten the way Karna had looked at me that day in Kampilya. A look that made me feel I was the only woman in the world" (Divakaruni, 2008, p. 97). This longing and the bittersweet nature of their connection persist throughout the novel, creating a sustained emotional resonance for the reader.

The vira (heroism) and raudra (anger) rasas are prominently featured in the novel's depiction of the Kurukshetra war. Divakaruni's portrayal of the epic battle scenes and the characters' motivations draws heavily on these rasas, creating a sense of grandeur and intensity. An example of vira rasa can be seen in Draupadi's admiration for Bhima's prowess: "Bhima fought like a force of nature, unstoppable as a hurricane" (Divakaruni, 2008, p. 267). The raudra rasa is evoked in scenes of righteous anger, such as when Draupadi demands justice after being humiliated in the court: "A queen! A daughter of kings! And you sat silent while she was shamed!" (Divakaruni, 2008, p. 190). The karuna rasa, or the emotion of sorrow, permeates the latter part of the novel as the devastating consequences of the war unfold. Divakaruni's depiction of loss, grief, and the futility of violence aligns closely with the principles of karuna rasa as outlined in Natyashastra.

A poignant example is Draupadi's reflection after the war: "I who had clamored so hard for war now found no joy in our victory. How could I, when it was gained at the cost of nearly everything I loved?" (Divakaruni, 2008, p. 330). This sentiment encapsulates the

essence of karuna rasa, evoking a profound sense of sorrow and regret in the reader. While Natyashastra's concept of abhinaya primarily relates to performance, Divakaruni adapts these principles to her narrative technique, creating a vivid and expressive storytelling style. Divakaruni's use of dialogue in *The Palace of Illusions* aligns closely with the principles of vachika abhinaya (expression through speech). The characters' conversations are crafted to reveal their personalities, motivations, and emotional states, often with subtle nuances that add depth to their interactions.

For example, the terse exchanges between Draupadi and Kunti reveal the complex dynamics of their relationship: "'You've brought nothing but trouble to my sons since the day you stepped into this palace,' she said. 'I wish you'd never been born'" (Divakaruni, 2008, p. 165). This dialogue not only conveys information but also expresses the underlying tensions and emotions between the characters. Divakaruni frequently describes her characters' involuntary physical reactions to emotions, a technique that corresponds to sattvika abhinaya in Natyashastra.

An instance of this can be seen in Draupadi's reaction to seeing Karna: "My heart lurched painfully in my chest, then started to race" (Divakaruni, 2008, p. 96). Such physical manifestations of emotion allow readers to viscerally experience the character's feelings.

While angika abhinaya traditionally refers to physical gestures in performance, Divakaruni translates this concept into her prose by vividly describing her characters' body language and movements. These descriptions add a layer of non-verbal communication to the narrative. When describing Yudhisthir's reaction to losing the game of dice, Divakaruni writes: "Yudhisthir's shoulders slumped. His face was gray with shock" (Divakaruni 181). These physical details convey the character's emotional state without explicit explanation. Natyashastra also emphasizes the importance of creating a cohesive dramatic world, a principle that Divakaruni observes in her construction of the novel's setting and temporal flow. The palace of Hastinapur serves as a microcosm of the larger world, much like the stage in classical Indian drama. Divakaruni uses this confined space to intensify the interpersonal dynamics and conflicts between characters.

Divakaruni's handling of time in the novel reflects the flexible approach to dramatic time in Natyashastra. She employs techniques such as flashbacks, foreshadowing, and varying narrative pacing to create a rich temporal landscape that enhances the storytelling. Natyashastra outlines various character types and their attributes, a framework that Divakaruni adapts in her portrayal of the Mahabharata's cast. Draupadi, as the protagonist and narrator, embodies many qualities of the nayika as described in Natyashastra. She is complex, passionate, and driven by a strong sense of destiny. Divakaruni's portrayal of Draupadi aligns with the text's description of a heroine who is both vulnerable and strong, capable of inspiring both love and awe. The five Pandava brothers represent different hero archetypes outlined in Natyashastra. Yudhisthir embodies the dhirodatta (the noble hero), Bhima the dhiroddhata (the vehement hero), Arjuna the dhiralalita (the sportive hero), while

Nakula and Sahadeva represent the aspects of the *dhirashanta* (the calm hero). Karna's character in the novel aligns closely with the concept of the tragic hero in classical dramaturgy. His noble qualities, combined with his fatal flaw (his loyalty to Duryodhana), create a complex character that evokes both admiration and pity.

Beyond structural and stylistic influences, *The Palace of Illusions* also engages with themes that are central to *Natyashastra's* philosophy of art and life. The title of the novel itself, *The Palace of Illusions*, echoes *Natyashastra's* exploration of the interplay between illusion (*maya*) and reality. Divakaruni constantly questions the nature of reality, blurring the lines between the mythical and the mundane, much like the concept of *natya* (drama) in *Natyashastra*, which is seen as a representation of the world that reveals deeper truths. The novel contends with questions of *dharma* (duty) and individual choice, themes that are central to both the *Mahabharata* and *Natyashastra's* conception of dramatic conflict. Draupadi's struggle to reconcile her personal desires with her role as a queen and a catalyst for war reflects the complex interplay between individual and societal expectations that is often explored in classical Indian drama.

*Natyashastra* speculates that the experience of *rasa* has a transformative effect on the audience. Similarly, Divakaruni's novel aims to transform readers' understanding of the *Mahabharata* by offering a new perspective. The novel itself becomes a form of *natya*, inviting readers to engage with the familiar story in a new and emotionally resonant way. *Natyashastra* outlines five stages of plot development: *mukha* (opening), *pratimukha* (progression), *garbha* (development), *vimarsha* (pause), and *nirvaahana* (conclusion). While these stages are more explicitly defined in classical drama, their influence can be observed in the structure of Divakaruni's novel.

The *mukha* stage is evident in the novel's opening chapters, where Draupadi's birth and early life are introduced, setting the stage for the events to come. The *pratimukha* stage unfolds as Draupadi enters the world of the Pandavas, with her marriage serving as a pivotal moment that propels the story forward. The *garbha* stage comprises the bulk of the novel, detailing the complex relationships, political intrigues, and personal struggles of the characters. The exile of the Pandavas and Draupadi serves as an extended *vimarsha* stage, a pause in the main action that allows for reflection and character development. Finally, the Kurukshetra war and its aftermath represent the *nirvaahana* stage, bringing the story to its conclusion. *Natyashastra* describes five types of *sandhi* or junctures that mark significant turning points in a dramatic work. While not strictly adhering to these conventions, Divakaruni's novel does feature pivotal moments that serve a similar function:

- i. *Mukha Sandhi*: The *swayamvara* scene, where Draupadi chooses Arjuna, sets the main plot in motion.
- ii. *Pratimukha Sandhi*: The game of dice, which precipitates the Pandavas' exile.
- iii. *Garbha Sandhi*: Draupadi's humiliation in the court, which cements her desire for revenge.

- iv. Vimarsha Sandhi: The negotiations to prevent war, which ultimately fail.
- v. Nirvaahana Sandhi: The conclusion of the war and its immediate aftermath.

These junctures serve to structure the narrative and create a sense of dramatic progression that echoes the principles laid out in Natyashastra.

While Natyashastra primarily focuses on drama, its principles regarding language and poetics have influenced novels like *The Palace of Illusions*. Divakaruni's prose is rich with alamkara, or figurative language, a key element of Sanskrit poetics discussed in Natyashastra. Her use of similes, metaphors, and other literary devices serves not only to beautify the language but also to deepen the reader's understanding of characters and situations. While Natyashastra itself does not explicitly focus on gender issues, Divakaruni's feminist retelling of the Mahabharata through the lens of Natyashastra's principles offers a unique perspective on gender and power dynamics in the epic.

Natyashastra outlines various character types, including different classes of heroes and heroines. Divakaruni subverts these traditional types by presenting Draupadi as a complex protagonist who doesn't neatly fit into any one category. She is at times the devoted wife (anukula nayika), at others the proud and wronged queen (abhimana vatika), and occasionally even displays characteristics typically associated with male heroes. This rebellion allows Divakaruni to challenge traditional gender roles and explore the limitations placed on women in the epic world. For instance, Draupadi reflects: "I was not the only woman in the history of the world who had been blamed for a man's downfall" (Divakaruni 251). By focusing the narrative on Draupadi's perspective, Divakaruni explores how the various rasas outlined in Natyashastra are experienced from a female point of view. This is particularly evident in her treatment of vira rasa (heroism) and raudra rasa (anger), which are traditionally associated with male characters in the epic.

Draupadi's heroism is not expressed through physical ability but through her resilience, intelligence, and determination. Her anger, while powerful, is often constrained by societal expectations, adding layers of complexity to the expression of raudra rasa. Natyashastra, while primarily a treatise on dramatic arts, also touches upon spiritual and mystical concepts. Divakaruni incorporates these elements into her novel, creating a narrative that blends the mundane with the divine. The Hindu concept of lila, or divine play, which is touched upon in Natyashastra, is a periodic theme in *The Palace of Illusions*. Draupadi often reflects on the seemingly arbitrary nature of fate and the gods' involvement in human affairs, echoing the idea that the world is a stage for divine drama. This is particularly evident in Draupadi's relationship with Krishna. She muses, "Was our friendship part of some divine plan? Were we all just puppets in Krishna's cosmic play?" (Divakaruni, 2008, p. 212). This integration of mystical elements adds depth to the narrative and connects it to broader Indian philosophical traditions.

Natyashastra speculates that the experience of rasa can lead to a form of transcendence or spiritual enlightenment. Divakaruni explores this idea through Draupadi's

journey of self-discovery and her gradual understanding of her role in the larger cosmic drama. As the novel advancements, Draupadi moves from being a participant in events to an observer, gaining a more detached and philosophical perspective. This transformation mirrors the ideal of the *rasika* (connoisseur) in *Natyashastra*, who can experience emotions deeply while maintaining a level of detachment.

*The Palace of Illusions* stands at the intersection of multiple textual traditions, including the Mahabharata, *Natyashastra*, and contemporary feminist literature. Divakaruni's novel demonstrates how principles from classical Indian aesthetics can be adapted and reinterpreted in a modern context. By viewing the characters of the Mahabharata through the lens of *Natyashastra*'s character types and *rasas*, Divakaruni offers fresh interpretations of familiar figures. For instance, Karna, often seen as a tragic hero, is portrayed with elements of the *dhiroddhata* (vehement hero) and *dhiralalita* (sportive hero) types, adding complexity to his character. *Natyashastra* primarily deals with drama, Divakaruni successfully adapts its principles to the novel form. This blending of genres demonstrates the flexibility and enduring relevance of classical Indian aesthetic theories.

The novel incorporates elements of historical fiction, fantasy, and psychological realism, all unified by the underlying framework of *Natyashastra*'s principles. This innovative approach creates a work that is both rooted in tradition and distinctly modern. Several critics praised the novel's emotional resonance, which can be attributed to Divakaruni's skillful application of *rasa* theory. For instance, Indu Sundaresan, writing for *The Seattle Times*, noted that the novel "will leave you spellbound to the last page" (Sundaresan, 2008), a testament to the power of well-crafted *rasas*. The novel's unique structure, which deviates from a straightforward chronological retelling, was a point of discussion among critics. This structure, influenced by the dramatic conventions outlined in *Natyashastra*, allowed Divakaruni to create a narrative that is both familiar and fresh. *The Palace of Illusions* has been recognized as a significant contribution to Indian English literature, particularly in the realm of mythological retellings. Its success paved the way for more works that blend classical Indian aesthetics with contemporary narrative techniques.

## **Conclusion:**

The influence of *Natyashastra* on Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* is both profound and multifaceted. From its application of *rasa* theory to its adaptation of dramatic conventions, the novel demonstrates the enduring relevance of classical Indian aesthetics in contemporary literature. By viewing the Mahabharata through the lens of *Natyashastra*, Divakaruni's work is blended with literary tradition and modernity. The novel's success lies in reimagining Draupadi's perspective through the prism of the principles of *Natyashastra*. *The Palace of Illusions* stands as a testament to the power of cross-cultural and cross-temporal literary synthesis while demonstrating the influence of *Natyashastra* vividly. The application of *rasa* theory allows Divakaruni to create a rich emotional landscape that engages readers on multiple levels. Her adaptation of *abhinaya*

principles to narrative prose results in expressive storytelling. The novel's treatment of dramatic time and space, character development, and thematic explorations all bear the imprint of Natyashastra's enduring influence. As we continue to contend with questions of identity, power, and human nature in the works like *The Palace of Illusions* remind us of the timeless insights offered by classical traditions. By bridging the gap between ancient aesthetics and contemporary literature, Divakaruni has not only created a compelling retelling of the Mahabharata but also demonstrated the ongoing vitality and relevance of India's rich literary heritage. ■

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# Mulk Raj Anand : A Novelist in Identity

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One of the founding fathers of Indian English literature, Mulk Raj Anand, uses the question of identity as a central motif of his narratives, which mirror the social-political realities of India in the colonial and post-colonial eras. This study aims at analysing various aspects of identity crises in Anand with much emphasis on his *Untouchable*. It goes deeper into an analysis of how the personalities created by Anand cope with the matters of caste system, class, and colonialism, though in the end they are left to face the realities of social structure. This paper focuses on Anand's major works and tries to reveal the specifics of his character's search for identity as a paradigm of his characterization method. Thus, comparing the works of Anand with his contemporaries in the paper reveals his unique approach to writing and his input to the discussion of identity in the Indian context. Finally, the research suggests the assessment of the impact of Anand's work and its continuing relevance for generations of writers, establishing its importance in the ongoing examination of issues related to identity and justice.

**Key Words:** Identity, Indian English Literature, social realism, *Untouchable*

## Introduction

Among the luminaries, Mulk Raj Anand emerged as one of the most important writers and his pioneering work has been instrumental in charting out the course of Indian writing in English. Anand was born in 1905 and thus, he was highly affected by the social and political settings of colonial India, something that is very evidently portrayed through his works. It can be said that, he is among the pioneers of the Indo-Anglian fiction which was established as a writing of the colonized against colonialism. His novels are socially realistic and analyse the plight of the downtrodden persons in Indian society particularly the Untouchables, the poor, and the suppressed. Anand wrote with the specific aim of educating society about the vices that raged in Indian society in a bid to advocate for a change that literature could bring about (Shende 93-95; Berman 142-62).

Identity is one of many topics that Anand often focuses on in his novels, as he tries to penetrate the multifaceted world of individual and collective identities formed by socioeconomic and cultural factors. In most of his works, he depicts characters who fight to find themselves in a society that tries to deny them a place. For instance, in his novel

*Untouchable* (1935), Anand shares the life of Bakha, a young sweeper, who cannot find his place in a society that segregates people based on untouchability. Anand also delivers a message about the psychological state of victims of social isolation in the context of the caste system through the character of Bakha (Sunmugam et al. 23-22).

Furthermore, Anand deals with identity beyond caste, even class, gender, and colonialism too are highlighted. These themes are further explored in his novel *Coolie* (1936) where the main character Munoo is depicted as a victim of his class and of colonialism. Anand's characters are quite commonly portrayed as stuck within the spaces between several subjectivities, which are defined by the oppressive dynamics of the existing social order. This discussion of identity in Anand's works is intrinsically linked to his own positionality and violence in his fight for the marginalized, making his literary output important for the field of Indian English literature as well as for the discussion of identity and human rights (Khuman 78-135; Berman 142-62).

It must be noted, however, that Anand's deep concern with the theme of identity points to literature as a means to depict and transform the existing system in order to build a human world.

### **Mulk Raj Anand's Literary Journey**

The personal life of Mulk Raj Anand and his work itself is quite similar, filled with narratives that reflect the socio-political context of India of his times. Anand born on December 12, 1905, in Peshawar, British India was raised amidst social evils like caste discrimination. He grew up with his father who was a coppersmith working with the British Indian Army and a religious mother who had the purpose of teaching him to care for the suffering of the minority communities in India. Caste oppression especially during his youthful age profoundly shaped Anand's perception of life and later dominated most of his work (Verma 105-27; Deka 10).

Anand's education at the academic level first led him to the University of Punjab, Lahore to study English Literature and then to the University of London to have a Ph.D. in Philosophy. During his years in England, he read the Western philosophers and writers; Bertrand Russell and E. M. Forster, whom he developed close relations with. Like many progressive artists of his era, Anand was equally inspired by the political and social context of his time which included anti-colonialism and the socialist movements in Europe. These factors defined his intellectual and literate orientation, which made him embark on literary and political activism missions where he mixed the two (Berman 142-62).

It can be said that Anand first came of age as a novelist before the Indian independence movement had even started and through his connection to the PWA in London. The PWA, comprising of writers such as Ahmed Ali and Faiz Ahmed Faiz among others, aimed at establishing literature as a means for social transformation. From *Untouchable* (1935) that was published with a preface by E. M. Forster, can be termed as Anand's first

literary effort at the age of thirty five. Despite the critique of sexual politics of the colonial era, the novel, which portrays a day in the life of Bakha, an oppressed sweeper, was acclaimed for capturing the exploitation of the Untouchables in India. It textually and categorically affirmed Anand as a pioneer in the genre of Indian English Literature and a writer who could turn social realism into an art form (Goswami 30–39).

After *Untouchable*, Anand went on to address issues of social inequality, poverty, and human suffering in his subsequent works. *Coolie* (1936) is one of the most important novels of this period which describes the misfortune of Munoo, a child from a poor family who is trapped in the colonial system. The novel was acclaimed for its portrayal of the interlocking of caste, class, and colonialism and thus entrenched Anand's image as a writer with social consciousness. Some of his other works include *Two Leaves and a Bud* which was published in 1937 and deals with the sufferings of the plantation workers and *Seven Summers* published in 1951, which is an autobiography that portrays the social and political transformation of India during his childhood (Khuman 78-135).

Besides novels, Anand has written short stories, essays, and critical essays. His collection of short stories entitled *The Lost Child* published in 1934, and the *Letters on India* published in 1942 were critically acclaimed for the social critique that they offered about India. Anand's output was staggering throughout his career, and he was celebrated for his humanistic portrayal of social issues. In India, its reception was always positive, but there were also translations in many languages, it is hence popular globally and is studied by academics (Goswami 30–39).

Despite such positive feedback on the works of Anand, there were controversies, which were associated with his works. Despite the fact that he was highly appreciated for not being afraid of discussing such temas as caste and untouchability, there were organizations and people in India who did not like his frankness and critical attitude towards society. Yet, Anand did not wane, he kept on writing with an experience that the word written can bring change if put in the right terms. Such a profound journey of his literature is an avowal of his relentless struggle for justice and equality and for the dignity of man, making him one of the most influential writers in Indian English literature (Verma 105-27).

### **Exploration of Identity in Anand's Novels**

Mulk Raj Anand's concern with the theme of identity, as seen in his novel *Untouchable* (1935) is a rich commentary on the social and political milieu of the colonized India. This novel occupying the place of critically acclaimed work in Indian English writing is a single painstaking probing into the victimized identity urge of the first person in the novel Bakha, a boy from the Untouchable caste. In the case of Bakha, therefore, Anand breaks the equitable social relations of caste, class, and colonialism in the society that supports the social stratification of people (Berman 142-62; Deka 54).

## **Identity Crisis in “Untouchable”**

In *Untouchable*, the vulnerability of the main character Bakha is depicted through the struggle of identity in his societal role as a sweeper in the Indian caste system. Right from the beginning, Bakha realizes his social position and the inhuman manner in which the upper castes treat him. The way he is aware of his identity and being an “Untouchable” triggers a profound sense of shame within him. This internalization of societal contempt makes Bakha swing from a passive acceptance of his lot in life to a desire for a decent existence as well as recognition. The psychological effects of caste discrimination especially on the affected individuals are perhaps the strongest messages portrayed by Anand through Bakha, where the situation presents the loss of an individual’s identity due to existence in a society that does not appreciate their existence (Goswami 30-39; Sunmugam et al. 203-22).

Furthering Bakha’s crisis are his interactions with different members of society: the priest who harasses him sexually and an upper-caste man who beats him up just for touching him ‘immorally’. These are not just fights; these are attacks on his identity. The shame and humiliation that Bakha feels is magnified by his accepted knowledge that his untouchability is a brand that he has to bear that categorically defines his existence. Anand effectively paints the psychological effects of caste oppression on the downtrodden and powerless, demonstrating how it eats deep into a person’s soul eradicating worth and esteem (Khuman 90-112).

Also, Anand presents the concept of modernity as a possibility of freeing Bakha from his identity confusion. The flush toilet which stands for civilization, represents Bakha’s desire to free himself from the most humiliating occupation of scavenging sewers. Likewise, Mahatma Gandhi’s speech on the eradication of untouchability opened up a horizon in front of Bakha that one can begin to be something other than Untouchable. But these rays of hope are brought into the shade by the realization of Bakha that structural changes are called for in order to alter the self. Anand leaves Bakha’s fate rather uncertain; this follows the energetic and persistent but inconclusive fight for recognition and identity of the oppressed in India (Goswami 30-39).

## **Social Realism and its Impact on the Portrayal of Identity**

Social realism is therefore central to everything that Anand seeks to convey through identity in *Untouchable* and his other novels. Social realism as used by Anand is an accurate portrayal of the difficult conditions of life that one has to go through being a member of the lower class in India. This literary approach helps Anand to narrate the problems of the characters with a compassionate tone as well as denote the flaws. Unlike many other social realist authors, Anand also offers analyses of the psychological and emotional aspects of his characters suggesting a rather complete picture of the influence of the social setting on character development (Verma 105-27; Berman 142-62).

In *Untouchable* too, social realism is seen in the way Anand builds up Bakha's environment, the sweeper's dirty surroundings, the abuses hurled at him, and the daily portrayal of his untouchability. The caste system is well described by Anand that isolation excludes the Untouchables from clean air and water and interpersonal relations. This realism makes casteism portray its dehumanizing impacts that can translate Bakha's identity crisis as not only a self-fashioned problem but a systematic one with a weak social justice system (Goswami 30-39).

In addition to this, Anand remains faithful to the ideal of social realism and also in the representation of other sorts of outcasts in the novels. Thus, in the novel *Coolie* (1936) Munoo's personal identity is formed through his experience as a low-caste, colonial labourer constantly oppressed and exploited in an unfair economy. As with Bakha, Munoo endures the internal breakdown of his personality as the prejudice and assumptions of his society rob him of his personality. However, in these narratives, Anand is able to employ social realism to depict how the oppressed are programmed by the system to be what they are thereby making his works a biting commentary on both the Indian society and the colonial power structure (Khuman 90-112).

### **The Role of Caste, Class, and Colonialism in Shaping Identity**

In Anand's novels caste, class and colonialism are combined factors that determine identity formation. By identifying the most visible component of Bakha's identity, caste stands out as the most dominant function in *Untouchable*. However, Anand also demonstrates the ways in which caste complicates other systems of oppression, such as class and colonial structures. Bakha is a man of very low status living in poverty which makes him to be more vulnerable to both social injustice and poor health. His oppression is doubled by the colonial powers that support the caste system for their advantage and use it as a means of controlling the Indian population (Shende 93-95; Berman 142-62).

Anand's bitter attack on the caste system is perhaps most clearly seen in how the system robs people of their humanity and their ability to chart their own course in life. Cast derives not only Bakha's identity but in a broader sense, one can say it controls it. Every move he makes, starting from the locations where he can set foot to people he can address, is restricted by the system of Castes. Anand gives an account of how this system eliminates the humanity of people especially the lower caste, where they become their caste in as much as people become their names (Goswami 30-39).

Class is another important aspect that was introduced in Anand's search for identity. In *Coolie*, due to his unprivileged economic background, Munoo is bound to be a coolie that is a drudge and a victim of oppression in exactly the same way as Bakha is a sweeper due to his Untouchable status. Anand illustrates how class like caste defines persons in a society where wealth ownership is a preserved endowment of few people. Caste and class complement each other in Anand's novels as double oppression the characters like Bakha and Munoo experience (Verma 105-27).

Identity crisis is also apparent in Anand's characters because colonialism adds another oppressive aspect into the mix. Continuation and reinforcement of the two major socio-economic systems within the Indian social structure, namely the caste system and the class stratification is a fundamental feature of the colonial regime which seeks to harness the effects of these structures to dominate over the Indian population. From the experience of the surface interaction in *Untouchable*, readers are able to note that the British soldiers have the same racist feelings as the Indians give Bakha, similar to caste discrimination. Anand depicts how colonialism keeps the communities oppressed and their identities mutilated and subordinate to the ruling societal structures intact (Shende 93-95).

Thus, in the light of Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* and other novels, it is quite clear that the cast, class, and colonialism do play major roles in the identity of Indian people. Using the idea of social realism and concentrating on the lives of the deprived, Anand unfolds a devastating commentary upon the oppressive society which makes human beings feel like they are worthless and do not have a right to be alive. Through depicting the conflict of the identity loss of such characters as Bakha and Munoo, which is still topical in the contemporary world, the author provides important insights into the battle for the recognition and non-discrimination of the marginalised people by society.

### **Characterization and Identity**

Characters are remarkably portrayed through realistic details and the condition of 'otherness' is portrayed well in the novels of Mulk Raj Anand. Anand's protagonists mostly belong to the lower classes of Indian society, Untouchables, exhausting working laborers, or poor who make attempts to assert their identities in a caste-ridden society and this aspect is central to his stories. By depicting these characters, Anand examines the conflict between the personal self and the society or family that forms it and in which it exists.

### **Key Characters and Their Search for Identity**

In *Untouchable* Bakha is a young sweeper born into a caste that ensures that he will lead a life of shame. It's a tale of the search for identity, the struggle within and against society. Anand captures Bakha's psychological conflict between his acceptance of his low caste status and his desire for a decent existence. This duality is well demonstrated by Bakha's affection and envy for the British soldiers, who embody the modern and the powerful, and his understanding of the fact that these agents of modernity are themselves part of the system that seeks to oppress him and his kind. As such, Bakha's search for his identity is not only the search for the dignity of the individual but also a protest against the social system that erases his humanity (Sunmugam et al. 203-22; Deka 48-89).

The following are the other characters that help in establishing Bakha's identity crisis. His interaction with the British Tommies who stand for the modernity he craves is juxtaposed to the treatment meted out to him by the upper caste Hindus who consider him as an Untouchable. It is interesting that Anand uses these two types of relations to convey

the duality of Bakha's personality – the man who looks up to the colonizers and the man of color who experiences the bitterness of his predicament. The flush toilet which stands for modernity is Bakha's desire for liberation from his humiliating profession; however, it shows the caste system which prevents him from changing his situation. Thus, through the character of Bakha, Anand reveals the process of identification in the caste society that is marked by a clear and hierarchized division of people (Shende 93-95; Goswami 30-39).

Likewise, in *Coolie* (1936) the main character Munoo's identity crisis is depicted through various incidents in the life of a low-caste worker. Munoo's life begins in a remote village and takes him through different cities in India and he gets to experience the worst forms of labor where people only see him as a tool for production. Similar to Bakha, Munoo is entrapped by the social and economic factors that determine one's status in society. Anand captures Munoo's effort to escape such categorisation because, to society, he is a lost soul whose life is not worth living. Munoo's character is used to portray the dehumanizing effects of poverty and the effects of labor exploitation in society and his death emphasizes the fact that his search for stability and identity was doomed to fail (Berman 142-62; Verma 105-27).

### **Intersection of Individual and Collective Identity**

In his novels, Anand often examines the themes of personal identity and corporal identity, particularly in relation to casts, classes, and colonialism. The issue that his characters face is as individuals, but their fight is one of the oppressed groups to which these characters belong. This is well illustrated in *Untouchable* where Bakha's conflict of identity is not only his but of the entire Untouchable caste of India. Anand depicts Bakha as an entity and as a member of his particular caste in order to understand how society makes the individual participate in a collective existence that oppresses and categorizes him (Goswami 30-39).

The self-categorization of the Untouchables is therefore defined by such factors as common prejudice, marginalization, and discrimination. On this aspect, Anand effectively portrays this aspect through Bakha's relations with his family and other Untouchables that the author brings throughout the novel to portray that despite individuality, they are oppressed together due to that system. Through these interactions, Anand is also able to demonstrate his concern for the caste system and its ability to shape the lives of the suppressed individuals. The difficulty Bakha undergoes to seek identity shows that the Untouchables encounter the same problems, hence relating the struggle of an Untouchable to the rest of the world (Shende 93-95).

In *Coolie*, the formation of the working-class subject is represented by Munoo's relations with other employees who like him suffer from the effects of capitalist oppression. Anand portrays the workers as a politically coherent group that suffered in a similar manner. However, he also considers the divisions within this collective identity like the caste and religious differences which make Munoo's search for identity even more difficult. This depiction provides the reflection of social life during colonial India as people imperative of

social causes rather than their personal dreams and aspirations; identities are formed and defined by the various forces of social structure (Berman 142-62; Verma 105-27).

It should however be noted that Anand has not only considered the social and economic aspects of oppression but also has given consideration to the psychological. More than that, his characters' identities are the consequences of both external and internal forces; the forces of caste, class, and colonialism. Anand examines the subject's exposure to mental dilemmas and how they manage to find identity in the face of the world and existence. Yet this psychological dimension contributes to offering more layers to the portrayal of the character Anand and brings to the construction of identity investigation a global and more human perspective (Sunmugam et al. 203-22; Deka 48-89).

Thus, Mulk Raj Anand's novels can definitely be viewed as providing a highly valuable insight into the subject of identity, as the author displays here his ability to create works that are highly moral, humane, and often tragically realistic. The conflicts between the self and society are well illustrated by his protagonists, for instance, Bakha in *Untouchable*, and Munoo in *Coolie*. Anand's portrayal of self and collective identity subverts the system of oppression in the society making the compendium timeless works to study caste and class in the Indian literary works.

### **Comparison with Contemporary Writers**

Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, and Raja Rao are generally looked at as part of the triumvirate of the initial phases of Indo-Anglian writing; they all had distinct roles to play in the emergence of Indian English fiction. To some extent, all three writers aim to portray the society in India and its dynamics; nonetheless, their writing styles and themes vary, especially as far as identity is concerned.

### **Comparative Analysis with R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao**

R. K. Narayan has a reputation for humor, understated, plain writing, and depiction of the everyday affairs of the mundane middle-class existence of people in South Indian towns. The characters in his fictional town of *Malgudi* represent Indian society and their individuality is defined by their mundane lives and realities. Thus, Narayan's construction of identity can be described as more discreet where the main concern is presented as an individual's search for his/her place in a socially fixed but not unchanging world. Unlike Anand's characters, his characters, for instance, the protagonist in the '*The Guide*' (1958), transform in a manner that is individualistic and psychological and not social as is the case with Anand's works (Hossain et al. 13-22).

While Raja Rao's writing like in *Kanthapura* published in 1938 is full of philosophical and spiritual motifs. Rao's use of myth as well as his post-modern narrative style deal with questions of identity within a metaphysical prism that links the individual's experience with spiritual and cosmic dimensions of the existents. Rao's characters are depicted as lovers of the truth, the seekers of enlightenment, and their characters are basically formed by their spiritual

quests. This search for the metaphysical identity is diametrically opposite to the complex and socially oriented search for the identity shown by Anand (Verma 105-27).

It is however important to note that unlike Narayan or Rao, Mulk Raj Anand directly takes on the realities of identity in his novel. The victims who are rendered helpless by social conditions and social hierarchies form the subject matter of his novels, *Untouchable* (1935) and *Coolie* (1936) the main characters of which Bakha and Munoo respectively are engulfed in social problems and are compelled to live a life of subjugation. That is why, identity in Anand cannot be discussed separately from social realism, as if the latter is inextricably linked to the socio-political aspects of identity representation; Anand's characters' performativity reflects not only the power dynamics of their personal identities but also the systemic injustice they experience (Goswami 30-39; Khuman 99-101).

### **Distinctive Elements in Anand's Portrayal of Identity**

In terms of identity, the most innovative point of convergence emphasized by Anand is caste-class-colonialism configuration. Whereas Narayan's characters wrestle with individual and ethical issues within a settled structural context, Rao's characters run in search of spirituality, and Anand's characters are seen struggling under the hegemonic social formation. Due to this focus on intersectionality, Anand is in a position to examine identity in a complex manner whereby an individual derives his or her identity through the interplay of the various social forces. For instance, Bakha in *Untouchable* is constructed through a caste system as well as through colonial masters' restricted representations of the modern Indian subject as a filthy Untouchable yet as one seeking medical help (Shende 93-95; Deka 90-112).

The last major characteristic of Anand's work is that he presented a social realism in his work defining the realities of life for the downtrodden. Anand presents arguably one of the bleakest images of India's socio-economic reality through the portrayal of poverty, exploitation, and social injustice as they are unlike the rosy imagery, that Narayan paints of India. This realism is at the core of his work of examining identity because it points to how conditions of the world like poverty, and prejudice influence how an individual understands self. Frequently, Anand's characters are represented as individuals in a fight against the system and, at the same time, against the consequences of the system in their subject formation (Hossain et al. 13-22; Goswami 30-39).

Anand uses this approach and sets himself apart from the pack because of his deep understanding of the characters he portrays notably those from the lower end of society. He sets out not a theoretical construction of identity, but more of an appealing advocacy for civilizations. Characters in Anand's novels, though helpless and distressed, are depicted with respect and courage, and their endeavour to establish the self's power and continuity – is represented as a fight against oppression. This humanistic approach puts Anand outside the trend of other writers, whose investigations of identity are less engaged, or even more cerebral (Verma 105-27).

## Critical Reception and Legacy

Anand's works have been studied rigorously in academic circles mainly for their raw portrayal of social realities especially the Indian caste-class and post-colonial predicament of identity. Some of his novels are *Untouchable*, *Coolie*, etc. He has used the social realism genre to depict the plight of the lower class of society. Scholars have applauded Anand for his realism and artistic sensibility that turned his work into not only engaging stories but sociological analysis as well (Verma 105-27).

Anand has benefited not only academia but has influenced the writing style of many generations of writers not only in India but also in the world. This has inspired many writers to write about the issues affecting society. Arundhati Roy and Rohinton Mistry who also work on the caste differentiation issues, formed their base on what Anand did as a pioneer of the Indian Writing in English. They gave his work a humanistic angle and a passion for social transformation, which are still topical as we consider social justice nowadays (Goswami 30-39; Shende 93-95).

Anand has continued to be remembered not only as a postcolonial writer who developed Indian English literature but also as a writer who used his writing to fight for the marginalised, thus, creating a very significant impact on two fronts, literary and social.

## Conclusion

The role played by Mulk Raj Anand on the subject of identity in literature is significant and revolutionary. Anand has depicted the issues of the dispossessed people and coping especially with the Dalit's identity, social class, and colonialism as seen in his pioneering works. Caste oppression, as portrayed in his novels including *Untouchable* and *Coolie*, did not only focus on the physical predicament of the victims but looked at the psychological and social aspects of the victims' personality. The social struggles are reflected through the individual struggles of Anand's characters and the main conflict of character formation and identity is depicted in the film. Social realism in connection with a had-and-heart approach to the given topic enables readers to delicately face the challenges of finding personal identity within a society comprised of various layers.

It is noteworthy to take a closer look at the consequences of Anand's work in the context of current theories and approaches regarding identity. In the same way, they still are for theories of social justice especially where questions of race and colour are at the centre of the post-colonial and subaltern studies, his extension and interrogation of how systemic forces form identity remain significant. Anand was able to incorporate the voice of the oppressed through word and pen, and the direction he took has made way for writings of aspiring generations of writers and scholars to better address identity in institutionally colored forms. He has left a positive mark in the world as a source of inspiration for those who want to study the system of defining and regulating human beings. ■

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# Maya's Search for Identity in Anita Desai's *Cry, the Peacock*

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Anita Desai, one of the well-known contemporary Indian English novelists talks about the predicament and the status of women in Indian society. Women writers have contributed significantly to Indian English Novels from female perspectives. This research paper aims to explore the sensibility of women through the main character Maya. Desai unfolds the detached relationship and the failure of the marriage system between husband and wife through the characters Gautama and Maya of the middle-class Indian family. The important aspect of feminine sensibility is laid bare through Maya as she represents the traditional role of mother, wife, and daughter-in-law in a male-dominated society. The psychological problem arises out of solitude for the communication gap with aged husband, Gautama. The novelist focuses on the struggle of an individual character. The portrayal of an individual and society is presented through the vice-versa mode. Violence against women in the form of psychological, financial, and social forms through ill-treatment, exploitation, and humiliation become a major issue.

**Key Words:** Indian women, Marriage, Traditional roles, Suffering, Patriarchy

## Introduction

Anita Desai's debut novel *Cry, the Peacock* (1963) revolves around the female character Maya. Being a woman, Anita Desai portrays the women characters and writes about women through the eyes of women's perspectives. Maya's journey starts at her father's and brother's house at an early age as a princess in a fairyland and ends at her husband's house. Her transformation takes place from a fragile character to the ugliest character, she transforms herself from a good character to a neurotic character due to circumstances and her own experiences. Maya suffers from her loneliness and loveless married life, as a child she is deprived of her mother's love but her father showers overwhelming affection and love on her. As a result, she becomes a neurotic and represents as a rebel. But after her marriage, she fails to fulfil her expectations, here the novel unfolds the failure of the marriage institute. In the patriarchal society, Maya becomes a victim and is quite suppressed and oppressed.

**Objectives of the Study:** The researcher tries to study the role of women from socio-cultural perspectives. The research paper explores the status and predicament of women along with Indian feminine sensibility. The attempt is made to focus on one's identity through the woman character Maya.

**Methodology:** The primary and secondary data are collected for the present study. The primary data includes interviews and novel manifestations. The secondary source material is mainly the relevant published and unpublished material. The data is acquired through online articles and research papers.

**Introduction:** The complexities of man-woman relationships are shown through ill-matched husbands in Desai's *Cry, the Peacock*. The woman always receives the secondary place. Simone De Beauvoir's book *The Second Sex* shows women's struggle, various social aspects, and various dimensions. She rightly points out "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman...." (Simone De Beauvoir 210) Simone De Beauvoir and Judith Butler reflect many social aspects and show various themes. A woman occupies a lot of space in the orthodox Indian society. Kate Millet's milestone work 'Sexual Politics' talks about the abolition of male supremacy from a social and personal perspective. She concludes 'because of our social circumstances, male and female are two cultures and their life experiences are utterly different and this is crucial' (Kate Millet 1972). Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* shows how American women came to release the problem of women from the early 1960s.

The female character Maya is sensitive and lives in a world of dreams rather than coping with her surroundings. She wants to see Darjeeling and the dance of Kathakali ballets but her husband does not show any interest in her. Gautama says that because of economic problems, they cannot go to the south to watch the Kathakali dance. Lack of independence gives insecurity, powerlessness, and uncertainty. Maya wants to join an Urdu friend's party but Gautama does not allow her for the party. Gautama is calculative, highly insensitive towards her wife's expectations and does not give her freedom. This leads to suffocation and Maya is scared of herself and as well as society. Gautama tortures her wife silently by giving her a subordinate status. Maya's friends are also not happy with their family members and try to live with compromise. Maya's friend Pom does not like her husband and the family and Maya's other friend Leila, a teacher of Persian at Girl's High School marries a man who suffers due to disease. Leila's husband suffers from tuberculosis. They tied the knot of marriage after falling in love with each other so that materially they have small expectations from life.

Once Maya visits her friend's house and comes to know that her friend Leila takes utmost care of her ill husband and even Pom also accepts her married life. Maya is a typical woman who stands for newness, brightness, colour, and light-heartedness. Gautama's sister Nila is also not happy in her married life and she wants to get a divorce from her husband. She needs help from her brother Gautama but being a lawyer, he is not ready to help her as it becomes a matter of his dignity and status. Generally speaking, Maya means affection or

love and in one sense Maya stands for illusion and materialistic attachments. Maya's search for identity goes beyond her necessities such as food, clothes, and accommodation. Maya cannot understand her friends Pom and Leila and their attitudes toward life. Despite knowing the difficulties in her friend's lives, she does not create a healthy atmosphere in her inner world. Maya's natural desires and expectations from her husband make her more sensitive. Being a lawyer, her husband spends a lot of time in the office work. The fear, anxiety, melancholy, and even oppression come in the form of unrecognized things under the guise of love, protection, care, and affection. In the patriarchal society, Maya always tries to find her 'self' identity and tries to fulfill her craving, but she does not make any decisions. In this regard, Sinha states: "A woman's normal destiny is still marriage, which practically means total subordination to man in the existing context of things." (Post-Colonial Women Writers, 2008). It becomes clear that woman's world is very limited to cooking and rearing. As the head of family, a man takes important decisions independently. In case of Maya, she has to take permission for the routine activities and any planning.

Desai shows disharmony in familial relationships. Women are alienated from society, parents, families, and even in their selves. Women are not an important part of the family but they are ill-treated. As a result, there are unsolved, unanswered questions before human beings. Desai depicts the Indian woman as a victim and later on she transforms that character of woman into a rebellious one. The woman character Maya starts her journey as a submissive and obedient woman and ends as a rebellious woman. A woman like Maya went through a change because of her experiences and surroundings. A woman's intrinsic desire to know her identity makes her more conscious. As the daughter of a wealthy aristocratic father, she enjoys luxury but without her mother, she feels loneliness in her world as she does not share her feelings with her father. She was searching for someone to share her feelings. When the story opens, the reader comes to know that her dog Toto dies and this incident makes her more deplorable. Maya says: "It was that something else, that indefinable unease at the back of my mind, the grain of sand that irked, itched, and remained meaningless.

Meaningless, and yet its presence was real, and a truly physical shadow of death, like the giant shadows cast by trees, split across the leaves and grasses towards me, with horrifying swiftness, till like the crowding blades of grass, it reached my toes, lapped my feet, tickling and worrying, and I leaped from my chair in terror, overcome by a sensation of snakes coiling and uncoiling and uncoiling their moist lengths about me, of evil descending from an overhanging branch, of an insane death, unprepared for, heralded by deafening drum-beats..." (*Cry the Peacock*). She shows human virtues like kindness, happiness, and positive thinking towards animals. In her childhood, she starts her journey and struggles to live within a limited world. The loss of self-respect, honour, status and perception of life make her deplorable. Maya says, "How little he knows my suffering or of how to comfort me .... Telling me to go sleep. While he worked at his papers, he did not give another thought to me" (*Cry the Peacock*). Gautama does not know her sufferings and pains rather he tells her to sleep. However, he is very busy person in his work but Maya needs his

valuable time. This shows the communication gap and further it leads to her loneliness, and becomes the greatest hindrance in their relationship.

Maya is a traditional woman who believes in the prophecy of the astrologer. She performs the rituals in the evening. She spends her time in the preparations of housework. Financially she depends on her husband and is often neglected, humiliated and her husband Gautama. The novel revolves around the harsh screams of Maya. Maya's cry for love, affection, and understanding remains unanswered and unquestionable. The animal- a small bird the Peacock's cry is highly symbolic and compared with the cry of Maya. As a young girl, she was a pampered child and received all the comforts as a princess at her father's house. It reminds the poem 'Palanquin Bearers' by Indian poetess Sarojini Naidu which expresses the bride's feelings and emotions and along with that the poetess expresses the journey of a woman from her father's house to her husband's house. She is a motherless child, and as a result, her upbringing is not normal in such an atmosphere, of course, her father is over-careful about her, and consequently, she suffers from the cause of egotism and possessiveness. At the same time, she becomes the victim of patriarchy in the guise of different characters such as father, brother, and husband in a male-dominated world.

All this becomes a cause for disharmonious relationships in the family after her marriage. There are other traits in Maya's character, which transcend the idea of Feminism. She is in search of new vistas for a woman's world, a space in which she is on par with man akin to the dance of the peacocks who destroy each other in spite of being madly in love. Maya thinks of her married life with Gautama as a deadly struggle in which one is destined to kill the other. Rebuffed by her husband, Maya is torn between her love of life and her fear of death. She is deeply stricken with the sense of loneliness and insecurity. (Bilquees Dar, 89) Albino, astrologer's prophecy makes her restless and brings unhappiness. At her young age, an astrologer predicted that after her marriage in the fourth year either her husband or wife will die. At her maternal house, Albino predicts that she will marry at an early age and one of the couples will die unnaturally. It creates a state of vacuum in her mind and gets the feelings of haunted all the time. Like the great Indian novelist R.K. Narayan, Anita Desai depicts the dialogues of astrologers and these things occur in Maya's life. This superstition makes her weak and timid.

At the end of the novel, the female protagonist Maya pushes her husband Gautama from the top roof and he falls to death. This shows her insanity and death of her happiness and fulfilment of her desires which she expected from early childhood. The impact of the astrologer's prophecy resulted in a severe and ugly way. After Gautama's death, she laughs and gets the relief of freedom. Maya's unexpressed feelings, emotions, and thoughts make her restless. The writer and well-known critic Chanda argues: '*Cry the Peacock* is a faithful description of psychosomatic growth of a female character, who cannot cope with the practical world of the husband and feels dejected, forlorn and demoralized' (Sense of Alienation 1914). However, the dark cloud of unhappiness does not leave her for a long time. Albino's prophecy created an illusion in her inner mind and she could not live like other women characters

such as Pom, Leila, and Nila. After pushing down Gautama, her insanity does not stop, she also jumps out of the open balcony and commits suicide. Bindu Lata Chaudhary proclaims, “The joy of life in her case is the joy of death as the story shows her thirst for life and this is gradually built up only to justify her killing of Gautama” (Chaudhary 61). Mentally and socially isolated Maya ends her materialistic life by committing suicide. It may have happened because of her husband’s profession, his insensitive nature, practical and rational approach toward life. In the modern time, the government has launched Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao’s campaign for the empowerment of women. In addition to this, Balika Samridhi Yojana, Mahila Samridhi Yojana, and Ladaki Bahin Yojana in Maharashtra are examples of women empowerment.

### **Conclusion:**

Anita Desai tried to unfold the predicament of her woman character through Maya. The unsuited couple represents the various types of violence. Maya has broken the socio-cultural roles by pushing her husband to death from the top roof. At last, with a note of pessimistic approach, Maya finds the meaningfulness of life through death. It is observed that a status woman is subordinate to a man through Mya and Gautama. Maya’s struggle for her own identity has become more challenging. Albino, an astrologer plays a significant role in Maya’s life. His prediction has brought a horrible explosion in the form of the death of Maya and Gautama. Desai has highlighted the status of women through the character of Maya. His murder is the release of Maya’s feminine sensibility. ■

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## V. S. Naipaul's *An Area of Darkness*: A Tale of Desire for Rooting and Re-Rooting

Jumi Kalita

By travelling across the seven seas, V.S.Naipaul found every country he travelled to be nightmare for the uprooted people like him. A close exploration of Naipaul's own soul and psyche, as depicted in his works, is a necessary pursuit to make a righteous appraisal of his treatment of the theme of the immigrants stranded in foreign land and confronting with alien culture. Three generations of diaspora are portrayed in his work who trying to find their feet across the seven seas .In his works, Naipaul has not only displayed traditional Hindu ways of life but also the indenture Indians who are trapped in the Caribbean Island without any hope of going back to India, their original homeland. Naipaul's lack of roots is a burden that he carries with him during his travels around the world and on the other hand it becomes his weapon with which he could examine the countries he visits. *An Area of Darkness* is considered Naipaul's first encounter with India that explores Naipaul's search for roots and his formulation of identity in the backdrop of the postcolonial concepts of culture and diaspora.

**Key Words:** Diaspora, Migration, Rooting, Re-rooting, Naipaul

V.S. Naipul's creative corpus accommodates not only his collection of novels, but alsohis stories, essays and travel writings and there has always been a sense of rediscovery of his works. As a writer of multiple heritages,Naipaul remains an instable traveler and has undergone transformation from a novelist to a story writer and essayist of acute observation of world issues, specially the issues faced by the Third world countries.Naipaul's fictions and non-fictions are closely related on the account of establishing problems and the effects of socio-geographical displacement during and after the colonial rule. He has the tragic view of history because after travelling the third world countries, he came to know the world-its pitilessness and struggle, its indifference to human suffering. His travels in Caribbean and later on the subcontinent and in Africa bring him with better understanding of his own history as a displaced Indian. In *A House for Mr.Biswas*, Naipaul had already written of the artificiality and the mimicry of the colonial existence. Mr.Biswas was oppressed by the feelings of authenticity; something had missing in past, something bound up with

humiliation of India from where his father like Naipaul's grandfather had arrived in the Caribbean as indentured labourer.

As an exile, facing cultural collisions, Naipaul does not escape disintegration and alienating effects and his dislocation from his roots enables him to treat his own alienation as an instance of his quest for identity of colonial and postcolonial people. In this regard Elleke Boehmer makes a pertinent remark on Naipaul's postcolonial response to Indian situations: "As a writer enamoured of British culture, and scornful of formerly colonized societies, Naipaul is central to any discussion of assimilation and duality of postcolonial identity" (1995:176). He pursues the middle passage and strives to discover his center by living in between and through sharing both origin and ends. His travels proved to be an important segment for the development of his art. Moreover, his travels helped him to bring his perspective to view his personal emptiness and homelessness against the wider context of the world.

India is the background of his childhood and even "the country of imagination" (*An Area of Darkness*, 1964: 41). He knows India through the language he spoke at home with the immigrant Indians and the books he read. For him India...was a country out in the void beyond the dot of Trinidad; and from it our journey had been final. It was a country suspended in time, it could not be related to the country discovered later-and I thought of the time when the transference was made as a period of darkness, darkness which also extended to the land, as darkness surrounds a hut at evening though for little way around the hut there is still light. The light was the area of my experience in time and place (*An Area of Darkness*, 1964: 30)

Naipaul begins his journey from the realm of darkness, with an attitude of ambivalence hoping to fill the area of darkness with experience. The darkness of Naipaul is the darkness of his own situation born out of romantic imagination. He continually tries to impose his personalized, romanticized images of India on the reality, and when the reality militates against his pre-conceived notion he allows his narrative to slip into an exercise of unwarranted moralizing and misplaced criticism. It was such a background with which Naipaul travelled to India and he wanted to explore the possibilities of finding his roots in India from which he alienated culturally, emotionally and also by birth. As he travelled towards India through Cairo and other eastern countries, the East tried "to reveal itself and each recognition was a discovery" (*An Area of Darkness*, 11). The first thing he discovered about India was that it was a land of his imagination; it was an in the words of Salman Rushdie "imaginary homeland" (*Imaginary Homeland*, 1991).

*An Area of Darkness* reflects Naipaul's visit to India and his visit to India is motivated by his desire to redefine his position as a Hindu of Indian origin and to examine whether India is his home. Through the book Naipaul expresses his feelings and describes his experiences in India and gives the reader deep insight into a country and his strange sensibility. A certain sense of both nostalgia and pain accompany a migrant's thought of home. Naipaul's

other two books on India *India: A Wounded Civilization* (1977) and *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (1990) mark his vision and engagement with India. His encounter with India can be interpreted with exile, suffering, struggle and return as reflected in his books.

Edward Said in his *Culture and Imperialism* emphasizes that identity of a nation depends on new and different kinds of visions, nations are defined also by their natives who live in exile, “whose conscious is that of the intellectual and artist in exile, the political figure between domains, between forms, between homes, and between languages” (1990: 408). Said’s theory of ‘counterpoint’ sees the intellectual exile as extract of displaced refugee. For many of them the picture of India as home appears only in fantasy. The task of diasporic migrant writers lies on drawing a home from the space-less, redefining existence from individualistic view, discovering a world in one’s own authentic space. Therefore the dynamics of re-location is central to define Indian nation in its plural form. Thus Naipaul’s involvement with Third World has categorized his writings as Indian or Caribbean. ‘Place’ is an important segment that reveals through his works. For him ‘place’ is subtle emotion which makes him involve and move with pain. On the other hand Naipaul expresses his inability to write about London in *The Times Literary Supplement*: “I like London. For all the reasons I have given it is the best place to write in. The problem for me is that it is not a place I can write about. Not as yet. Unless I am able to refresh myself by travel- to Trinidad, to India- I fear that living here will eventually lead to my own sterility; and I may have to look for another job” (15 August, 1958).

A third generation Indian, born and brought up in Trinidad, Naipaul’s world is bounded by the mechanics of colonialism. This can be traced one of Naipaul’s quoted images of man in colonial society: “A derelict man in a derelict land; a man discovering himself, with surprise and resignation, lost in a landscape which had never ceased to be unreal because of the scene of an enforced and always temporary residence” (*The Middle Passage*, 1962: 189). For Naipaul’s father his new home in the west was to have an eternally temporary feeling because he kept hoping that at some time he would be able to go back to his village. However, the physical objects that spoke of India to Naipaul the child were all symbols of a faraway home which existed in miniature within the walls of his house in Trinidad. The emphasis is on a lost world which Naipaul recovers with his writer’s imagination. It is the process of re-location that Naipaul goes through in his travel account of India.

On the basis of the romantic picture of India embedded deep in his consciousness he had come to his ancestral roots with high expectations. By preserving the ancient culture he had desired to see a revitalized India. His visits to Trinidad and India – both countries now learning with a postcolonial scenario had certain things in common. Naipaul finds that Indians like the West Indies people mimic the British and there is an inversion of freedom and power in this country also. However, the greatest difference between the two was that Trinidadians like Indians did not have the asset of rich ancient, pluralistic culture which was both an asset as well as a handicap in modernization. His double alienation

was complete – the alienation from Trinidad and the one from India. He concludes in *An Area of Darkness*. “It was a journey that ought not to have been made; it had broken my life in two” (*An Area of Darkness*, 289).

The insider/outsider balance is introduced in *An Area of Darkness* and remains central to the tone of the narrative. He observes India with an imperialistic outlook of an outsider as well as an insider’s sensibility. He comes to the country with expectations but also with a sense of humiliation that his ancestors have to live the motherland as indentured labourers. It is the striking feature of the book that very often starts with objective narrative emphasizing the external details but this aspect gets replaced by his introspective and autobiographical projections.

The ambiguity of the title produces the urge to explore the land ‘India’ and also brings implicit judgement of the life in India. Naipaul observes that India had produced so many persons and things which he has found around him “featureless” (*An Area of Darkness*, 30) and he considered time as a “period of darkness” (30) which no longer belongs to him. His early regret is that he lacks the solid unchanging allegiance of his grandfather to a simple pure idea of India. Here Naipaul develops the same idea that he formed structural principle of *A House for Mr. Biswas*. Tulsidom is an obstinate preservation of India in Hanuman House like the village of the Dubeys in Trinidad. There he has dwelt on the inherent decay of the physical structure of the house: “its central hall was made of timer pillars which the woodlice were already attacking the mud walls of the kitchen were in a state of utter dilapidation” (*A House for Mr. Biswas*, 87). The ‘idea’ of India is strongly reflects within the house. The picture of India and its decay are seen as simultaneous with the obvious reality of a multi-racial existence. Where Muslim neighbours are concerned, the idea of ‘difference’ has limited the idea of the Indian nation. Indianness begins to be defined by how it is unlike the ‘others’ (Said, 1978:27).

Cultural expatriation is the chief motif of Naipaul’s postcolonial writing. As a traveller in the cultural spaces in India, he examines social mannerism, tradition and custom but his Western rational mind is unable to cope up with cultural shock. The ironic distance he tries to maintain is through the language of shock, satire and derision in the texts. India of his mythological conception, the residue of his childhood memories, is a land different from that what he really sees: In so many of the brightly coloured religious pictures in my grandmother’s house I had seen these mountains, cones of white against simple, cold blue. They had become part of the India of my fantasy... the pictures I knew to be wrong; their message was no message to me; but in that corner of the mind, which continues child-like their truth remained a possibility (*An Area of Darkness*, 167).

Although Naipaul creates the concept of India in his mind from reminiscences, personal decisions and actual interaction with Indian people, but he brings to India the colonial experiences of Trinidad and London, a western vision with a distinct Indian ancestry. The mingling of the two visions have made his first travel book on India both a record of a

sense of belonging and an assertion of eternal homelessness. Distrust and feeling of insecurity have already begun to define the East for Naipaul. Seeing life in its lowest forms, he is led to judge the absurdity of people who could ever be proud to wield power over such creatures. The anger of the emigrant turns to “a later self-disgust” (An Area of Darkness, 16). Naipaul sees India from the point of view of his own responses and responds spontaneously to all he sees.

It is the Indian acceptance of British that challenges Naipaul’s perceptions about India. By analyzing British India and today’s India, Naipaul sees not the victory of Indian’s independence but the humiliation of people who blindly follows the British customs and keep “kipling’s”(An Area of Darkness, 57) India alive. In “Fantasy and Ruin” one of the sections of An Area of Darkness, Naipaul distinguishes between artificiality of British India and the dirt of India where numerous conquerors from the Aryans to the Muslims are ruined and gives a distasteful vision of past and present Indianness. It is Naipaul’s direct confrontation with imagination and he digs up the roots of his imagination. He carefully examines his past experiences: his experiences as a colonial in Trinidad; his experience of England as it existed in Trinidad and his idea of India that he formed in Trinidad. He is not prepared to accept the England that he finds in India.

Naipaul looks into himself and wonders why the “detachment” he had cultivated during his prolonged isolations of his stay in England, deserted him in India. He sees in India’s acceptance of England, the typical Indian ability “to retreat, the ability genuinely not to see what was obvious” (An Area of Darkness, 200). Naipaul observes India living with British Raj that was long dead and becomes a country that lives amongst incongruous, “alien ruins” (An Area of Darkness, 202) because in India “everything is inherited, nothing abolished” (An Area of Darkness, 206). Thus Naipaul’s perceptions about India are marked by an inevitable insider-outsider conflict. He feels the way that the Indians had to see themselves through European eyes to be aware of their own spirituality, so that “in the acquiring of an identity in their own land they became displaced” (An Area of Darkness, 212). With a fractured vision familiar in postcolonial discourse Naipaul blames Indian acceptance of suppression as a case not a mimicry but “schizophrenia” (An Area of Darkness, 55).

While writing An Area of Darkness, it becomes difficult for Naipaul to disassociate himself from the idea that Fantasy had also become part of the Indian Ruin. Naipaul’s nationalist desire to preserve the ‘wholeness’ of India in his imagination had somehow subtracted a pure idyllic subcontinent from the burden of past misfortune which became part of its identity. The ‘Taj Mahal’ may “speak only of personal plunder and a country with an infinite capacity to be plundered” (An Area of Darkness, 205). But it cannot be seen from the cycle rickshaw man’s “straining limbs” (An Area of Darkness, 206) that take tourist to see it. Naipaul’s pain after observing the wounds of India causes the same fear and anger which becomes the integral part of every migrant’s perspective for both the Nationalist’s desire and the colonialist’s enthusiasm. It is a desire to see “home” as heaven, pure and unblemished- a true fantasy (SudhaRai, 1982: 62).

Naipaul's work on India is to be located as a migrant's enthusiasm to show the hollowness of Indian adulation of the conqueror's legacy and seeking his own reflection through them. *An Area of Darkness* thus reflects his profound sense of marginality, homelessness and not belonging to any place and community that combined the fact that he is in a chaotic and unstructured world and that will inform his view of civilization. Here he makes an assessment of his own relationship to the past which cannot correspond to the structured ideal and ultimately becomes indefinable and homeless.

*An Area of Darkness* was written when Naipaul was very young and it can be a devastating experience to discover one's past which is based on illusion, containing only fragments of fact. Naipaul's interaction with the Indians and his experiences on sub-continent brings tremendous bitterness. Naipaul discovers that an attempt to reclaim the past is always accompanied by a danger of losing ourselves completely to a bitterness informed by the illusion of the past. Therefore, *An Area of Darkness* is a warning for one not to go back home and even never wish to go home. Naipaul feels for the loss of his heritage that turned out to be utterly foreign to him.

Naipaul's visit to India is thus marked with the world of myth and darkness and he cannot return back here again. He realizes that despite everything he is the one who is out of place and does not belong not only to India but also England and Trinidad. His return to the land of his ancestors by returning to the nineteen acres of his grandfather's land could no longer inspire his "colonial prudence" (*An Area of Darkness*, 256). The little effort he makes to discover India has shattered and he becomes alienated. He comes to realize that his alienation is not only from India but also from England as well. In the connection of his alienation and his search for the roots Naipaul asserts: Into this alienation we daily ventured, and at length we were absorbed into it. But we knew there had been change, gain, loss. We knew that something which was once whole had been washed away. What was whole was the idea of India (*An Area of Darkness*, 200).

V.S.Naipaul projects his diasporic sensibility with a sense of frustration, disillusionment, anguish and anger which is an outcome of his being denied essence of belongingness and a special identity in India. India therefore, becomes an area of darkness for him where the diasporic self of Naipaul becomes a restless traveller to define and redefine himself by constantly musing upon his roots. His desperate desire to (re)root himself being mostly frustrated, India finally becomes for him a land of wounded civilization. ■

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# Aesthetics of Suffering: An Overview of Malayalam Dalit Literature

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Today Dalit Literature has become a vibrant presence in most of the regional languages in India including Malayalam surpassing the Dalit who still face upper-caste atrocities, social unteachability and economic exploitation. It has inscribed itself in the mind scape of ordinary readers and scholars churning timehonoured assumptions and holy verdicts. With the subaltern speak, the long silence now seems broken with telling effect. Although Malayalam Dalit Literature became a movement only in the closing decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, its history can be extended to the Kerala renaissance of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Though poets like Kunjan Nambiar had critiqued the caste ideology in the 18<sup>th</sup> century through his performance like *ParayanThullal*, it was during the renaissance that the question of caste got serious consideration, especially in Kumaran Asan's poems. Asan was inspired by Sri Narayana Guru, a major renaissance figure of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, who had led a veritable crusade against casteism, attempting to reform the caste-ridden Kerala society. But Dalit critics have exposed contradictions in Asan's anti-caste positions. With the unshackling of Ambedkar's ideas through Malayalam translations of his writings and speeches a new generation of Dalit scholars and writers have emerged in Malayalam literary scenario who radically demonstrate the chinks in the grand forte of Kerala Renaissance. The article is an attempt to critically evaluate the contributions of the pioneering and present writers to the corpus of Malayalam Dalit Literature.

**Key Words:** Dalit, Caste system, Subaltern, Malayalam Dalit Literature, Kerala Renaissance,

The term 'Dalit' means 'the spurned' and the term has acquired the sense of the marginalized, inferior, subordinate 'other', lacking all virtues and tastes. A product of the unjust and inhuman caste system, this marginal object's utterances/creative expressions were also treated for long, as marginal, insignificant or even, non-existent. Any cultural sphere is a reflex of the socio-political sphere it's born in to, and begets the fault lines of its power sometimes. However, in recent times there has been a spurt of Dalit creativity, and Dalit writings are appearing in all major languages: Marathi, Hindi, Panjabi, Bengali, Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam and so on. The erstwhile untouchables are using the

weapons of literacy - traditionally denied to them - for exposing the wretched conditions of caste subordination imposed upon them by the votaries of Sanatana dharma. Dalit writings confront Gayatri Spivak's contention that "the subaltern cannot speak"(110).

Malayalam Literature has produced a rich corpus of Dalit writings which is available in all genres: poems, short stories, novels, dramas, essays and autobiographies. The lived experiences of Dalits: caste violence, discrimination, untouchability, poverty and deprivation flame in to words in Malayalam Dalit writing. Through their literary representations, Dalit writers' assert their identities and pour forth their dissenting voices against the dehumanizing effects of caste.

The origin of Malayalam Dalit literature can be located in the oral folk songs of Kerala. As the folkloric expressions of Dalits are the oldest manifestations of their culture, Dalit writings in Malayalam necessarily exudes the influence of Dalits folk tradition that includes their folk songs, folk tales, myths, legends and their ritualistic and performative art forms. In factorality is a precondition for Dalit writing as it is from the oral roots, along with the indigenous subaltern social movements and the Ambedkarite movement, that Dalit writing in Malayalam has inherited its anti-caste edge. Therefore it is wrong to categorize Malayalam Dalit Literature into two phases: the Oral and the written. There is a wrong tendency to treat only the works belonging of the written phase as literary neglecting the literary value of the Dalit orature. In fact, the tradition of Malayalam Dalit writings can be located beyond the indigenous anti-caste movements and the Ambedkarite movement to the rich corpus of the Dalit folklore of Kerala.

Modern Dalit writings in Malayalam can be viewed as an offshoot of the general awakening of Dalit consciousness across the country as a result of Ambedkar's movement for Dalit emancipation in the twentieth century. It was after the movement of Ambedkar that established notions about history, politics, culture and aesthetics began to be questioned and reconstructed. Buttressing Ambedkar's crusade for Dalits, the writing back from the peripheries began in the 1960's in Maharashtra, the epicentre of the Ambedkar's anti-caste campaigns. However, Dalit Literature became a national movement only in the 1980's and 1990's making its vibrant presence felt in most of the regional languages including Malayalam.

One of the reasons for the Dalit literary upsurge in India in the 80's is the unshackling of Ambedkar's thought from the cultural prison his enemies had thrust it, with the publication of his complete works and its subsequent translation into regional languages. Later, the raging debate on caste reservation in the 90's sparked by the implementation of the Mandal commission recommendation and the nation-wide wave of political protest fuelled and aided the fissures further. The concerted anti-reservation moves by high caste cultural and political factions, abetted by studied neutrality of the left-right combine, catalysed into the spontaneous consolidation of Dalits as a marginalized category. Identity politics emerged as a major formation in some states. Ambedkar became the centre of Dalit mobilization, communal

identity and intellectual debate. The critical appraisal of Ambedkar's legacy also led to the rediscovery of Ambedkar as a national icon. All these generated a renewed interest on the caste question and gave a new vigour and relevance to Malayalam Dalit writings.

Although Malayalam Dalit Literature became a movement only in the closing decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, its history can be extended to the Kerala renaissance of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Though poets like Kunjan Nambiar had critiqued the caste ideology in the 18<sup>th</sup> century through his performance like *ParayanThullal*, it was during the renaissance that the question of caste got serious consideration, especially in Kumaran Asan's poems. Asan was inspired by Sri Narayana Guru, a major renaissance figure of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, who had led a veritable crusade against casteism, attempting to reform the caste-ridden Kerala society. But beyond Sri Narayana Guru's anti-caste crusade, what seems to have prompted Kumaran Asan's poems like "Duravastha" and "Chandalabhikshuki" was his missionary zeal for reforming the Hindu society.

An astute social thinker, Asan was aware of the empowering aspects of colonial modernity that could enable Dalits to be aware of the social injustice of casteism. Like his counterparts in the renaissance movements in Bengal: the Brahma Samaj and Arya Samaj, and the native reformers of Kerala like Chattampi Swamikal - his work *Kristumathachhedanam* is a staunch defense of Hinduism against Christian missionary assault - Asan too feared that the Dalits would convert to Christianity or Islam as revivalism reigned supreme in these religions. Therefore, in his poems such as "Duravastha" and "Chandalabhikshuki", Asan stood for reformation in Hindu religion and called for a more humane approach towards dalits. K K Kochu, a leading Malayalam Dalit critic opines, 'Asan's primary objective was not the annihilation of caste; instead of attacking the precepts of *Chatur Varna* and *Sanatana Dharma* his poetry only reaffirms them' (148). This also explains why, Asan, in spite of his virulent attack on the social division between *Varna* and *Avarna*, nevertheless, had to make his high caste heroine *Savithri* refine her lower caste lover by teaching him the Hindu scriptures: *Vedas*, *Upanishads* and *Smritis* in order to make him eligible to share life with him.

Though poets of the Romantic era like Changampuzha have selectively dealt with caste issues in poems like "Vazhakkula" in ornate and poetic language, he seems less concerned about the brutal caste oppression of Dalits than their class exploitation. Though the poem succeeds in demonstrating the exploitation of Dalits under feudal social order that flattens on Dalits surplus labour, the poet seems carried away by the seductive appeal of Marxist ideology that promised the establishment of a classless, egalitarian social order with the eradication of feudalism. Whereas, the above 'Dalitist' (Dalit+elitist) poets like Asan and Changampuzha tried to articulate the cause of the oppressed castes with clear religious and class intentions, appropriating Dalit identity and experience; the 'Dalit insiders' depicted the lived experiences of Dalits with stark realism. Early Dalit poems like "Jathikummi" by Pandit Karuppan, "About my Race..." by Poikayil Appachan (Sri Kumara Guru) "Arukolakandam" by K.K. Govindan Asan are worth mentioning in this regard.

Viewed from a Dalit perspective, indeed, the much-touted Kerala renaissance was a failure. While the movement had an empowering impact on communities like the Nairs and Ezhavas, it failed to effect the consolidation and empowerment of Dalits. Dalits were neither allowed to participate nor became beneficiaries. They were, for instance, left out from various representations submitted to the Maharaja of Travancore such as *Malayali Memorial* and *Ezhava Memorial* for securing administrative participation of the natives in governance. Then again Dalits were left out from the *Nivarthana* agitation of the 1930's organized by the Ezhavas, Christians and Muslims. These communities were demanding that they, along with Nairs should be given proportional representation in the Legislature. While Kerala renaissance had failed to empower the Dalits, it had inspired pioneering Dalit novelists like PotheryKunjambu.

PotheryKunjambu's novel *Saraswativijayam* (1892), through its multi-layered plot provides a cross section of the society of the late 18th century and the caste issues prevalent. It depicts, in a broad canvas, the inhuman ill treatment meted out to Dalits who violate the caste norms. Thus, Marathan, the Dalit male protagonist of the novel is beaten almost to death by Ramankutty Namboodiri the steward of Kuberan Nambudiri for singing while the Namboodiri was being carried away in a palanquin to his Illam. The practice of pollution was wide spread in the Malabar region and the *avarnas* were not only denied access to public places but also their very sight and sound were dreaded by upper castes as polluting. The text also demonstrates how the upper castes enjoyed several immunities and privileges and how the political power and authority sided with them. This accounts for the reason why the complaint against Nambudiri was initially rejected by the police officer.

Kunjambu addresses conversion which was yet another burning issue of the time. While the non-Hindus like Christians and Muslims were not discriminated and enjoyed better privileges, the lower caste Hindus were subjected to all sort of discriminations and humiliations. The text hints at the paradoxical situation of treating as untouchables the lower castes of Hindu society while those lower castes who get converted to other religions like Islam and Christianity were no more considered untouchable. Hence, it was only natural that a large number of conversions from among backward castes took place to Christian and Muslim religions. The novel is a vibrant testament of the emancipatory aspects of the colonial modernity, education, administration, legal and religious systems as far as the liberation of Dalits are concerned. Although published coeval with O. Chandu Menon's *Indulekha* (1890); *Saraswativijayam* was shoved to the side lines by a sleight of hand of the cultural critics and literary historians, while the former was proclaimed as the first true-to-form Malayalam novel. A comparative analysis of *Saraswativijayam* and *Indulekha* will reveal their relative merits and capriciousness of the verdict.

*Saraswativijayam* puts forth a manifesto for Dalit liberation founded on the emancipatory potential of colonial education, administrative reforms and Christian religion. *Indulekha*, on the other hand, deals with the domestic issues of the high caste Nair community such as *Sambandham*— informal marriage of Nair woman by Nambudiri

men- and shift from the matrilineal system to patriarchal one. True, other social issues of the time such as English education, colonial value system and its impact on native culture get a passing mention. While a narrow universe of domestic issues underpins Chandu Menon's work, Kunjambu laments the burning social issues of Hindu society: the evils of untouchability, unapproachability and 'un-seen-ability' - Not only the touch but also even the approach and presence of the Dalit-outcaste was found to be polluting by upper caste moral standards. The novel takes on an ideological position in stating that Dalits can overcome these caste barriers and obtain social mobility through religious conversion, modern education, individual efforts, and by cultivating proper values and virtues.

Yet another relative merit of Kunjambu's work is that it addresses the question of Brahminical patriarchy and its oppressive nature by exposing evil practices like *Smarthavicharana*—the practice of the trial of the Nambudiri woman accused of adultery and her excommunication if found guilty. Through the example of Subadra, the novelist highlights the necessity of women's education and employment for their social and economic empowerment. In spite of these merits, the novel was ignored by critics since novel criticism used tools of high caste aesthetics. The same was the fate of early Dalit fictional interventions like *Pulleli Kunju* (1882), *Gathakavadham* or *The Slayer Slain* (1864).

Although novels, short stories and life writings have not become powerful genres in Malayalam Dalit writings as in other languages like Kannada and Marathi, some attempts deserve attention. The novels and short stories of TKC Vaduthala, for instance, are significant for their realistic portrayals of dalit characters and their social condition. While Smt. Saritha K V attempts a critical explication of the story "Sweet Offering at Chankranthy" in the backdrop of blending tradition and modernity; Dr Sameera Rajan locates the assertion of the Pulaya 'otherness' in select stories of T.K.C. Vaduthala. Dalit life and experience are also realistically -occasionally stereo typically too - represented in the writings of Paul Chirakarode, Kallada Sasi, Kaviyur Murali, EK James, P Rajan, V K Narayanan, Kallara Sukumaran and so on. The works of C Ayyappan indeed stand apart in representing the vexing complexity of Dalit life through the perspective of Modernism. His stories in particular exhibit a rare vision, fresh sensibility and an in-depth understanding of the present day Dalit ethos.

Contemporary Dalit writers like Sunny M Kapikad, Rekha Raj, Renukumar, M B Manoj, Binu M Pallipattu, I K Mohanan, JojiPadappakal, O K santhosh, P B Suresh, A Arun and so on herald a bright future for Malayalam Dalit writings. It was the critical engagement of Dalit intellectuals and literary critics like K K Kochu, K K Baburaj, Pradeepan Pampirikunnu, K Salim Kumar, Ajay Sekhar, V M Unni, M L Sanal, V V Swami that led to the discovery of the formidable significance of their writings. They have contributed meaningfully to the production and interpretation of Dalit writings in tune with Ambedkar's ideology.

K K Kochu is the leading voice among Dalit critics. His rewriting of ancient history of Kerala in *Kerala Charithravum Samootha Roopikaranavum* (2012) - History of Kerala and Social Formation - critiquing main stream historiography and using an indigenous Dalit perspective is a path breaking attempt. His critical analysis of Dalit texts like *Saraswativijayam* using the insights of Modern theories has contributed largely to the rediscovery of the cultural significance of this pioneering Dalit text long ignored by elite critics and literary historians. His radical rereading of the canonical Malayalam writers like O Chandu Menon, Kumaran Asan and Thakazhi demonstrate how their writings far from being progressive reiterate and reproduce caste ethos. His literary essays have helped in formulating a distinctive ideological and cultural aesthetic to contemporary Dalit writings in Malayalam.

The contemporary Malayalam Dalit literary horizon is animated multiple poetic voices like Raghavan Atholi ("Kandathi"), S Joseph ("Identity Card"), Sasi Madhuveli ("Balikakka"), M B Manoj ("Kanunilloraksharavum"), M R Renu Kumar ("Vishakaya"), Sivadas Purameri ("Chornnuolikunna Murry"), to name only a few. They have succeeded in forging a new Dalit consciousness and aesthetics. In their poems one finds the expression of Dalit voice in its intense complexity and multi-layered versatility.

Dalit Writings in Malayalam, despite the politics of exclusion that resulted in the cultural invisibility of early Malayalam Dalit writings, has now, by critical concerns, turned a corner if not come of age, overcoming many a hurdle in its long, eventful evolution. Instead of perceiving their identities through upper caste cultural representations and historical narratives, Dalits writers in Malayalam, as elsewhere in India, has begun to formulate their identities through their own stories and histories using their indigenous representational modes. They started questioning the way Dalit identities are constructed in upper caste writings, and found alternative ways of constructing their identities. The Dalit writers' evident disregard for the mainstream literary tradition is also evident in their rejection of the oppressors' literary forms, conventions, content and style. Dalit writers unlike the post modernists believe in the role language and narrative in effecting social and political changes.

Although Dalit literature has become a national movement with its formidable presence in all regional literatures the real question is whether the wide dissemination and growing acceptance of Dalit literature has led to affirmative action to alleviate the pain and suffering of the Dalits as a caste entity. One cannot but agree with S Anand's view in this regard, : "While the grand realities of apartheid in India do not concern most non-dalits in India and abroad... they seem comfortable consuming Dalit literature " (4). However, there is no denying the fact that the popularization of Dalit literature has indeed helped to nationalize and internationalize the continuing discrimination against Dalits in India. ■

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# A Hermeneutical Reading of Fourth World Literature

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The contemporary discourse on Fourth World Literature offers deeper insights into the field of anthropology, literature, memory studies and social sciences. Within the broad spectrum of hermeneutics, Fourth world Literature/Native Literature draws on multiple philosophical and theoretical interpretations to a text. The current research paper seeks to explore how hermeneutics offers a multidisciplinary framework to interpret cultural artifacts such as, texts, films, music, and visual arts. With an abundance of texts embodied as Fourth World Literature today it is both interesting and challenging to bring them within a single unification and to adopt a stipulated methodology and theology due to its heterogeneous nature. Interestingly, there lies a huge corpus of literature known as Fourth World Literature from across the globe. Due to its inter-racial allegiance under the only historical and unifying backdrop of colonialism its existence before the invent of print literature is assumed as liminal and insignificant within the dynamics of European literary canon. Its emergence as a prominent voice in literature today and the surmounting theories embodying the same, it attempts to historicize the notion of what could be termed as literature. With the emergence of ALT Literature today, literature itself is constantly evolving into something new everyday.

Fourth World Literature grapples with the socio-economic, literary and cultural conditions which impaired the lives of the natives. Reading these cultural artifacts enriches our understanding and knowledge of European colonial formation, post colonialism and the socio-cultural background of the colonial nation. Drawing upon E. D. Hirsch's, *cultural literacy* wherein he talks about the three important dimensions of hermeneutics namely, the linguistic dimension, the historical dimension and the cultural dimension the paper tries to explicate the dynamics of the hermeneutical theory in studying native literature. Understanding the linguistic facet of fourth world literature throws light on how literature was evaluated only on the metrics of script and all literature which was in oral form or in heliolithic forms predating print culture was considered to be out of the contours of the literary canon. French philosopher like Jacques Derrida in his *of grammatology* has challenged this linguistic privileging of script over other forms of literature even till date. Cultural activist and linguist like G.N. Devy has also highlighted such a linguistic

discrimination eclipsing the rich cultural legacy of these nations and the acute suffering under the reigns of colonialism.

Cultural literacy talks about knowledge passed down through traditions like language, literature, arts and culture common to a socio- cultural group. Individuals who are adept to this and have mastered this knowledge engage in a meaningful society through ‘lived experience’. This shared body of knowledge is vital for effective communication and interpretation.

We can use the three dimensions of hermeneutic analysis to interpret any native text. Linguistic dimension engages with the language and literary devices used in the text like the mnemonics of remembering and forgetting, repetition, rhymes, native idioms and jokes. Historical dimension involves understanding the historical context in which a book was written. To any native literature across the globe the only underlying and common backdrop is European colonization. The cultural dimension of these texts can be examined through their artistic forms such as folklores, music, art, dance, mythology, flora, fauna, agriculture, ecology and sustainability. The paper explicates some of the powerful Fourth World literary texts from India, Africa and Australia applying the methodology of hermeneutics of Schleiermacher, Gadamer, Dilthey and Heidegger.

**Key Words:** Erlebnis (lived experience) ; Lebenswelt ; Hermeneutic Circle ; Historical Consciousness ; Verstehen (empathetic understanding)

## **Introduction**

Contemporary discourse on Fourth World Literature draws on a multidisciplinary framework in analysing the triangulation of literature, memory, anthropology, and social sciences. Fourth World Literature embodies a broad canon of literature from across the globe which is diverse in its nature but unified under the familiar backdrop of colonization, permeating the boundaries of ethnicity, language and culture. This literature once shoved to the margins, owing to the socio - political configuration and out of the tremendous efforts of activists and writers has become a discourse today both in academia and in mainstream life. This literature seeks to understand distinct histories of conflict confronted by a race, its extinction in terms of identity, language, culture, the neglect of its traditions and isolation from knowledge transactions that are part of mainstream lives and above all being painted as “ savages” in history through the lens of the ‘other’ and its slow but effective ascendance to the centre of academic discourse reinforces its political aspiration as a ‘counter narrative’ to the existing dominant literature.

The existence of Native literature as per records predates the print literature and the significance of these writings have never been endorsed as a consequence of linguistic/ cultural privileging. In response to this Native literature battles against all such bias and privileging and draws upon key concepts and ideas that are inherent part of the anti-colonial struggle and becomes the main subject of postcolonial discourse. The aim of

postcolonial study over the decades ‘is to locate modes of representation-narratives where Europeans constructed the natives in politically significant ways’ (*Contemporary literary and cultural Theory Nair, 164*). The main Agenda of postcolonial studies is to unpack the themes and representations predominant in these racial discourses that rejects native literary traditions and promotes a continuing western hegemony. Largely postcolonial writings focus on the different ways in which power is constructed and perpetuated in the light of colonialism and its aftermath.

Reading and conceptualizing Fourth world literature needs more of listening, internalizing and empathizing than refuting and contending as it is a place of articulation and expression of the people who were over centuries devoiced and marginalized. A profound understanding of these activist writings aims to bring about resolution rather than conflict. In the wide tapestry of Fourth world literature/Native literature germinating from different parts of the globe with a polyphony of genres and tones it’s hard to engineer a homogenized approach in understanding it.

While grappling to understand fourth world literature as a distinct field of study it is also vital to be aware of the multiple interpretative and critical perspectives that scholars apply in reading this literature. Among the array of critical studies ‘hermeneutics’ offers a multidisciplinary framework in reading literature. This research article explores the potential of critical hermeneutics as an effective approach in understanding and interpreting literary texts and the problems of ideology. Hermeneutics essentially is a branch of philosophy that focus on the theory of ‘interpretation’. It tries to interpret literary texts, arte- facts, and other cultural phenomenon and arrives at accurate interpretations. The etymology of the term in Greek meaning ‘interpreter’.

A hermeneutic methodology works to disclose hidden meanings of a text by reading between the lines of the texts through the symbols and allegories. Hermeneutics helps readers understand the cultural contexts in which the texts were produced and offers suggestions to uncover the underlying assumptions and values which the author wants to convey and does not as reading and meaning making happen taking into account the diverse experience of the readers. Adopting what *Sarte* says ‘reading is an exercise in generosity’ (*What is Literaturesarte, 37*) the reader takes immense freedom in reading and understanding the text and culls out more than what the writer intends to state.

Fourth world literature draws on the domains of anthropology, memory studies, literature and social sciences. To begin with one needs to have a proper understanding of the term ‘indigenous’. Indigenous refers to anyone who is the first settler/native of a region. In Anthropology the indigenous tribes are known to us through different epithets denoting different geographical spaces. We know them as ‘aborigines’ of Australia, Maori’s of New Zealand, as the ‘First Nations’ of Canada, and as ‘janajatis’ / ‘tribes of India’ who are the ‘denotified communities’ of India. These first settlers occupy the vast expanse of various regions of the globe. In the words of renowned cultural critic G. N. Devy : ‘ It would be

simplistic to perceive them as divergent victim groups of any shared epochal phenomenon' (*Indigeneity culture and Representation, Devy, xi*). In the terminology of ILO and UNESCO the 'indigenous' represent more than a thousand different communities spread over the world and it would be absurd to congregate them as a unified entity. To arrive at a historical/cultural convergence among these indigenous population is not essential as each of this group shares a unique language, lifestyle, tradition and culture. What is required when it comes to indigenous or fourth world writing is our empathy in understanding the plight of a mass who have been out of the metrics of modernity unable to adapt and to the ways of the mainstream,

The literature of these tribes are filled with stories of anguish, displacement and alienation. The position of the pastoral nomadic indigenous communities are even more worst. Their stories not only talk about their resentments but are also a celebration of the coexistence they share with nature, the age old practises that promote emotional and environmental well being, the medicinal herbs, their sustainable agricultural practices, their lifestyle, tradition and customs. through these literary texts we get to know about the history and uniqueness of their community through their songs, dance, gossips, jokes their handicrafts. The heliolithic paintings and engravings the musical instruments the agricultural and fishing machineries their weapons findm space in memorials, paintings and museums and installations which is purely a imperial form of documentation wherein a culture is deprived of life and instead museumized. These forms art engage with cultural and historical memory of the indigenous communities.

### **Memory studies and Hermeneutics**

It is yet another inter- disciplinary field of research engaged in studying literature for its ability to represent past events in the present. Literature assumes the role of an object in memory studies. Only after the emergence of fourth world literature there was an awareness about how there were communities, peoples and nations that had an age old history towards a specific geographical space predating the European invasion and were exploited ruthlessly in terms of capitalist motives that consumed their resources. This in turn led to the extinction of their identity, language, culture and history. Indeed fourth world literature in all forms was a means to be heard in order to conserve their natural resources and to preserve their tradition and culture. Contemporary memory studies does not look at literature as an isolated domain but as a relative, entangled and discursive field trying to map the history, culture and socio-political backdrop to a text. The contextualization principle in hermeneutics talks about understanding the historical and cultural context in which a text is produced. A text is a vehicle that carries the culture of a particular race. Cultural/collective/social memory is an obscure term that embodies different configurations of cultural knowledge which finds expression in the form of myth, oral lore, monuments, rituals, art and heliolithic paintings and engravings and the neural patterns and networks of knowledge of the indigenous communities transmitted as songs, gossips and jokes. Reverent French Philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs was the first to use the term 'cultural memory'. His studies

of memoir collective has actually paved way as the foundational texts to memory studies today.

Culture as such is an entanglement of both the material and abstract attributes including language, religion, art, food habits, dress code, different forms of entertainment including popular culture. It is this vastness and this intricacy both of which are subsumed within the framework of cultural memory which provides ample scope to apply the theory of hermeneutics. The process of memory is subject to coding, encoding, decoding, remembering and forgetting which are perceived as natural process in our day today life. All such day today incidents are hoarded in the form of memory. Exploring remembering and forgetting as dialectical entities in the field of psychological memory draws on narratology, as a means in achieving accurate meaning to interpretations. Another major challenge in the study of cultural memory is the conflict between the individual and collective memory often contesting on the veritability of the historical events owing to multiple narratives on each incident.

Literature serves as a research object to memory studies, that is memory is operated through fictional texts that explores the memorial processes of their characters. In addition to this fictional texts also portray unspoken thoughts and feelings and perceptions of the characters other than the speakers. Intertextuality, metaphors, polyvalence, rhetoric. Indeed narratology serves as a tool box in analysing texts in relation to cultural memory. Astrid Erll in her taxonomy of Literary memory studies applies narratological approaches primarily to the field of literature (Erll, 2010). A text is the signifier of a nation's culture which endlessly evolves and transcribes itself in meaning production. It acts as a vehicle for the indigenous narrative.

### **Indigenous Knowledge, the Cultural Security System and the contextualization principle of Hermeneutics in Memory Studies.**

Cultural security anchors itself in the strong philosophy of equality among the existing, diversified ethnic groups. This requires a re-examination of the human to human relationship existing over the years and also between the human and non-human entities, a non-anthropocentric approach in reading literary texts written over the years from across the globe. Different cultural and anthropological theories talk about how culture unfolds itself in a three dimensional framework as the social, the material and the cognitive forms. The indigenous cultural memory holds a gateway to the centuries of oppression and resentment in the colonial context, isolation from globalization and other knowledge transactions in the present. It also acts as a reservoir to hoard their own communal beliefs, tradition, customs, way of life, deep knowledge regarding the conservation and regeneration of natural resources and other sustainable practices that benefits all living species. The current research paper will engage with both the human and the non-anthropocentric models of indigenous cultural security system connecting to the ecological and planetary perspectives delving in to different forms of memory apropos the

individual, collective, national/political, the literature's memory wherein the concept of remembering and forgetting (conscious/unconscious), intertextuality and narrativity which plays a significant role in conserving cultural memory. The concept of remembering and forgetting is not limited to analysing the facts and data but also explicates 'how' this data is stored. The above methodological concepts are analysed in this research wherein select indigenous texts by acclaimed activist authors are chosen for study.

Intertextuality involves the mnemonics of remembering and forgetting. The memory of a text is formed by the intertextuality while intertextuality arises in the act of writing. Mnemonics are memory aids that help these communities to store data as memory. Different indigenous communities adopt varied mnemonic tools to pool their knowledge and to transmit them from generation to generations. The content of these are the stories about their heroes, the socio-political upheavals, the knowledge about the medicinal herbs, the sustainable agricultural practices all find a way to get stored in indigenous cultural memory. Mnemonic devices include special rhymes, poems, acronyms, and songs. Types of mnemonics vary from mundane catchphrases to abbreviations and phrases and more interestingly images play a significant role in recollection and remembering they replace alphabets and engage in meaning making: "Preserving cultural memory involves something like an apparatus for remembering by duplication." (*Mnemonic and Inter-textual aspects of Literature*)

The role of the writer and narratology involved makes the text a perfect space for political deliberations. The first book to be explicated for study is ***ChottiMunda and His Arrow*** by eminent Indian writer Mahasweta Devi, an activist – writer, who is dedicated to the struggles of tribal people in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh in eastern India. She fights for tribal issues like bonded labour, tribes taken away as contract labourers, displacement of tribes from their lands and lack of rehabilitation facilities when their land is grabbed by the government in various development schemes.

While switching over to intertextuality and narrativity the intricate components of memory studies one has to signify the role of the 'story' and 'rumour' in a novel like ***ChottiMunda and his Arrow***. Drawing on what reverent writer and critic Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak says "the writer writes these stories to set the records straight" (*ChottiMunda and His Arrow ix*). As an activist Devi's fiction portrays the social upheaval and political turbulence predominant among the tribal population of her times. Mahasweta Devi's ***ChottiMunda and His Arrow*** takes a continuing battle of the tribal against the oppressive powers belonging to mainstream India. Criminalization of politics, inhuman torture, and oppression of the marginalized make resistance inevitable. The novel uses a lot of refrains to preserve the story of the legendary hero 'chotti', everything that happens in chotti's life is woven into a story "this song continues then another phase, another song, these songs are sung here and there – that it continues to live". The metaphor used is 'like a bead to a string' the story adds one after the other (*ChottiMunda and His Arrow, Vii*) and this is also considered as resistance. That is why the beginning of the book opens into a

mythic ancestor- continuity placed within an open frame at both ends, The Arrow of Chotti is a symbol the of the hope of the Munda tribes of eastern India.

In Another short story like **Pterodactyl, PuranSahay and Pirtha** from the collection **Imaginary Maps** Devi plunges deep into tribal life and experience wherein the image of the pterodactyl in the story needs a hermeneutic interpretation. The pterodactyl on the periphery is an ancient bird which creeps in the story as a bird but the writer deliberately brings in the image of the pterodactyl as a ‘prehistoric beast a scientific-anamoly’ (*Imaginary Maps, iii* ) which makes a sudden appearance in a remote tribal belt in Madhya Pradesh. There is a parallel drawn to comprehend the incongruous ‘pterodactyl’ and ancient tribes . At the first place the writer tries to draw a comparison between the ‘pterodactyl’ and the ‘tribes’.

Pirtha the tribal area is represented as a world on the verge of extinction, an alienated continent, famine stricken, displaced and forgotten. The tribes deprived of their land ignorant of their rights, in the novella represent tribes across India suffering due to exploitation. An in - depth reading of a story like pterodactyl will reveal the power lines like, nationalism, globalization, capitalism operating in the society. To a few critics Devi’s inspiration for the pterodactyl starts with her encounter with the rock painting at Madhya Pradesh tribal region The figures represented in these paintings echo the voice of the tribal memory because it reconstructs the timeless voice that constitutes the tribal history as well. What she observes is that the forms of modernity has successfully devastated the paintings of the pterodactyl as well over the times.

The old stories are also getting lost they are loosing their way, like motes in the face of a dust storm, ancient tales, history, songs, sagas, folklore, folkways. How will fifty-nine million six hundred and twenty- nine people capture and put together their history and their culture from the storm winds of areas ruled by twenty- five states and the central government ? (*Imaginary Maps, 187*)

Weaving history, myth and current political realities is *Imaginary Maps* translated by famed cultural literary critic GayathriChakrabortySpivak. It explores troubling motifs in contemporary Indian Life through the figures and narratives of indigenous tribes of India. These delicate and the violent stories of Devi brings to light the fate of the tribes in India and of marginalized people everywhere. The title **Imaginary Maps** is subject to various interpretations. The title speaks for itself reminding of the “ marginalized communities” the tribes: neither the tribes of India are able to Map the Nation nor the nation tries to Map the tribes. *The Book of the Hunter* is a perfect illustration of how an indefinite bond exists between the tribes and the forest. Tribal development in post-independence India still remains a distant dream. To envisage the integration of tribals into the national mainstream had been a long distant dream to the nation. Writers like Mahasweta Devi stress on this, as it is a dire need for the tribes to accept acculturation today with changing times. Devi in **The Book of the Hunter** brings out how the mutually advantageous and harmonious relationship between

the tribes and the forests remain unchanged even today. **The Book of the Hunter** would be largely considered as life writing as a sufficient amount of valuable information from the past which is held in collective memory alongside myths ( *myth of Abhaya in The Book of the Hunter* )

The narrativity and the intertextuality in the text is significant as every text is a political act signifying deep negotiation. There is a story within the story framework in the narrative, the story of ‘ma’ *Abhayachandi* and the life of the shabhar tribes of India find expression through these writings of Devi. The book is based on the ancient story written by writer Mukundaram an epic poem known as *Abhayamangal*. About this Devi opines “Mukundaram’s poem was my source but while writing about the life of Shabhars , I have combined what I know from his book(*Abhayamangal*) (*The Book of The Hunter*, vii) They believe that Goddess Abhaya is their creator, nurture and protector of the living beings on land and water in the jungle. To the tribe the jungle is called Abhayachandi but to the others it’s a desolate forest. So there is an intricate ‘intertextuality’ adopted by the writer by incorporating myths, legends, folklore, history and the cultural memory of the shabhar tribes. The role of mnemonics and intertextual aspects of the literature finds significance in indigenous writings. In cultural texts the authors of the text draw on other texts both ancient and recent belonging to their own customs or the other and refer them in innumerable ways. The authors, allude, quote, or paraphrase or incorporate them in their text. The word ‘Intertextuality’ is conceived in literary scholarship to capture the semantic interchange between the texts. It could be further described as a process by which a books culture unfolds by constantly rewriting, re – transcribing the signs within and evolving into something new with every reading and interpretation. Literature has been over the years served as a vehicle for indigenous cultural memory . Writing in its mnemonic dimensions incorporates art as well. The concept of memory and its relation to images are truly a matter of concern. Images play a vital role in recollection and remembering. Images adorn the role of letters in many contexts.

### **A Hermeneutical Reading of Australian Aboriginal Literature**

An overview of Australian Aboriginal writings throws more light to this study. For Indigenous people across the globe writing has been a perpetual medium of Communication and representation. The Aboriginal community battles against the manifold prejudices, subjugation and trauma through diverse ways and voices. To many of them there are painful traumatic memories that seek to find vent through words. Writing allows them to explore their emotions and calls for validity. The skewed representation of Aboriginal identity in history and in research is quite intriguing. Aboriginal writers and activists constantly call for attention against existing discrimination. They serve a dual purpose. One is to heal, two is to question authority and the existing bias against its community. **Writing as Healing in Growing up Aboriginal In Australia** by Anita Heiss explores the not much trodden spaces in Aboriginal writings that deal with the discrimination of Light skinned Aboriginal people in Australia.

Recent years are resplendent with much epistemological discourses on First Nation Literature. Lot of postcolonial practices are said to be heard everyday. Writers, activists and academicians across the globe have contributed immensely towards sensitizing mainstream about the importance of conservation and recognition of Aboriginal people's identity, culture and practices. On that context **Growing Up Aboriginal in Australia** is a compilation of manifold narratives which center the lives of heterogeneous people of Australia. The book would enlighten our understanding of the lives of Aboriginal people in Australia today. It is a heart rendering account of fifty one aboriginal writers who recount on their lost cultural lives and experiences. The goal of the anthology as Anita Heiss reflects is “ to break down stereotypes many of which are identified within these pages and to create a new dialogue with and about Aboriginal Australians” ( the Introduction GUAA ) , There exists a vast gulf of difference between indigenous epistemology and western knowledge. This is why First Nation writers are very particular about decolonizing research by recounting on their identity and personal history themselves rather than through borrowed Non- Aboriginal voices.

The day indigenous people grappled with documenting their own life and experience is the dawn of a new epistemology formation in research. There have been baby steps and pilot projects over the decades by NGOs and the Government organization in understanding the crisis surmounting aboriginal lives only to get it in fragments and not holistically. The indigenous Aboriginal community experiences many threats in the form of impoverishment, unemployment, violence against women and children and much more turmoil till date. But the most dangerous threat according to indigenous scholars seems to be the misappropriation of knowledge. Analyzing the cultural and historical background to this study is important.

A recurring theme in **Growing Up aboriginal in Australia** is the tension between maintaining indigenous culture and social upliftment at the same time. The current paper throws light on the less explored areas of turbulence from select chapters from the text . **Growing Up Aboriginal In Australia** by Anta Heiss focusses on racism experienced by light- skinned Aboriginal people in a multicultural and globalized Australia. Today Australia is a melting pot of varied culture and the state of the Australian Aboriginals is questionable. Socio-economic development of the Aboriginals is connected with globalization and hence being rooted to traditional culture and life style becomes a hindrance. These are the cultural indicators over the times There is aendless battle to retain cultural identity and the need to adapt to the progressive world amidst fluid times. They try to retain their identity in the form of oral lores, craft, music, dance and writing. Indigenous knowledge over the years were transmitted only orally as stories. But in recent years aboriginals have taken to writing as well. Stories are ingrained in collective memory as folk tales and songs. Encroachment of Adivasi territory, destruction of forest and adivasis abandoning their places are the subject of these stories and songs stored as collective memory. Another important aspect of native literature is its convergence with other native peoples across the globe in terms of suffering despite their cultural dissimilarity. There exists a commonality among

indigenous people across the globe. They are united in their suffering due to colonial impingement.

The central concern of native literature is the celebration of resilience inherent in its people and this in the words of Heiss : “this anthology is not one of victimhood: it is one of strength and resilience, of pride and inspiration”(9, GUAA). Some of the significant goals of these native literature is to liberate people, reclaim identity, decolonize the west and restore heritage and society. The battle against decolonization starts with research. To confront western epistemology and its validation of native knowledge and culture remains crucial till date. Indigenous community has been tirelessly working against such epistemological biases by talking back, shooting back and writing back to insist on the fact that western validation of the aboriginal is skewed and inconsequential.

To create awareness about misinterpretation of native knowledge and culture remains the endless target of aboriginal writings. Their writings have fervently questioned misrepresentation. Cultural theorist Homi Bhabha describes this as “ misrepresentation is the repression of the real”(113 *The Location of Culture*) and truly western epistemology proves to be sidelined and manipulated. As Wilhelm Dilthey observes, interpretation is not just understanding the historical context of a text alone but also in understanding the mental and emotional states of the author who produce them.

One should also take into consideration the decolonization of Research theories as mandatory for non-native readers to understand reality. The linguistic dimension unfolds in reading these texts. Initially a significant amount of tribal history was stored and transmuted through orature a preliterate form of documentation. Words are powerful the oral word reinvents its community or as G.N.Devy puts it “for a tribal his word is his bond”(7, **Indigeneity culture and representation**). Oral lores not only document tribal way of life but remains a legacy in itself.

**Growing up Aboriginalin Australia** leaves a trail of nostalgic memories a multivocal deliberation by various writers with an aboriginal ancestry about ones place, landscape livelihood and the age old ancestral customs and practices which have waned away with time. Another remarkable pop up in the text centers on the challenges to retain ancestral identity in contrast to the emerging hybrid identity in these fluid times with Globalization. “Globalization is a certainly a source of anxiety in the academic world” ( 89, **Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination by Arjun Appadurai**). There is an unswerving commitment to sustain their language, people and homeland. Ethnoscapes ( a term used by cultural theorist Arjun Appadurai) is the key focus of these texts. Australia is a multi-ethnic country with one of the most linguistically and culturally diverse populations in the world that results in intense cultural flow. Migrants account to 40 percent of Australian population.

Till now research on racism in Australia has not yet incorporated racism faced by light skinned first nations. The Australian Aborigines face a discrimination from the

mainstream and sometimes from their own community in terms of race. Not all Aboriginals have a clear aboriginal ancestry some are a product of mixed race but still love to own their Aboriginal identity which has been constantly neglected. Being isolated and discriminated by their own community becomes a stigma “I am fair and a bit outcast. Still listening to ancestors”(20,GUAA)

The contents in the volume deals with various issues that Australian Aboriginal people face in everyday life particularly the light-skinned Aboriginals. Quest for Aboriginal identity among their own tribe remains a conflict to many natives. A kind of lateral violence is exercised on these light skinned aboriginals both from the mainstream and from their own community **.Its not over** by Bebe backhouse is a reportage on the plight of aboriginals belonging to mixed race ‘white dad and aboriginal mom’(18,GUAA).

Aboriginal people define Aboriginality not by skin colour but by relationships. Light -skinned Aboriginal people face challenges on their aboriginal identity because of stereotyping. There is always that feeling of being short of something without being complete. Bebe Backhouse talks about the frequently asked question to light-skinned aboriginals : “Are you Aboriginal or Torres Straight Islander? Yes/No. Yes! I AM ABORIGINAL! Acknowledging my cultural identity was such a thrill for me;”(21,GUAA). This discrimination and obsession with skin colour is still persistent in Australia. On the contrary to blacks being sidelined in terms of skin colour here in this compilation we get to know how light-skinned Aboriginals experience racism. Alicia Bates again in **My Story** reiterates this discrimination meted out on light-skinned Aboriginals who were always proud of their Aboriginal ancestry the country and its people and still unable to connect with their own people and culture. In her words :

“Having a lighter skin tone , I have been told by others, both Koori and non-Indigenous, that I am too white to be Aboriginal and that I have ‘more white blood than black blood. Last I checked my blood was red just like everybody else’s and I’m not sure when exactly or how these people measured how much black was in my blood”’(24,GUAA)

An Aboriginal identity is no more based on being a noble savage of owning a dark skin, with tribal tatoos and markings and holding a spear. It has transgressed with times. One need not dress like an Aboriginal to be an Aboriginal and to judge people based on the above stereotypes becomes unethical. In this context many light-skinned First Nationals still are experiencing these sort of bias on a regular basis. Reverent theorist Hans-Georg Gadamer believes that interpretation is a process that is always shaped by our preconceptions and biases and that we must be aware of these factors in order to arrive at accurate interpretations. Thus understanding the biases social; linguistic and historical is mandatory in interpreting cultural texts. Racism exists at two levels. One it is explicit and intense like becoming an outcast. Two its subtle either in form of remarks or taunts. Either way its embarrassing and painful.

Another major issue discussed by writers in this text pertaining to Australian Aboriginal community are the plight of The Stolen Generation. The Stolen Generations refers to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children who were removed from their families between 1910 and 1970. This was exercised by the Australian State Government and The Church missionaries.

This remained a forcible removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families which became a part of the assimilation process. As Kevin Rudd then prime Minister calls it as a ‘blemished chapter in the nations history’ (39, GUAA) owing to their ill treatment in these homes. Reference to the Yarrabah mission an aboriginal mission run by the Anglican Church of England near Cairns north Queensland highlights the physical and psychological agony and repercussions surrounding the lives of these Stolen Generations.

These children were referred to as ‘half-caste’ derogatorily and were subjected to acute discrimination. The chapter **Murri + Migloo = Meeks Mobby** Norleen Brinkworth is a plunge into the state of aboriginals at the Yarrabah mission an aboriginal reserve. These unethical gruesome practices were an attempt to segregate toddlers and children below the age of ten to assimilate them away from their parents and to prune them ‘towards betterment’ in the colonial sense. Norleen Brinkworth describes his experience : “ My paternal grandfather spent seventy -four years as a victim of the Stolen Generations- that blemished chapter in our nations history (42, GUAA). In this chapter Norleen the author recounts the experiences of a generation caught in the Yarrabah Mission where stolen children spent their lives.

In line with the above is *YuyaKarraburra* (fire is burning) a poem by Alice Eather which resonates the agony of owning a split identity a diverse and complex issue in Australian Aboriginal Life. The poem draws out the struggle of being caught between black and white. The term ‘half-caste’ skin colour issues permeates Aboriginal conflict to a different level. It’s a term which has traversed boundaries from Northern territory of Australia to Queensland. The following lines bring out the conflict within every Aboriginal belonging to mixed lineage:

I walk between two worlds  
A split life  
Split skin  
Split tongue  
Split kin  
Everyday these worlds collide  
And I’m living and breathing  
This story of black and white (71, GUAA)

All too often Australian Aboriginal identity is constructed superficially by looking at the skin colour. Colour is the stereotype measure of Aboriginality. The Aboriginals were by nature black or brown depending on their locality. The right of people of mixed race to identify as Aboriginal has been questioned consistently over the decades by settler Colonial society.

Significant cases questioning the identity of Aboriginal people have persisted as mixed race people according to the mainstream have fell short of their identity of being light-skinned and being a product of mixed racial background. **Bebblackhouse** recounts on such an experience “I had many friends who were of different cultural background , but I could’nt help feeling somewhat excluded from my Aboriginal friends as my skin colour was white and theirs was black (20, GUAA). The chapters in this volume are life histories which cover a vast geography and time frame. They give us the opportunity to understand the significance of Aboriginal identity. Many Aboriginal people in Australia have more ancestors in the previous generations who are not “Aboriginal” Hence a majority of people who identify as Aboriginal in Australia today are of mixed race. There is significant differences between traditional Aboriginal or Torres straight Islander and the mainstream western cultures in Australia.

**A Tasmanian ToomelahTiger** by Jodi Haines is a sad account of Quest for the Aboriginal Identity which is a recurrent theme in many of the narratives in this volume.

This chapter explores the challenges faced by Aboriginal people in seeking recognition of their identity as Indigenous Australians. Some of the consistent criticism they face are “You are not a real Aborigine. You don’t look like an aboriginal”. How much Aboriginal is in you? (93, GUAA). There is constant judgement and questioning of one’s identity which is ingrained and infused in Aboriginal psyche.

Another recurrent theme implicit in these narratives is the tension between maintenance of indigenous culture and achievement of socio-economic equity that is the determination to uphold cultural values and to assimilate in the fluid times. Being rooted to ones’s culture becomes a hindrance to achieve socio-economic upliftment among the tribes.

Today Aboriginal literature has transgressed geographical boundaries A pan - Aboriginal perspective and study is essential to understand the homogeneity and Intertextuality between texts from different aboriginal communities to understand Aboriginality in the context of colonial discourses.

The process of writing to these Aboriginal writers is healing. Writing is therapy. There have been significant wars fought in history by the Aboriginals against colonial invasion and exploitation. All recorded as folklore , performances and art. Rest is history. History too is contaminated. One need to understand the politics of literary history:

Who is writing , from what location, and for whom? To adapt what Arnold Krupat has said about ethnocriticism, in asmuch as the conceptual categories necessary to the form – culture , history, literature, interdisciplinarity – are western categories, the objection may be raised that the form is itself no more than another discursive and epistemological variant of imperialism. Can Literary history as academic genre be decolonized. (49, **G.N.Devy ,Indigeneity culture and representation**)

Indigenous Community has been tirelessly working against epistemological biases. This volume **Growing up aboriginal in Australia** is a shoot back against such epistemological biases that go into the making of a new research uncontaminated by colonial influence. Life as a contemporary Aboriginal person in Australia can be fraught with challenges to identity, authenticity and legitimacy. Indigenous author Anita Heiss has addressed this issue of light-skinned Aboriginals back in her significant work **AM I BLACK ENOUGH FOR YOU**.

The mainstream understanding of the Aboriginals is often skewed like equating poverty with Aboriginality. The select chapters from this book throws light on how Aboriginals today are prosperous materialistically and underscore on issues away from economic aspect of Aboriginal Life. “I grew up in quite a fortunate and privileged home, never being short of the newest and best materials, objects and opportunities and most importantly never being short of food, clothing, or love. (20, GUAA).

All these chapters from the **Growing up Aboriginal In Australia** focusses on “the errors in judgement around the treatment of Aboriginal people”.(54, GUAA). Racism as portrayed in the text exists at varied levels. Sometimes it unfolds as taunts other times as gibes but whatever be the intensity it has left a trail of traumatic memories in all of these Aboriginal people who have ventured to document their memories in this collection. What makes this book special is its multiplicity in voice. Further it examines the plight of light-skinned people who have been neglected over the years and have formulated their own cultural identity. Writing is an expression of acute resilience and a way to heal a wound that has been handed over as legacy.

The other contemporary indigenous texts like *Dark Emu* by Bruce Pascoe, *The Biggest Estate on Earth; How Aborigines made Australia* by Bill Gammage are excellent texts that brings to fore the sustainable agricultural practices predominant in indigenous communities. Both of the above mentioned texts talk about the indigenous sustainable practices by the indigenous people which benefit all living species. A text like *Dark Emu* explores how the aboriginals of Australia were forerunners in fishing, agriculture and in advanced machinery that out beats today's machineries. The Cultural dimension of these texts can be examined through the artistic forms folklores music art dance mythology flora fauna, domesticating plants, agriculture, ecology and sustainability.

## Conclusion

Interpretation is an act that requires deep engagement with the text or object being interpreted and also an empathetic understanding about the creator's subject put to discussion. This is not an objective or rational process but one that is influenced by the interpreters own historical and cultural context. Dilthey's methodological framework in reading cultural texts hermeneutically is in analysing the individual and subjective experience. He also believes that poetry and other literary texts are important sources that provide insight into

human experiences. Moreover works of art provide a unique perspective on human experience because they have the ability to explore the complexity of emotions within the characters in the text which are not possible in any other form of discourse. This research paper has attempted a hermeneutical reading of the indigenous cultural texts that are politically significant and calls for an empathetic understanding in realizing the pathetic state of these humans who need to be listened and contribute towards their well being as sincere citizens. ■

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# Constructing Reality through Discourse: A Foucauldian Reading of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*

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This article offers a Foucauldian reading of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, focusing on the ways in which discourse is used as a tool to construct and manipulate reality. Drawing on Michel Foucault's theories of power, knowledge, and discourse, the analysis explores how the pigs in Orwell's allegorical novella employ language as a mechanism of control, shaping the animals' perception of truth and reality. Through the manipulation of history, the distortion of commandments, and the control of education, the pigs create a hegemonic narrative that maintains their dominance. This study also examines how surveillance and self-regulation, central to Foucault's concept of panopticism, are subtly enforced in the farm's social structure, leading to a form of self-imposed oppression among the animals. Ultimately, the article argues that *Animal Farm* exemplifies Foucault's notion that power is not merely exercised through overt domination but through the production and control of knowledge, discourse, and truth. This reading underscores Orwell's critique of totalitarian regimes, emphasizing the intricate relationship between language, power, and the construction of reality in an authoritarian context.

**Key Words:** Authority, Discourse, Hegemony, Knowledge, Power, Panopticism.

## Introduction:

George Orwell's *Animal Farm* has long been recognized as a powerful allegory of political corruption and totalitarianism. While it is often viewed through the lens of Soviet communism and the rise of oppressive regimes, the novella also offers rich material for a Foucauldian analysis, particularly in its treatment of power, discourse, and the construction of reality. Michel Foucault's theories on the relationship between power and knowledge suggest that control is not solely maintained through overt repression but through more insidious mechanisms, such as the regulation of discourse and the production of "truth". In *Animal Farm*, these mechanisms are employed by the ruling pigs, who manipulate language, history, and ideology to assert and maintain their dominance over the other animals. This article examines how Orwell's portrayal of power relations on the farm mirrors Foucault's concept of discourse as a tool for constructing reality. Through the pigs' control of knowledge—ranging from the revision of the Seven Commandments to the rewriting of

history—the animals’ perception of truth is gradually reshaped, fostering a system of self-regulation and internalized oppression. By analyzing *Animal Farm* through a Foucauldian framework, this article explores how the manipulation of discourse serves as a subtle but effective means of control, ultimately leading to the solidification of authoritarian power. In doing so, the article reveals how Orwell’s work resonates with Foucault’s critiques of modern power structures, emphasizing the complex interplay between language, power, and truth in shaping social order.

Michel Foucault (1926–1984) was a French philosopher, historian, and social theorist whose work has profoundly influenced various fields, including literary theory, cultural studies, and political philosophy. Foucault’s scholarship centers around the intricate relationships between power, knowledge, and discourse, emphasizing how these elements shape social institutions and individual subjectivity. One of his key contributions is the idea that power is not merely possessed or wielded by individuals or groups but is instead diffuse, operating through a network of social relations and discursive practices. Foucault’s notion of discourse encompasses the ways in which language, practices, and systems of knowledge construct and regulate reality. He argues that discourse shapes how we perceive truth and morality, ultimately determining what is considered knowledge within a given society. This dynamic is evident in his analysis of institutions such as prisons, schools, and hospitals, where power manifests not just through coercive measures but also through the creation of norms and the categorization of knowledge. Central to Foucault’s theories is the concept of biopolitics, which refers to the governance of populations through regulatory mechanisms and discourses that manage life and health. Additionally, his idea of panopticism highlights the ways in which surveillance creates self-regulating subjects who internalize societal norms and expectations, thus perpetuating power dynamics without the need for overt coercion. In the context of *Animal Farm*, Foucault’s theories provide a critical framework for understanding how the pigs manipulate language and knowledge to construct a version of reality that serves their interests. By analyzing the power dynamics at play within the farm, this article seeks to illuminate the mechanisms through which discourse operates as a means of control and domination, aligning with Foucault’s insights into the pervasive nature of power in societal structures.

Foucault’s theories of power are not about centralized, top-down control but about how power operates through various institutions, practices, and forms of knowledge that produce compliant subjects. In *Animal Farm*, propaganda serves as a tool of discursive power, shaping the animals’ understanding of reality and ensuring their subjugation. Foucault saw power not as a top-down phenomenon but as something that circulates within a network of relationships. In *Animal Farm*, the pigs, particularly Napoleon, use various strategies to consolidate and maintain power. This reflects Foucault’s ideas about how power is not just repressive but productive—it produces truth, norms, and behaviors. Napoleon promises that the windmill will bring prosperity and ease to the animals’ lives. When the windmill is destroyed (twice), he blames Snowball and external enemies, maintaining hope and

preventing the animals from losing faith in his leadership. Snowball is scapegoated by Napoleon and the other pigs after his expulsion from the farm. This scapegoating serves several purposes: it helps Napoleon consolidate his power, distracts the other animals from the true causes of their problems, and creates a convenient enemy to blame for any issues that arise. After Snowball is chased off the farm by Napoleon's trained dogs, the windmill that the animals have been working on is destroyed during a storm. Although the windmill's collapse is due to poor construction and weather, Napoleon immediately blames Snowball, accusing him of sneaking back to the farm and sabotaging it. This false accusation turns the animals against Snowball and justifies Napoleon's harsh policies.

As the farm faces various difficulties such as food shortages, machinery breakdowns, and general discontent; Snowball is continually blamed for these problems. The pigs claim that Snowball is secretly visiting the farm at night to cause trouble and that he is in league with Mr. Jones and other human enemies. This constant demonization keeps the animals in fear and prevents them from questioning Napoleon's leadership. The pig, Squealer, gradually rewrites the history of the farm to portray Snowball as a traitor from the beginning. For instance, although Snowball was initially celebrated as a hero for his bravery during the Battle of the Cowshed, the pigs later claim that he was actually in league with Mr. Jones and deliberately fought poorly. This revisionist history erases Snowball's contributions and paints him as the farm's greatest villain. When Napoleon begins his purges to eliminate potential threats to his power, many animals are coerced into confessing that they were in league with Snowball. These confessions are almost certainly false and are used to justify brutal executions. By linking these supposed conspirators to Snowball, Napoleon creates a sense of paranoia and reinforces the idea that Snowball is a dangerous enemy. By turning Snowball into a common enemy, Napoleon unifies the animals under his rule and eliminates any potential sympathy for Snowball's ideas or leadership. Whenever things go wrong on the farm, Snowball is blamed. This deflection prevents the animals from realizing that the real cause of their suffering is Napoleon's mismanagement and the pigs' exploitation. The idea that Snowball is constantly lurking, ready to sabotage the farm, keeps the animals in a state of fear and distraction. This prevents them from focusing on the pigs' growing corruption and authoritarianism. By making Snowball the scapegoat, Napoleon effectively quashes dissent, controls the narrative, and keeps the other animals in a state of fear and submission. This tactic is a powerful tool in maintaining his totalitarian regime.

For Foucault, power operates through discourse—what is said, how it is said, and what is left unsaid. In *Animal Farm*, the pigs control the narrative, which shifts reality to their advantage. Squealer's rewriting of the Seven Commandments and the changes in the key aspects of history (such as the events of the Battle of the Cowshed) demonstrates how discourse shapes power relations. The control of language and history allows the pigs to maintain their position of dominance by shaping the animals' perception of the world. Language becomes a tool for domination. The pigs, through Squealer, deploy rhetorical strategies to maintain control. Squealer's speeches echo Foucault's analysis of political

discourse as a way to solidify regimes of truth. The animals are manipulated through emotional appeal and misinformation, reflecting how power is often exercised through discourse rather than force. The pigs' manipulation of language (e.g., the changing of the commandments, Squealer's propaganda) can be understood through Foucault's notion that those in power control discourse. The pigs produce the "truth" of the farm, altering the reality of the past and the present to suit their needs, which mirrors Foucault's argument that truth is produced within regimes of power. Foucault discusses how power works through normalization—shaping the behavior of individuals by establishing what is "normal" and "abnormal". The pigs define what is normal on the farm, using propaganda to convince the animals that their exploitation is natural and justful. For instance, the slogan that "*All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others*" reflects the normalization of inequality and the control through language.

Squealer, a pig, plays a pivotal role in maintaining the pigs' control over the other animals by manipulating language, spreading lies, and rewriting history to suit the leadership's needs. Squealer is the farm's chief propagandist. He has a talent for persuasive speech, often convincing the other animals to accept the pigs' decisions, no matter how illogical or unfair. Whenever the pigs make decisions that seem to contradict the principles of Animalism, Squealer is there to justify the changes. For example, when the pigs start hoarding the milk and apples for themselves, Squealer convinces the other animals that these foods are necessary for the pigs' health because they are the "brainworkers" of the farm. He uses complex language and jargon to confuse the animals and make them accept changes without question:

"You do not imagine, I hope, that we pigs are doing this in a spirit of selfishness and privilege? Many of us actually dislike milk and apples. I dislike them myself. Our sole object in taking these things is to preserve our health. Milk and apples (this has been proved by science, comrades) contain substances absolutely necessary to the well-being of a pig. We pigs are brainworkers. The whole management and organization of this farm depend on us."

Squealer uses the argument of "science" to justify the pigs' consumption of milk and apples, which were supposed to be shared equally among all animals. He frames the pigs' selfishness as a selfless act for the greater good, making the animals believe that the pigs' well-being is essential for everyone. Squealer frequently uses fear to keep the animals in line, particularly by invoking the threat of Mr. Jones's return. This tactic prevents the animals from questioning the pigs' authority or the deteriorating conditions on the farm. He argues: "Surely, comrades, you do not want Jones back?" for ensuring compliance that if the pigs fail in their duties, Mr. Jones could return:

Squealer plays a key role in altering the animals' memories and perceptions of events. For instance, after Snowball is exiled, Squealer gradually revises the farm's history, claiming that Snowball was always a traitor and was never truly loyal to the farm. This manipulation helps Napoleon solidify his power by eliminating any positive memory of

Snowball's contributions. He also changes the Seven Commandments to suit the pigs' behavior, always providing a convenient explanation when the animals notice discrepancies. This rewriting of the commandments is a way to gaslight the animals, making them doubt their own memories and ensuring that the pigs' actions always appear justified. Squealer controls the flow of information on the farm, acting as the intermediary between the pigs and the other animals. He selectively shares news that benefits the pigs while withholding or distorting information that could incite dissent. He often uses vague language or complex statistics to baffle the animals, who are unable to challenge his claims due to their lack of education. This ensures that the animals remain ignorant and dependent on the pigs for guidance. Squealer often uses fear to manipulate the animals.

He frequently warns them that any dissent or failure to follow the pigs' orders could result in the return of Mr. Jones, the human farmer they overthrew. This fearmongering keeps the animals in line and prevents them from questioning the pigs' authority: "Do you know what would happen if we pigs failed in our duty? Jones would come back! Yes, Jones would come back! Surely, comrades... surely there is no one among you who wants to see Jones come back?" Squealer often cites fabricated statistics to prove that life on the farm is better than it was under Jones, even when the animals are clearly worse off. His use of numbers and rhetorical questions confuses the animals and prevents them from challenging the pigs' authority:

"Reading out the figures in a shrill, rapid voice, he proved to them in detail that they had more oats more hay, more turnips than they had had in Jones's day, that they worked shorter hours, that their drinking water was of better quality, that they lived longer, that a larger proportion of their young ones survived infancy, and that they had more straw in their stalls and suffered less from fleas"(Orewell).

He also justifies Napoleon's increasingly oppressive policies, such as the public executions of supposed traitors, by claiming they are necessary for the safety and stability of the farm. Squealer's ability to rationalize cruelty helps maintain the pigs' iron grip on power. Squealer represents the role of media in a totalitarian state. Just as Squealer distorts the truth to serve Napoleon, state-controlled media in real-world dictatorships often spreads propaganda, rewrites history, and suppresses dissenting voices to maintain the regime's power. Squealer's manipulation of language and information reflects how those in power can control not just the physical actions of the populace but also their thoughts and beliefs. By constantly shifting the narrative, Squealer ensures that the animals' perception of reality aligns with the pigs' interests. Squealer's persuasive tactics create cognitive dissonance among the animals, making them doubt their own experiences and accept contradictory ideas. This confusion is a key tool in preventing rebellion and maintaining the pigs' control. The other pigs on the farm are ruling class and administrators, particularly those in leadership positions, support Napoleon's regime by helping to implement his policies and maintain control over the farm. They benefit from the privileges granted by Napoleon's rule, such as better food and living conditions, which ensures their loyalty.

Minimus writes a poem titled “Comrade Napoleon,” which is filled with exaggerated praise and adulation for Napoleon. The poem describes Napoleon as the protector and provider of all good things on the farm. For instance: “*Friend of fatherless!*”, “*Fountain of happiness!*”, “*Lord of the swill-bucket!*”. These phrases elevate Napoleon to a god-like status, suggesting that all the animals’ welfare and happiness depend solely on his leadership. This creates an image of Napoleon as an infallible leader, discouraging any thoughts of rebellion or dissatisfaction. Minimus composes a new anthem for the farm to replace the original revolutionary song “Beasts of England.” The new song is much less about freedom and equality and more about loyalty to Napoleon and the farm that begins as: “*Animal Farm, Animal Farm, never through me shalt thou come to harm!*” The anthem shifts the focus from the collective struggle for freedom to a pledge of obedience and submission to the new order under Napoleon. It also instills a sense of inevitability about the leadership of Napoleon, suggesting that the animals’ security and success are tied directly to their loyalty. The language Minimus uses is simple and repetitive, which is a common propaganda technique. By using straightforward and easily remembered phrases, the propaganda is more likely to stick in the minds of the animals, making them easier to manipulate: “*Napoleon is always right*”. This phrase, though not directly written by Minimus, reflects the kind of messaging he supports through his works. It simplifies complex issues into a single, unchallenged truth, making it easier for the animals to accept Napoleon’s rule without question.

Foucault’s concept of panopticism, drawn from *Discipline and Punish*, applies to *Animal Farm* through the surveillance techniques used by Napoleon and the pigs to control the other animals. The dogs that Napoleon raises serve as a form of physical surveillance, ensuring that the animals comply with the regime through the threat of violence. The pigs also manipulate information and monitor the animals’ responses to maintain order. Napoleon exercises what Foucault would call disciplinary power by shaping the animals’ actions through subtle forms of control, such as fear, surveillance, and the regulation of labor. The pigs create a culture of self-regulation, where the animals are so conditioned by the system that they internalize their oppression and do not challenge the authority openly. Foucault’s concept of the Panopticon, a system of constant surveillance that disciplines individuals without overt force, can be seen in how Napoleon exerts control. Napoleon raises a private guard of dogs to instill fear, not just through direct punishment, but through the implied threat of violence.

In *Animal Farm*, the puppies play a crucial role in Napoleon’s rise to power and the establishment of his authoritarian regime. Their transformation into loyal enforcers illustrates how leaders can manipulate and indoctrinate the young to maintain control. Early in the story, Napoleon takes the puppies away from their mothers, claiming that he will be responsible for their education. However, he isolates them from the rest of the animals and raises them in secret. Over time, Napoleon trains the puppies to become his personal enforcers. These dogs serve as his secret police, instilling fear among the other animals and ensuring

that any opposition is quickly and ruthlessly dealt with. The nine dogs, raised and trained by Napoleon from puppies, serve as his private security force. They grow into fierce, obedient dogs, fully loyal to Napoleon alone. When the time is right, Napoleon uses them to chase Snowball off the farm, eliminating his main rival for power. After expelling Snowball, Napoleon uses the dogs to intimidate and control the other animals. The mere presence of these aggressive dogs is enough to suppress any dissent or rebellion. They enforce Napoleon's decrees and ensure that no animal dares to challenge his authority. The dogs are also used to carry out brutal punishments, such as the public executions of animals who are accused of collaborating with Snowball. This use of violence reinforces a culture of fear on the farm, discouraging any resistance to Napoleon's rule. The way Napoleon raises and indoctrinates the puppies mirrors how authoritarian regimes manipulate the youth to perpetuate their power. By controlling the next generation, Napoleon ensures that his control over the farm will be unchallenged. The dogs are a physical manifestation of Napoleon's power. While other animals may disagree with his policies, the fear of the dogs prevents them from speaking out.

This shows how brute force is used to maintain control in a dictatorship. The puppies, originally meant to be equal members of the animal community, are turned into agents of oppression. This reflects the broader corruption of the ideals of the Animal Farm revolution, as what was supposed to be a society of equals becomes a totalitarian state. Foucault's concept of biopower refers to how government control populations by regulating bodies and behaviors. In *Animal Farm*, the pigs exercise biopower by managing the physical labor, food supply, and reproduction of the animals. The pigs push the animals to work harder while keeping resources for themselves. The rationing of food and the division of labor reflect a biopolitical regulation of the farm's inhabitants, where the animals' bodies are managed as resources for the regime. Napoleon manipulates the animals' belief that they are working for the common good, while systematically exploiting their labor to sustain the pigs' comfort. Boxer, for instance, represents how biopower exhausts the body for the sake of the state, only to discard it once it's no longer useful.

Foucault also believed that power always produces resistance. However, in *Animal Farm*, any resistance from the animals is quickly co-opted or suppressed by the pigs. Foucault also discussed the possibilities of resistance within systems of power. In *Animal Farm*, the animals occasionally attempt to resist, such as the initial rebellion against Mr. Jones. However, under Napoleon's rule, resistance is crushed, demonstrating how power works to neutralize opposition. Boxer's fate is an example of how resistance is co-opted or eliminated in a Foucauldian power structure, where those who dissent are punished or removed from the social body. Any attempt to challenge authority, like when the hens resist giving up their eggs, is met with force or punishment. The pigs neutralize resistance by controlling the means of violence (the dogs) and the flow of information (Squealer's propaganda), ensuring that rebellion is short-lived or ineffective. The rebellion against Mr. Jones initially seems like a successful revolution, but as time passes, the pigs recreate the same oppressive power

structures, showing how resistance can be absorbed into new systems of domination. This mirrors Foucault's idea that even resistance can become a part of the larger apparatus of power.

### **Conclusion:**

A Foucauldian reading of *Animal Farm* reveals how power operates through mechanisms beyond brute forces, instead, it works through surveillance, knowledge, discourse, and the regulation of bodies. The pigs' control of the farm reflects a regime of power that operates subtly and pervasively, ensuring the dominance of the ruling class while keeping the other animals subjugated, often through their own internalized obedience. Thus, *Animal Farm*, in a Foucauldian light, illustrates how totalitarian regimes don't just dominate through overt coercion but through a network of social and discursive practices that shape the very fabric of the subjects' lives, thoughts and actions. ■

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# The Romantic Writers : Wordsworth and Coleridge

## (After a visit to Lake District in UK)

Mallikarjun Patil

William Wordsworth is the greatest romantic poet in England. In fact, Wordsworth and S. T. Coleridge began romantic poetry (literature) with the publication of their *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798. The romantic poetry is known for its strong individualism, subjectivity, idealism, love of the past and love for nature and the like. The romantic poets made use of fancy and imagination; they used the language of the common people. They wrote of lay people. So their poetry reached the common people and hence it is quite popular.

**Key Words:** Romanticism, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Nature, the past, imagination, rural life.

Who has not heard of Wordsworth of Lake District? Once I had the chance of making a short trip to Lake District and the Brontes' Haworth. The Lake District is visited by most of the people who go to see England's nature. Lake is a region in Cumbria, northwest of England. It includes the English peaks like Scafell Pike, the highest peak in the UK. The area was made a National Park in 1951 and it is a fine tourist place today. The principal lakes are Windermere, Ullswater, Derwentwater, Conistonwater and Thirlmere. The area has valleys and glaciers. The woodland includes broadleaf species and the scenery is relatively wild and very attractive.

Wordsworth was born at Cockermouth, Cumberland in 1770, as the third of the five children of John Wordsworth, a steward to Sir James Lowther (later the Earl of Lonsdale). Wordsworth was educated at Cockermouth, Penrith and Hawkshead. The Wordsworth children lost their parents in young age. Lowther's debts caused the family much distress. They were reared by their uncles Richard Wordsworth and Christopher Cookson.

Wordsworth's major work the *Prelude*, which is his poetic autobiography, mentions that he had a happy childhood. William Taylor, the headmaster at Hawkshead Grammar School was a poet and scholar and he allowed students much freedom. Wordsworth's life afterwards was not so happy as his sister Dorothy records it: "We are found fault with every hour of the day by the servants and my grandfather and grandmother, the former of whom never speaks to us but when he scolds, which is not seldom."

Wordsworth's maternal uncle William Cookson was a fellow at Cambridge and he procured for William a fellowship for perusing higher education. So Wordsworth joined Cambridge and earned his BA. He did not do much. It is said he was weak in Mathematics—the mother of all sciences. This time, he went on a walking tour in France, Switzerland and Germany. Even he did not like to join the church. Then he lived with his brother Richard in London for some time. He liked to become a soldier. He made a tour in France again and fell in love with Annette Villon and begot a child—Caroline. He involved in French revolutionary politics. When England declared a war on France he returned home. He could not marry Annette but paid her money for her dowry. His affair of this is found in his poem 'Vaudracour and Julia.'

Wordsworth had already begun to write poetry addressed to a lady called Mary. His poem 'An Evening Walk' is a good early poem. His *Descriptive Sketches* is about his tour in Europe. Wordsworth liked to become a journalist. When his friend Raisley Calvert died he left him a legacy of 900 pounds. This helped the poet to concentrate upon poetry. Then the poet settled down with his sister Dorothy at Racedown in Hardy's Dorset. He wrote pomes like 'Guilt and Sorrow,' 'The Ruined Cottage' and the unsuccessful play *The Borderer*.

A dramatic visit to S. T. Coleridge in 1797 made him move near his house in Nether Stowey. Wordsworth lived in Alfoxden in Somerset. Many of his poems 'The Idiot Boy,' 'The Thorn,' 'We Are Seven' and 'Tintern Abbey' with Coleridge's 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' appeared in their joint book *The Lyrical Ballads* in 1798, which event opened the epoch of Romantic poetry in English literature. Later, he enclosed a preface to it in 1800 and in it he said that he agreed with Coleridge to write poems on common people and in their language while Coleridge wrote poems on supernatural aspects. The Wordsworths and Coleridge made a tour in Germany. Once back home, Wordsworth wrote the 'Lucy' poems, 'Ruth' and acquired Dove Cottage in Grasmere in Lake District. He published his next books *The Excursion* (1814), *The Recluse* (an epic) and poems like 'Intimations of Immortality,' 'Ode to Duty,' 'The Solitary Reaper' and 'Resolution and Independence' and some of his best sonnets in 1807.

The Wordsworths moved to Rydal Mount in 1813. He had already married his childhood friend Mary Hutchinson in 1802 and had got five children by 1810. Two of them died later. His brother- John died at sea. His friendship with Coleridge became estranged. And his sister Dorothy went fragile in mind. Some of these things made the poet rather unhappy. Yet Wordsworth's financial condition was well enough. He had got his father's money from the court case. In 1813 he was made the official stamp distributor for Westmorland; in 1842, on Robert Southey's death, he was made the Poet Laureate; and he had got government's pension. None the less, his actual poetic output ended with his 1835 poem 'Death of James Hogg.'

Critics think Wordsworth was a poetic extremist who never compromised with any. His definition 'Poetry is the overflow of powerful feelings recollected in tranquillity' was

not liked by many of his contemporaries. Andrew Sanders states, “This is because Wordsworth shifts a literary perspective away from what he saw as gentility and false sophistication.” (Sanders 363) Still the second generation poets Shelley, Keats and Byron, Sir Walter Scott and De Quincy liked him. Matthew Arnold’s selection *Poems of Wordsworth* (1879) attracted Victorian writers and readers. A. C. Bradley, Garrod, Herbert Read, Lascelles Abercrombie and J. S. Mill — all admired him. Wordsworth’s influence is still strong today all over the world.

When I saw Wordsworth’s house at Cockermouth, my joy had no bounds. The joy was as great as when I visited Kannada poet Kuvempu’s house at Kuppalli in Shimoga district, Karnataka State or as that of Rabindranath Tagore’s Shantinikethan in West Bengal, India. It is a simple cottage-like house, now made into a museum. I saw his everyday used items and his books of poems. Wordsworth’s poetry has a rare glow of its own. His poems on villagers, women, children, even old people, on nature—hills, dales, rivers, grass and rain-bearing clouds is mesmerizing. Some of his poems like ‘She dwelt among the untrodden ways,’ ‘Tintern Abbey,’ ‘We Are Seven,’ and ‘The Solitary Reaper’ draw our immediate attention. Shelley calls Wordsworth a ‘lone star,’ admiring his love of truth, liberty and greater consciousness.

For those who love Wordsworth his Grasmere is most important. New Zealand writer Fleur Addock feels, “People talk about him as if he died yesterday.” It is true, as a teacher of English literature in a university I know Wordsworth is the most well-read poet even to this day across the world. When we see the green ridges, deep valleys, and sheep rearing and other farming activities we feel the scenery is like his poem, “A Solitary Reaper.” The Wordsworths and their friend S. T. Coleridge stayed near the Old Rectory for long which is now the Wordsworths’ resting place. When I visited it I found Mr. Robert Woolf and his wife Pamela, both living there as if tenants as in the case of Andrew Leahs at Thomas Hardy’s Max Gate. I had visited Hardy’s ‘Casterbridge’ a little earlier.

The Wordsworths’ Museum at Dove Cottage houses the Wordsworths’ manuscripts, diaries, journals and their personal collections. There are family albums, artefacts, domestic utensils and furniture. In the words of Tishani Doshi, who also visited the place “No literary personage in England, dead or alive, has such a state-of-the-art monument dedicated to them... Wordsworth died in the place in 1850 when he was 80. Still one can catch the spirit of the popular bard and see why he called it ‘the fairest place on earth.’”

**S. T. Coleridge:** Coleridge (1772-1834) was a fine Romantic poet, critic and philosopher. He was born in Ottery, Devon where his father was a Vicar. He studied with Lamb and Leigh Hunt at Christ’s Hospital, London. He studied at Jesus College, Cambridge, but left it soon. He joined the Army for a brief spell. In 1794, Coleridge and Southey wanted to start a commune (Pantisocracy) based on Godwin’s ideas. His first poem appeared in *The Morning Chronicle* in 1794. He lectured on politics, religion and education. He married Sara Fricker and stayed at Clevedon. Joseph Cottle published his first book *Poems*

in 1796. Coleridge got a son Hartley (who became a poet later). He studied German literature and philosophy, consuming opium at bouts of illness and depression.

In 1796 the Coleridges lived at the Quantock near the Wordsworths. The two poets published the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) starting Romantic Age in literature. Lamb, Hazlitt and others befriended him. He got an annuity from the Wedgwoods. He wrote poems like 'Frost at Midnight,' 'Kubla Khan,' verse tragedy *Osirio*, political ode 'France' and an anti-war poem 'Fire, Famine, Slaughter: A war eclogue.'

In 1798, Coleridge with the Wordsworths visited Germany; and studied Kant, Schiller, Schelling and Schlegel at Gottingen. These studies made him the most influential English interpreter of German Romanticism and the foremost exponent of its organicist doctrines. Back in England the next year, he translated part of Schiller's *Wallenstein* trilogy, contracted for a biography of Lessing and planned an ambitious work of Romantic metaphysics. He wrote some 50 articles for *The Morning Post* in 1800. He moved his family to London and then to Keswick in the Lake. By this time Coleridge's marriage had begun to fail and he fell in love with Sara Hutchinson, whose sister Mary had married Wordsworth. The guilt and stress of this love profoundly affected him over the next decade, forming the background to such poems as 'The Keepsake,' 'On Revisiting the Seashore,' 'To Asra' and 'A Daydream.' A more authentic voice breaks through in 'Dejection: An Ode.'

In 1804 Coleridge left Southey to take care of his family (which by then included another son, Derwent) and spent two years in the war-time Civil Service at Malta. He visited Sicily and Italy, wrote nothing but his notebooks and vainly tried to forget Sara. On his return to England in 1806 he formalized his separation from his wife. From 1806 to 1807 he stayed with the Wordsworths then living at Coleorton, Leicestershire, and was present at Wordsworth's reading of 'Poem to Coleridge' which became *The Prelude*; he replied with the conversation poem 'To William Wordsworth.' In 1808 he delivered 18 lectures 'On Poetry and the Principles of Taste' at the Royal Institute. This form was particularly congenial to him. Especially significant were the lectures on Shakespeare (first published as a two-volume collection of *Shakespearean Criticism* in 1907), developing the idea of a poet's work as epiphenomena of a single creative mind and the concept, then completely new, of 'organic' form. In 1808 Coleridge joined the Wordsworths for the last time, spending 18 months at Grasmere. Here he produced *The Friend*, a 'literary, moral and political paper' running for 28 issues in 1809-10. Politically and intellectually, its project of educating the English mind in post-Kantian idealism showed his development towards a new conservatism.

The final break with Wordsworth and Sara came in 1810. Coleridge lodged in London, lecturing and writing despite periods of near suicidal despair. The few poems of the next years include 'The Visionary Hope,' 'The Suicide Argument' and 'Time, Real Imaginary.' His pro-Government articles in *The Courier* and his attacks on the English Jacobins caused Hazlitt to denounce him as a political turncoat. His play *Remorse* is a reworking of *Osorio*. After a physical and mental breakdown in 1813 Coleridge underwent treatment at Bristol and Bath.

To this period belong the text *Biographyia Literaraia*, a kaleidoscope of philosophy, criticism and autobiography, and one of the key texts of English Romanticism.

In 1816 Coleridge settled at Highgate home, remaining there for the rest of his life. A chastened but also clarified figure, he became something of a living legend to younger Romantic poets. He was a 'London Sage.' At Byron's initiative, *Christabel and Other Poems* appeared in 1816 and *Sibylline Leaves*, his collected poems appeared in 1817. Coleridge's poetic career was largely over. The philosopher, preacher-lecturer and critic flourished. He became the centre of a circle of friends and disciples that included Godwin and the faithful Lamb.

Coleridge's view of society, culture and religion became more concrete and programmatic. His two *Lay Sermons* develop ideas on morality, national education and the organic structure of society. His 'Treatise on Method' ranges through every conceivable branch of knowledge. In 1819 he lectured on 'The History of Philosophy' and gave a 'General Course on Lecture.' *Aids to Reflection*, emphasizing the importance of Christianity as personal revelation influenced the development of the Broad Church movement and the Christian Socialism of John Sterling, F.D. Maurice and Charles Kingsley. In his last years Coleridge renewed his friendship with Wordsworth, and with whom he went on a short tour of Germany in 1828, made memorable by a meeting with Friedrich Schlegel. His last major publication *On the Constitution of the Church and State* (1830) proposed the removal of education and learning from both ecclesiastical and state control and the establishment of teachers, scholars, scientists, artists and priests as an independent 'estate of the Realm' called the 'clerisy' or 'National Church.'

Coleridge's nephew Henry Coleridge's edition *Table Talk* (1836) provides Coleridge's conversations. Coleridge's great poems are a few, but they maintain his poetic stature. His continental thought was new to his times. His theories of fancy and imagination gave impetus to Romantic criticism. M. H. Abrams thinks, "The concept of imagination is various as the modes of psychology that critics have adopted." (Abahms 123) His dialectical juxtapositions of reason and understanding, culture and civilization, and mechanical and organic form shaped the vocabulary of its recoil from Utilitarianism. Yet much of Coleridge's work is shot through with self-doubt and fears for his Christian belief, a metaphysical anxiety that seems to anticipate modern existentialism. ■

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# Humanism as depicted in Tagore's *Kabuliwala*

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Rabindranath Tagore's *Kabuliwala* is a poignant exploration of humanism, emphasizing the universal bonds of empathy, love, and compassion that transcend cultural and social boundaries. The story centers on the unlikely friendship between Rahamat, an Afghan fruit seller, and Mini, a young Bengali girl, highlighting the deep emotional connection that forms between them despite their different backgrounds. Through the depiction of Rahamat's paternal love for Mini, reminiscent of his own daughter in Afghanistan, Tagore underscores the universal nature of human emotions such as longing, affection, and loss. The story also explores how empathy can foster understanding across cultural divides, as seen in Mini's father's eventual compassion toward Rahamat. *Kabuliwala* serves as a timeless reminder of the importance of shared human experiences and the need for compassion in an increasingly fragmented world. Tagore's humanistic message, promoting emotional connection and cross-cultural understanding, remains as relevant today as ever, encouraging readers to recognize the shared humanity in others.

**Key Words:** Rabindranath Tagore, *Kabuliwala*, humanism, empathy, compassion.

## Introduction to Tagore and Humanism

The profound themes and universal values of Rabindranath Tagore's works have left an indelible mark on literature, philosophy, and the arts. In addition to his Nobel Peace Prize-winning poetry collection *Gitanjali*, Tagore was a philosopher, painter, educator, and humanitarian (Khan et al., 2022). His works often transcend borders, exploring the universal human experience. Tagore's work emphasizes the humanist belief that all people, regardless of race, class, or religion, are worthy of dignity, compassion, and interconnectedness. Tagore believed that humanism is a philosophy that people practice by being compassionate and understanding. He often shows how these principles can unite people across social, economic, and cultural lines.

*Kabuliwala*, a Tagore short story, shows Mini, a Bengali girl, and Rahamat, an Afghan fruit vendor, forming a genuine friendship. Rahamat is from a faraway place with a different culture, so their connection seems unlikely. Their relationship shows that we are not alone in our love, affection, and care for each other. *Kabuliwala* becomes an enduring

story of empathy in which two people overcome their differences to form a bond (Rogobete, 2022). Tagore shows readers how empathy and compassion can create human connections in a world where people are united by humanity rather than culture. *Kabuliwala* shows how empathy can unite people of different cultures, exemplifying Tagore's humanism.

### **Summary of *Kabuliwala***

Tagore's *Kabuliwala* is a touching story about Rahamat, an Afghan fruit vendor in Kolkata, befriending Mini, a Bengali girl. Rahamat, the "Kabuliwala," scares Mini as he sells dried fruits and nuts on the streets in a turban and loose Afghan clothes. Mini is initially wary of Rahamat, but they bond over jokes and stories about his homeland (Quayum, 2024). They bond despite their social and cultural differences, and Rahamat sees a little of his daughter in Mini, whom he raised in Afghanistan.

As Rahamat and Mini grow closer, the story's themes of loneliness and loss emerge. Rahamat's paternal love for Mini temporarily bridges his distance from his family in a foreign country. Mini, who symbolizes his daughter's love, comforts and inspires him in his solitude. Rahamat's tenderness toward Mini shows Tagore's belief that human emotions can unite people across borders. Rahamat is imprisoned after an altercation, causing tragedy (Agarwal, 2021). He returns years later, after Mini has grown up and forgotten him, emphasizing change and painful distance.

*Kabuliwala*'s character expresses Tagore's universal longing for family, separation, and paternal love. Rahamat's touching and tragic tale of lifelong love emphasizes Tagore's message of universal human dignity and time's transformative power on relationships. This gentle story about empathy shows how understanding and love can unite people regardless of location or other obstacles.

### **Humanism in the Character of the *Kabuliwala***

Rahamat, the Afghan fruit vendor in *Kabuliwala*, shows Tagore's belief in the universal humanity that unites all people. Rahamat's interactions with Mini, a Bengali girl who reminds him of his Afghan daughter, show his fatherly nature—kind, resilient, and loving. Despite his rough exterior, Rahamat treats Mini with kindness and warmth that befits his humble background as an immigrant worker abroad (Quayum, 2020). His love for her is deep and unconditional, like a parent's love for their child. Because Mini represents his missing daughter, Rahamat treats her with unconditional love.

Rahamat shows his humanity through small but significant actions. Giving Mini dried fruits as a gift, cheerfully enduring her teasing, and telling her funny stories show that he wants to protect her like his own child. Despite looking and acting like an outsider, Tagore shows how Rahamat bonds with Mini over shared human emotions rather than culture. Tagore believes that compassion and understanding can overcome prejudice and social barriers, as Rahamat is able to make this connection in a community that views him as an outsider. His fatherly love for Mini transcends culture and geography.

Tagore shows through Rahamat that status and circumstance do not affect human connections. Rahamat exhibits empathy and compassion, demonstrating humanism in which love and understanding overcome prejudice despite her foreign origin (Das & Bhowmick, 2023). He embodies humanity by showing compassion and understanding to people from all backgrounds. Tagore uses Rahamat's relationship with Mini to demonstrate that shared human emotions like parental love, nostalgia, and empathy can unite people regardless of distance, which resonates with readers. Rahamat's character embodies Tagore's humanism by showing how empathy can overcome prejudice and promote understanding.

### **The Father-Daughter Theme as an Expression of Humanism**

Rabindranath Tagore's *Kabuliwala* explores humanism through father-daughter relationships. Tagore shows that love, vulnerability, and the need for connection transcend culture, identity, and nation. Rahamat, an Afghan fruit vendor, loves Mini, a Bengali girl, because of his daughter in Afghanistan (Panjabi et al., 2022). This link shows that fathers of all ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds feel this instinct. Rahamat's love for Mini goes beyond a connection with a foreign child; it's a deep and longing love for his daughter. His gentle paternal love binds him to Mini even in a foreign land.

Tagore uses the father-daughter relationship to demonstrate humanism by showing how love for one's child transcends geography, economics, and culture. Child love for their father is innate and protective, uniting people regardless of their differences. Tagore shows through Rahamat's relationship with Mini that this bond transcends culture and space (Madhavan, 2022). Rahamat's loving relationship with Mini shows that fatherhood is universal and felt by all fathers. Fathers' profound vulnerability in loving their children unites people despite their differences. The emotional depth and universality of a father's love for his daughter symbolizes humanism. This applies in Bengali homes and Afghan villages.

Throughout the story, Mini's father changes drastically. He initially sees Rahamat as an alien from another planet and completely different from him. After Rahamat's release, Mini's father changes his mind about the Kabuliwala. He grows more compassionate toward Rahamat as he learns of his love for his daughter. After seeing Rahamat miss his daughter, Mini's dad feels compassion for her anguish and realizes emotions are universal. Tagore suggests that people from different backgrounds can bond over love and loss and overcome barriers. When Mini's dad has that epiphany, it shows how love, compassion, and humanity can unite strangers.

Mini's father's emotional transformation emphasizes the need to understand and empathize with people regardless of background or appearance. Mini's dad sees Rahamat as a human who loves his daughter unconditionally after initially seeing him as an alien. This scene shows Tagore's belief that love and other universal human experiences can unite people across cultural, social, and personal boundaries (Sen,

2017). The father-daughter bond and Mini's father's empathy show that relationships and emotions, not origins, bind people. Rahamat and Mini's relationship illustrates this.

She depicts these relationships to show that empathy is based on shared human emotions like love, vulnerability, and longing. Mini's father's acknowledgement of Rahamat's paternal love for his daughter shows how empathy and understanding can overcome appearances (Warner, 2020). Tagore hopes to show readers that everyone is human by using the father-daughter bond as a metaphor. It suggests that tolerance, empathy, and understanding are essential to overcoming social and cultural divides and building meaningful relationships. Kabuliwala uses the touching relationship between a father and his daughter to encourage readers to be compassionate and understanding of others and the world.

### **Conclusion: The Message of Humanism in *Kabuliwala***

Rabindranath Tagore's *Kabuliwala* is an enduring reminder of the importance of compassion, empathy, and the universality of the human experience in overcoming barriers of all kinds, whether those barriers be geographical, social, or cultural. In her tale of the Afghan fruit vendor Rahamat and the Bengali child Mini, Tagore shows how love and kindness can overcome language and cultural barriers to form a profound human connection. Rahamat's maternal love for Mini, which stems from his own distant fatherly love for a daughter, exemplifies how commonalities in feelings and experiences can unite people across great distances. One way in which Tagore shows how humanism promotes mutual understanding and respect is through Mini's father's gradual empathy toward Rahamat. This shows how we can see ourselves in other people, no matter their background. In an increasingly fragmented world, this message of compassion for all peoples remains as relevant and moving as it was during Tagore's lifetime. In *Kabuliwala*, Tagore presents a humanistic vision that encourages readers to understand and appreciate one another's humanity and to practice empathy. ■

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# Posthumanism: A Theoretical Overview

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Posthumanism emerged as a critical discourse with a view to offering a corrective discourse of humanism and anthropocentrism. Humans inherently work to make life comfortable and luxurious by possessing technological creations. Posthumanism as a critical discourse questions when technological creations become powerful enough to replace humans in the workplace. The term ‘posthuman’ emerged within the field of science fiction (SF) and philosophy implies embeddedness in the human body and enhanced capacities by cognitive and physical means. The study focuses on posthumanism as a critical and philosophical phenomenon and its implication in literature. SF authors problematise the issues vis-à-vis technology, biotechnology, genetic engineering, artificial intelligence, cloning and digital technologies through fictional representation. Posthumanism interrogates humans’ position of centre and postulates that humans including non-human species are residents of the world without any ownership and control. It also alarmingly deliberates on cautionary measures and horrendous consequences, if governments do not implement strict policies concerning advancement in biotechnology, genetic engineering, artificial intelligence, and digital technologies. The commercialisation of technological advancement is a pertinent concern of critical posthumanists. Further, the paper attempts to postulate how dystopian nightmare is a consequence of liberal humanist subject wherein imagined perspectives are crucial in changing the dreadful effects of a corrupt political system.

**Key Words:** Cyborgs, Posthumanism, Science Fiction, Technological Landscape, Transhumanism.

## Introduction

The term ‘posthuman’ finds expression in science fiction (SF) and philosophically signifies “species that might evolve from human beings.” Posthumans evolve artificial intelligence (AI), genetic engineering, and biotechnological advancements. Posthumans are enhanced through “genetic or bionic augmentation” (*Oxford Lexico Dictionary*). The term ‘posthuman’ does not imply absence of humans, rather talks about stretched boundaries vis-à-vis cognitive and physical capacities. However, a compelling reason for posthumanism to emerge as a critical notion is because technology as an external phenomenon asides “man” at a marginal position concerned with usage and control in the technological landscape.

As posthumans evolve from humans, are associated with powerful/ privileged status among all the living and non-living species. Therefore, the privileged status of humans as hero of development and scientific temperament are leading factors toward technologically progressive society. Humans inherently dream and work for progress and development. Gradually, humans are only living beings who endlessly work towards making technological progress. Hence, the world is radically transformed by technological means.

The term ‘posthumanism’ comes from science fiction and philosophy signifies “humans can be transformed, transcended, or eliminated either by technological advancements or the evolutionary process; artistic, scientific, or philosophical practice which reflects this belief” (*Oxford Lexico Dictionary*). Posthumanism as a critical method of inquiry attempts to scrutinise “anthropocentric and humanistic assumptions” in literature (Ferrando 29). Further, posthumanism seeks to inquire about the relationship between humans and technology alongside rethinking humans’ position in a technologically mediated and tampered world. Posthumanism as a critical discourse deconstructs the anthropocentric human activities that have caused chaos in the world. Posthumanism as a critical discourse postulates on concerns about animals and environmental ethics. The presence of posthumans can be traced in literary and philosophical texts which constantly warn about technological enhancements. Moreover, we cannot draw parallels between history of posthuman discourse and the evolutionary history of technology. Theoretical arguments concerned with posthumanism deal with critical inquiries into technological enhancements and anthropocentric humanism.

### **Posthumanism as a Critical Discourse**

Posthumanism deconstructs humanism while seriously looking into the changed subject position of centrality. The prefix ‘post’ identifies a new mode of interpreting literature, which radically exposes ‘humanism’ by citing loopholes rooted in anthropocentrism. It shows restlessness and displeasure for the human actions that replace humans in various spheres of life such as the workplace, household chores, reducing employment opportunities for human beings and so on and so forth. Posthumanism is a philosophical and critical phenomenon, that may be considered as a populist notion wherein concern for humans including living beings, environment, and technological advancements are at the core of deliberation. In fact, the critical and popular notion of populist agency functions as hope. One facilitates enhanced abilities and adds luxury to human life, whereas other critically questions anti-human and anti-environmentalist ventures.

Francis Fukuyama’s book, *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of Biotechnology Revolution* (2002) opens with a description of Aldous Huxley’s dystopian work *Brave New World*: “The aim of this book is to argue that Huxley was right, that the most significant threat posed by contemporary biotechnology is the possibility that it will alter human nature and thereby move us into a “posthuman” stage of history” (7). If advanced technologies fall into the wrong hands, these may push the whole world into a horrendous situation.

Technological advancements become dangerous when they create disparity in society, discriminate on the basis of technological superiority, and when an anthropocentric view of life is lent more prominence. Fukuyama further emphasises the inevitable commercialisation of technological and biotechnological innovations. He critically expounds on the future of enhanced humans. His understanding of posthumanism speaks more about the political economy: “Human nature shapes and constrains the possible kinds of political regimes, so a technology powerful enough to reshape what we are will have possibly malign consequences for liberal democracy and the nature of politics itself” (7). Fukuyama’s nightmare is situated in the political history of liberal democracy wherein a corrupt political system oversees policies concerned with the welfare of humans including companion species.

Human imagination and fantasy are crucial in experimenting with new ideas within the field of technology. Likewise, imagination and science can also work wonders in human life by becoming agents of cultural transformation. Ihab Hassan in his article on “Prometheus as Performer: Towards a Posthumanist Culture?” claims: “[B]oth imagination and science are agents of change, crucibles of values, modes not only of representation but also of transformation, their interplay may now be the vital performing principle in culture and consciousness—a key to posthumanism” (838). Thus, posthumanism does not create a binary line between human and posthuman, but its philosophical foundations can be found in robotics, biotechnology, cognitive science, computer science, etc. Posthumanism deconstructs the human in multiple discourses and examines them to unfold inherent humanistic and normative notions of humaneness.

The notion of posthuman and technology are linked together and was first suggested by Ihab Hassan in 1976 in the essay titled “Prometheus as Performer: Towards a Posthumanist Culture?” According to Hassan, “astonishing convergences of imagination and science, myth and technology in contemporary culture have tended to elude them” (839). The latest developments in the field of science and technology have reconfigured the world beyond the human paradigm. Posthumanists thus interrogate the anthropocentric view of humanism which discriminates against environment and non-human species. Instances such as humans’ prerogative as a superior species to make desirable changes in the genetic line, and their experimentation with animal breeds to use organs for transplantation, call humanism into question. Jerold J. Abrams claims thus:

Genetic line can be manipulated, even while the technologies are still very much in the experimental stages. It is hardly difficult to imagine several wealthy families manipulating their genetic lines and mating strictly with one another, in order to enhance desirable traits in the given line. They would be built to live longer, to be healthier, and for all practical purposes to approach the Nietzschean ideal of the overman. (247)

New technologies alter the biological enhancements that provide a healthy life. Although experiments in the extension and modification of life in the genetic line, as well as organ

transplantation, are done for the betterment of humans, they end up tampering with/ distorting the innate bodily unification of humans. Thus, in the very process of donating organs, one lives at the cost of terminating the other's life.

Life in posthuman discourse has thus been discussed as a process of establishing new connections among species and technological artefacts, and therefore, unethical organ harvest and xenotransplantation give rise to neo-cannibalism. Many science fiction writers have been writing about potential dangers of technological advancements and AI. Critical posthumanism critiques technologies that reduce human body to a sheer organ continuum. The embeddedness of posthuman body has to be understood in two ways, "firstly, the mind-body continuum – i.e. the embrainment of the body and embodiment of the mind – and secondly, the nature-culture continuum – i.e. 'naturecultural' and 'humanimal' transversal bonding" (Braidotti 1). Posthuman body is the combination of dissimilar species and material entities situated in new media environs wherein human beings and AI interact.

Technology is the biopower in Foucauldian sense and knowledge as a cognitive process. Knowledge is acquired from social interactions. At the end of *The Order of Things*, Foucault famously wrote that "man is an invention of recent date" (422). In the process of this "invention," people somewhere lose the unified structure of the body and lead towards posthuman condition. Human beings thus reached a situation wherein dependency on technological artefacts increased substantially. Cary Wolfe in the book *What is Posthumanism?* Observes thus: "Transhumanists believe in the perfectibility of the human, seeing the limitations of the human body (biology) as something that might be transcended through technology so that faster, more intelligent, less disease-prone, long living human bodies might one day exist on Earth" (10). There are numerous versions of the transhuman and some of them have questionable capitalist dimensions. The idea of transhumanism is dangerous because it creates more social inequalities by making somebody more intelligent and beautiful compared to others.

Chris Hables Gray questions appropriation of cyborg technologies that create cyborgs who are self-regulating creations made of cybernetic and organ combination. Today, scientists are in the process of creating a perfect robot that carries human sensibilities and capacities. Cyborgs use technological devices, as Gray in *Cyborg Citizens: Politics in the Posthuman Age* observes:

If you have been technologically modified in any significant way, from an implanted pacemaker to a vaccination that programmed your immune system, then you are a cyborg. Even if you are one of those rare people who is in no way a cyborg in the technical sense, cyborg issues still impact you. We live in a cyborg society, no matter how unmodified we are as individuals. So, as we humans continue to transform ourselves, this process will play an increasingly important, eventually fundamental role in politics- and not always for the better. (2)

Gray, in fact, makes a strong claim that humans are in a continuous process of transformation into cyborgs as vaccines are being given at a very early stage after birth. In the field of medical science, experiments have been done on human to affect/modify their life as well as their genetic line. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, people are bound to work with technological creations. Technology has been inseparably occupying human body and landscapes and has become an inevitable part of life.

### **Transhumanism and Posthumanism**

Transhumanists on the other hand attempt to bring significant changes in the physical and cognitive structure of the human. Transhumanism, a branch of posthumanism, aims at making perfect humans with the help of genetic engineering and biotechnology. Posthumanism suggests prosthetic relationship between human beings and AI. In the process of transformation, human beings as a species evolve better whereas their genetic line gets transformed. Robert Pepperell in his book, *The Posthuman Condition: Consciousness Beyond the Brain* observes:

We are transhuman to the extent that we seek to become posthuman and take action to prepare for a posthuman future. This involves learning about and making use of new technologies that can increase our capacities and life expectancy, questioning common assumptions, and transforming ourselves ready for the future, rising above outmoded human beliefs and behaviours. (170)

Several attempts have been made to change the physical and mental capacities of humans. Transhumanists attempt to make changes in humans' biological structure with a view to postponing death. For Robert Pepperell, posthumanism is an anti-human idea characterised by the absence of humanists' interests. One wishes to live a longer life by overcoming some of the biological limits of the body. This process requires experimental research to enhance human physical and mental capacities.

Transhumanists always desire and imagine better and reformed humans' bodies. They aim to make life more comfortable by way of using surgical, medical, electronic, and neurocognitive sciences. Critical posthumanism finds it problematic when the outcome of a transhuman venture takes an adverse turn and becomes devastating. Robert Pepperell further writes about technological dominance over human and non-human species:

Humans have imagined for a long time that the ability to develop and control technology was one of the defining characteristics of our condition, something that assured us of our superiority over other animals and our unique status in the world. Ironically, this sense of superiority and uniqueness is being challenged by the very technologies we are now seeking to create, and it seems the balance of dominance between human and machine is slowly shifting. (3)

Pepperell, in fact, worries about shifting of power centre from human to AI owing to advanced technological developments that seem more powerful. AI supersedes humans in terms of

work capacity and effectiveness. For instance, a woodcutter machine is far more efficient than a person who cuts wood. But, it also reduces employment possibilities for humans involved in the particular workplace. The theoretical postulations in the paper highlight the adverse impact of biotechnology, information technology, artificial intelligence, cloning, surrogacy, and robotics on human life. Ferkiss warns that “the synthesis of postmodern technology and industrial man could produce a new civilization, or it could mean the end of the human race” (Waters ix). The threat is the result of a transformative vision of future technologies. Ferkiss’s view is more concerned with the technologies that land us in landscapes inhabited and dominated by AI. Technology today occupies a place of centrality in human life and has resulted from a historical process.

Transhumanism is an intermediary agency between the human and the posthuman/perfect human, and is identical to Donna Haraway’s vision of life, which is to live as long as possible. It uses brain engineering, brain transformation, prosthesis and genetic engineering. As advanced medical science opens up the possibility to avail oneself of an original prosthesis to be able to live a longer life, unethical organ harvest has a negative bearing on the neo-cannibalist nature of the advanced technologies. Posthumanism can be marked from the point of human realisation of his human reliance on technologies. Initially, it becomes visible in the forms of urbanscapes and ruralscapes that are reflective of technological landscapes. In fact, “Civilizations are based on the interplay of technology and human values” (Waters ix). Undoubtedly, the skilful efforts of human beings have contributed toward progress to make life more comfortable. Still, critical posthumanism puts forth the idea that there is something wrong with the world after the arrival of advanced technologies. Literary writers and thinkers have been postulating about excessive human indulgence in technological landscapes.

### **Posthumanism and Science Fiction**

In literature, science fiction as a genre in particular deals with the issues of futuristic technologies and their threat to different species living on this planet. It also depicts the potential dangers of technological advancements. Further, such situations have been represented by various novelists such as Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley who, in 1818, wrote *Frankenstein: or, The Modern Prometheus*. Frankenstein’s monster is a genetically engineered being with enhanced capacities. His creation becomes dangerous for the creator, and the story ends in a chaotic situation. Another novel of hers namely *The Last Man* (1826) unfolds the story of a man living in a future world depopulated by a devastating plague. The damaged environment of Philip K. Dick’s novel, *Blade Runner* (1981) plays a fundamental role in shaping the idea of a post-apocalyptic scenario. The total destruction of the environment and eradication of non-human species alarmingly convey potential dangers of technological advancements and climate change. Environmental degradation and eradication of species a pertinent concerns of the novel that contribute in shaping the idea of a post-apocalyptic situation.

H.G. Wells' novel, *The War of the Worlds* (1898) portrays the Earth's invasion by the planet Mars's occupants. The story unfolds a futuristic tale where Aliens plot an invasion on Earth for widening their gradually depleting natural resources. *The Scarlet Plague* (1912) by Jack London is set in San Francisco in 2072 and narrates a story of depopulated landscapes on the earth. It portrays a situation where a deadly plague empties the planet which horrifies the reader. Aldus Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) is a story of those people who believe that happiness can be achieved through the use of drugs. Technology is the most powerful thing in society which can become dangerous for humanity if it falls into the wrong hands. Huxley depicts how technology controls society in terms of birth and future. George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) talks about the technological surveillance and manipulation of recorded history by an authoritative government. *Neuromancer* by William Gibson tells a near-future story of a computer hacker hired by a mysterious employer for one last job against powerful artificial intelligence. Thus, there are numerous writers who contributed by shaping the idea of posthuman landscapes in their writings.

Likewise, there are agencies of posthumanisation such as robotic technology, biotechnology, artificial intelligence, cloning, communication technologies, and new media that have contributed immensely to the fictional representation of posthuman landscapes in literature. Novelists such as Philip K. Dick, William Gibson, Aldus Huxley, George Orwell, Margaret Atwood, Cormac McCarthy, Vernor Vinge, and Kazuo Ishiguro have written about how technology has become a necessity. Everything in our life is reconstructed by how we travel, communicate with people, and seek information about everything. Internet chatting offers a broader scope of communication with relatives and strangers. In this way, physical reality is being replaced by virtual reality.

Posthumanism lays emphasis on the question of how we think about human beings in relation to the environment, animals, cloned bodies, and robots. N. Katherine Hayles, Cary Wolfe, Stefan Herbrechter, Francis Fukuyama, Donna Haraway, Niklas Luhmann, and Neil Badmington have contributed to the concept of the posthuman and its practice in humanities. In fact, the notion of posthuman is understood as the human of extended capacities as N. Katherine Hayles writes in *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*:

[T]he posthuman view thinks of the body as the original prosthesis we all learn to manipulate, so that extending or replacing the body with other prostheses becomes a continuation of a process that began before we were born...the posthuman view configures human being so that it can be seamlessly articulated with intelligent machines. (3)

Hayles emphasises the shift in the focus from the body to the material objects. After the advent of advanced technologies, human and robotic bodies seem essentially similar. The human body is treated as an organ continuum which can be further used for prosthetic transplantations. The posthuman subject is a combination of several material entities.

Posthumanists view human consciousness as the centre of identity and body as a prosthetic entity that can increase the lifespan of socio-economically privileged people. The posthumanist view presented by Hayles above points toward extension of human life through the use of technological, medical, surgical, digital and electronic gadgets. The posthuman thus crosses “normality’s threshold,” and leads the body into “techno-scientific colonisation” (Goicoechea 5).

The thrust of posthuman fiction writers remains on the landscapes materially occupied/overpowered by technological gadgets. It also depicts how prosthetic (original and artificial) relationship is destined to enhance human capacities. Posthuman bodies are an amalgamation of technological devices and tools. They are fundamentally similar to AI. Hayles observes that “becoming a posthuman means much more than having prosthetic devices grafted onto one’s body. It means envisioning humans as information-processing machines with fundamental similarities to other kinds of information-processing machines, especially intelligent computers” (246). Likewise, in the 21st century literature, we come across virtual characters who seem similar to the human characters. They are in prosthetic relationships with electronic devices and other species. They adapt their bodies according to the external object/s fitted/transplanted in the body.

Current trends in technology offer a futuristic vision via transporting human beings into a better future, and therefore, the idea of posthuman seems fascinating as it carries utopian traits. Robert Pepperell in *The Posthuman Condition: Consciousness beyond the Brain*, observes thus:

Posthumans will be persons of unprecedented physical, intellectual, and psychological ability, self-programming and self-defining, potentially immortal, unlimited individuals. Posthumans have overcome the biological, neurological, and psychological constraints evolved into humans. Extropians believe that the best strategy for attaining posthumanity is a combination of technology and determination, rather than looking for it through psychic contacts, or extraterrestrial or divine gift. (170)

Technology, an agency of posthumanisation and survival, cannot be alien to the human. Digital technologies widen the boundaries of the posthuman as people become dependent on artificial creations for a relatively better, healthier life. AI can be a dangerous agency in replacing human beings. Excessive indulgence of humans with machines, medical and surgical world, in fact, hybridises biological humans and technology. Artificial prosthesis helps enhance the capacities of the human body in desirable ways. Within the domain of posthumanism, information technologies and digitalisation hold an important place and thus merit discussion. Digital technologies blur boundaries between animate and inanimate images wherein devices talk to one another. Richard Jordan in the thesis titled “Posthuman Drama: Identity and Machine in Twenty-First-Century Play Writing” observes: “In a world where our devices ‘talk’ to each another, where our virtual personae outlive our bodies, and

where our memories are outsourced to the cloud, we have already become posthuman”(4). Thus, posthuman subject equates human identity with digital landscapes and intelligent machines.

Communication technology also has brought the entire world closer. Internet chat has created a wider scope of communication with one’s relatives as well as strangers. Posthumanfiction explores the consequences of excessive indulgence with/ reliance on technology/ machines. Virtual reality blurs boundaries between animate and inanimate objects and at times, it becomes challenging to distinguish between both. Posthuman subjectivity changes readers’ perception of technology, which results in a horrifying apocalyptic future based on the latest developments in the technological sphere. Whereas “[c]yberculture invokes a romantic apocalyptic vision of a cybernetic rapture, a new electronically induced return to the unity, an age in which the material world will be transcended by information” (Dinello 3) critical posthumanism deals with the question: “What happens when human beings are equated with intelligent machines or artificial intelligence?” (3). Posthuman fiction as a remarkable intervention represents human and non-human agents essentially similar to each other through intelligent machines crucial in unfolding the narrative.

The concept of posthuman comes into play when science fiction and philosophy deliberate on the issues concerned with the relationship with technology: “It is more accurate to describe two forms of discourse that run through both scientific and fictional narratives, in unequal ways. “Technoromanticism” and “cybergothic” can be used to refer to the techno heaven and the technohell, using Daniel Dinello’s notions, respectively” (Goicoechea 3). Based on the above-mentioned argument, it can be said that posthuman fiction addresses issues related to the utopian human desire for a better life by using technology. The desire and excitement for a better life leads people to an unmanageably chaotic situation.

Similarly, Jacques Derrida may be viewed as a critique of humanism when humans are involved in “unprecedented transformation” and their consumerist relation with non-human entities get enhanced (24). Further, the opportunities offered by capitalism are grabbed by anthropocentric humans as Rosi Braidotti postulates, “[P]osthuman condition consists in grabbing the opportunities offered by the decline of the unitary subject position upheld by Humanism, which has mutated in several complex directions” (54). She further argues, “Derrida’s attack on anthropocentrism is presented consequently as a necessary correlate of the critique of Humanism” (69). Posthumanism questions anthropocentric activities that grab the opportunities offered by technological advancements to transmute non-human species while exercising man’s prerogative as a superior species.

### **Posthuman and Technology**

Critical posthumanism castigates anti-human activities and denounces any endeavour due to which human survival is endangered. Indian playwright in English, Manjula Padmanabhan, in her play *Harvest* set in Bombay, portrays an urbanscape where the protagonist namely Om Prakash becomes jobless just because machines need few skilled

operators. So, he decides to sell his body organs for the survival of his family. This is the severe side of biotechnological advancements. Technologically and economically rich section of society challenges the mortal nature of human life by harvesting organs from people who are economically deprived. Posthumanism thus questions humanist discourse when biotechnology, nano-technology, and artificial intelligence tend to undermine human beings: “Posthumanism questions biocentrism, the concept of life itself, blurring the boundaries between the animate and the inanimate in quantum approach to the physics of existence” (Fernando 10). Critical posthumanism raises serious concerns about the interference of technology in human life besides emphasising how technologised human/ posthuman is alienated in society and how vulnerable sections of human population are compelled to sell their organs.

## Conclusion

Anthropocentric activities start harming humans, the physical environment, and non-human species. In posthuman discourse, humans enter into symbiotic relationships with AI and companion species. Contemporary technoculture and biotechnology create chaotic situation which may be called apocalyptic which reinforces rethinking anthropocentric humanism from different perspectives. Critical posthumanism intervenes when humans desire to shape a utopian world characterised by perfect human traits ends in chaos and destruction. Socially constructed nature of the human is different from the one that is technologically constructed. Posthuman view considers human consciousness as a separable part of the human body and organ continuum. Further, posthumanism denounces the binary line between human and posthuman, but its philosophical foundations can be found in technologies such as robotics, biotechnology, cognitive science, computer science, etc. Posthumanism deconstructs the human in multiple discourses and examines them to unfold inherent humanistic and normative notions of humaneness. ■

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# The Intersection of Gender and Identity : Identity Crisis of Male Characters in Ashapurna Devi's Selected Short Stories

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The article examines the way gender and identity come together in the example of male characters from the selected short stories of Ashapurna Devi, more particularly, on the aspects of one's identity crisis in a patriarchal world. The factors were attributable to the internal struggle of characters Gourishankar, Indranath Ghosh Chowdhury, Barin, Shibnath, and Someshwar Sen among others. These characters wrongfully feel a loss of control, loss of relevance, and sense of self, as the prescribed gender roles are challenged. The dissertation further departs from the polemic and inquiry, exploring and explaining the sociological concerns regarding the male characters' situation within the narratives more deeply. The same is achieved by looking into the factors that contribute the most to the identity crisis. This paper highlights that these identity crises are not lived as a tortured inner clash but rather as a struggle to maintain a delicate balance within the existing tension in society.

**Key Words:** Gender, Identity Crisis, Masculinity, Patriarchy, Short Stories, Male Characters, Internal Conflict.

## **Introduction**

The exploration of identity and its crisis is a significant theme in fiction, in Indian literature, and particularly in Ashapurna Devi's works. Her short stories focus on how men uphold gender and identity, with male characters often more confused and tormented by their identity as male than female ones. Ashapurna Devi's work often explores the suffering of women, who are gradually suppressive subjects in the Indian diaspora, and the feminist aspects of her narration. However, her work also highlights the complex and interesting images of male characters, who are stressed due to the tasks given to them by the male-dominated world.

Masculinity is often associated with strength, authority, responsibility, and protection in a patriarchal society. However, with changing times and questioning these patterns, men in Ashapurna Devi's tales are in transition losing out on earlier duties and the definition of

self. This dilemma is at the Centre of most identity crises and essential concerns of the writer's male protagonists.

This study focuses on the crisis of identity through concentration on the male figures in some of Ashapurna Devi's short fiction. Examples include Gourishankar in *The Revelation*, who feels redundant within the domestic space following the death of his wife, and Indranath Ghosh Chowdhury in *The Weapon*, who constantly engages in a war presiding over his physical wreckage due to disability. Characters like Barin in *The Deceiver* and the Deception and Shibnath in *The Whirling World* demonstrate that even private misdeeds or changing family contexts can lead to an all-encompassing alienation from oneself. In conclusion, this paper explores Ashapurna Devi's male characters, providing a rich and nuanced insight into the complexities of identity formation and crisis in a patriarchal society.

## Discussion

### **Gourishankar in *The Revelation*: The Struggle for Control in a Shifting Patriarchy**

In *The Revelation*, Gourishankar, a former government officer, grapples with an identity crisis following the death of his wife. His struggle is rooted in his need to retain control and authority within his household, a reflection of the patriarchal norms that define his identity. The key to the letterbox, which he clings to obsessively, symbolizes his desperate attempt to maintain a connection to his past and his position of power. His behaviour—secretly reading and withholding letters, particularly those addressed to his daughter-in-law, Swati—reveals his inner turmoil and the erosion of his authority. Chakraborty's analysis underscores the intricate portrayal of gender roles in Ashapurna Devi's stories, which highlights the identity crises of male characters as they navigate changing societal expectations. (Chakraborty, 2017).

This feeling of redundancy and helplessness further accentuates the identity crisis that Gourishankar is suffering from. The man, who all along had been the centre of interest, now felt junk and a redundant "discarded set of beads" that nobody was even bothered picking up. His clinging to the letterbox key symbolizes denial of acceptance of changes in family dynamics and his less significant place therein. In many ways, this crisis may also mirror the societal expectation for men to always be in control and provide a source of anxiety when that expectation is under threat.

### **Indranath Ghosh Chowdhury in *The Weapon*: Masculinity Under Siege**

Such an identity crisis in the case of Indranath Ghosh Chowdhury in *The Weapon* is conditioned by his physical disability, strained familial relationships, and an ongoing legal battle over the ancestral home. The injury during a football game had left Indranath with a limp; he sees this disability as a deterrent to marriage and a normal life. Add to that his status as a bachelor, physically limited, which compounds his inferiority complex, further enhanced by the disputed relationship he has with his stepmother over the family property.

Indranath's struggle is also linked to the way he perceives societal expectations regarding masculinity and success. The legal struggle is a metaphor for a greater struggle that is going on concerning his place in the family and society. While neighbours, who see him as rightfully entitled to the house, show much sympathy towards Indranath, he grows more isolated and helpless as his identity becomes submerged beneath the legal and familial battles ruling his life.

### **Barin in *The Deceiver and the Deception*: Unravelling Self-Deception and Alienation**

In *The Deceiver and the Deception*, Barin's identity crisis erupts in the wake of his wife Chitra's suicide. His reaction to her death exposes a severe detachment from his real self and his emotions. Barin suffers from what can be termed a split in his identity in that he doubts whether the man he sees in the glass is himself. His disassociation expresses his inner struggle to come to terms with his actions and emotions, most of all after Chitra's death.

Thus, a feeling of being cheated by Chitra and self-deception characterizes the identity crisis that Barin undergoes. That thought which torments his mind now is that he might have failed to understand her or the part he had to play in her death. This confusion makes him sail into deep questions about what an identity could be and whether he lost him in the various roles he played throughout his life.

### **Shibnath in *The Whirling World*: Generational Disconnect and the Loss of Identity**

The identity crisis of Shibnath in *The Whirling World* is the sense of alienation from his son, Shankhanath, and his daughter-in-law, Ruchira. As the career path becomes increasingly successful, firm, and independent for Shankhanath, Shibnath feels his identity crumbling bit by bit. With an enlarged generation gap and change in family dynamics, Shibnath feels that he is being kept aloof from his son and, thus, away from life itself. His envy of his son's success and his yearning for a connection that seems ever so unreachable heighten his internal conflict.

The crisis of Shibnath reflects the problem of aged males within a fast-changing environment where traditional roles and expectations have lost their meaning. He does not know how to communicate with his son and daughter-in-law, and at the same time, he suffers from an inferiority complex, which underlines the identity crisis resulting from loss of purpose and connectedness in a patriarchal society.

### **Someshwar Sen in *A Defeated Heart*: Patriarchal Guilt and Familial Estrangement**

The identity crisis of Someshwar Sen in *A Defeated Heart* evolves the moment he receives a letter from his long-separated daughter, Tanu. In this letter, Someshwar has to confront, as it were, the darkness of the past he has hitherto kept himself buried with, feeling the guilt of separation from his daughter. It is this sense of crisis stemming from the role of the father and the semblance of masculinity from society in a case of personal tragedy.

Someshwar's struggle is also delineated by his disintegrating relationship with his wife, Amala, and the fear of loss of face in society. Once grounded in the role of a family head, now fragmented between guilt, grief, and the realization that possibly he had failed in his responsibilities was the crisis that reflects bigger themes of failure and loss, present in Ashapura Devi's engagement with male identity in a patriarchal society.

### **Bibhu in *Perspective*: Navigating Unemployment and the Crisis of Masculine Identity**

Bibhu's identity crisis is shoved deep into a corner, instigated by unemployment and financial insecurity, challenging his self-esteem and masculinity. Bibhu is a youngster who has graduated with an engineering degree and is under immense pressure to get a job and start supporting his family according to traditional expectations from men in Indian society. And this very expectation with which he can't come up to causes deep inadequacy and is in turmoil internally.

The story brings into focus Bibhu's reluctance to accept financial assistance from his wealthy relative, Ranga-da, due to which the crisis is further deepened. Bibhu's pride and self-esteem contradict the expectation of his family to be dependent on and supported from the outside, therefore increasing tension that heightens in this regard his sense of failure. The conflict can be brought out when Bibhu protests against the help his mother is getting from Ranga-da,

“You've overcome so many obstacles over all these years, Ma, must you do this for my sake now? No, I don't want it”.

Bibhu's identity crisis is personal, yet it speaks to that which society demands of men: breadwinners and protectors. His inability to do so has rendered him feeling emasculated and unsure about his future. The story brings into light Bibhu's internal turmoil in the face of complexities within the role he plays within his family, pressures to succeed, and his own personal desires for independence. This is symbolic of wider problems that young men face in a society where the value of men is often measured at professional and financial levels.

### **Probhatmohan in *Defeated*: Clashing Traditions and the Fractured Identity of the Patriarch**

In Ashapura Devi's short story *Defeated*, the identity crisis of Probhatmohan emanates from the deep-seated conflict between traditional values and evolving dynamics within the family. A self-made man with personal tragedies like the early death of his wife, Probhatmohan prides himself on being a strong patriarch who has upheld traditional values and responsibilities. It is, however, grossly challenged when his son Probal announces his decision to move out of the family home decision which Probhatmohan interprets as a rejection of the family's values and authority. Sen's discussion on Indian Identity highlights the cultural tensions underlying the identity crises of Ashapura Devi's characters as torn between tradition and modernity. It is to this extent that Sen says, “Despite India's long

history of cultural pluralism, the most successful construction of Indian identity has been that of Hinduism.” (Sen, 2006.)

In this tug-of-war with his psyche, Probhatmohan feels acutely betrayed and helpless. His son’s revelation sends him reeling down, buckling the very base on which his identity as head of the family rested. Anger, the sense of loss, and desperation to regain lost ground beset him, as revealed by his vindictive musings and effort at defeating the plans of his son. It is his dread of losing face in society that really heightens his crisis since he remains uncertain about how people will take him after what his son has done.

This identity crisis further links to Probhatmohan’s perception of masculinity and his role as a father. The shift in the dynamics of the family, where his son decides that his desires are more important than familial duty, renders Probhatmohan superfluous and defeated. His struggle is part of the bigger tension between tradition and modernity, where the older generation feels that with the changing values of the younger generation, its authority and identity are being challenged. While Banerjee looks at the conventions of gender and identity in Indian literature, one will appreciate that Ashapurna Devi’s male characters reflect conventional themes regarding evolving gender roles in society. (Banerjee, 2014) This way, Ashapurnadevi navigates Probhatmohan through a painful process of reconciliation between traditional expectations and the realities of a fast-changing world.

### **Boloram Shaha in *Not Guilty*: The Fragility of Paternal Authority in Crisis**

The identity crisis of Boloram Shaha in the story *Not Guilty* is rooted in the struggle he goes through in trying to reconcile the traditional role of a father and protector with the harsh realities surrounding his daughter Phuleshshori’s alleged murder. A shopkeeper deeply connected with family business and legacy, Boloram identifies too closely with his responsibilities toward his family, most especially in keeping them safe and their honor intact.

The crisis commences when Boloram is confronted with news about the alleged murder of his daughter, which had brought his notion of control into shambles and sent him into mourning and utter confusion. His initial reaction is that Boloram gets infuriated, seeking justice desperately as he hurries towards confronting the accused. But as it unfolds, Boloram’s perception of both his daughter and the events leading up to her death are challenged by unexpected revelations, especially regarding Phuleshshori’s lifelong ailment. This new information would problematize Boloram’s understanding of the situation and raise many questions in his mind about the role and decisions of a father. Rao’s work on masculinity in Indian short stories provides a helpful comparison to the identity crises Ashapurna Devi’s male characters experience, similarly ensnared in the tension between what is expected from them by tradition and modern realities (Rao 2016).

Boloram’s identity crisis is further exacerbated by the conflicting emotions and societal pressures he faces. His rigid determination to seek justice is disrupted by the complications of human relationships and the many unexpected twists in the case that

eventually leave him disenchanted and confused about his place in this world. This crisis shows the brittleness of Boloram's identity, constructed on his capability to protect and provide for his family. Finally, the story presents Boloram as torn between the traditional values he believes in and the uncontrollable nature of life, making for a deep inner conflict and identity crisis.

### **Poroshor in *The Ballpen with Refill Used Up*: Familial Duty Versus Personal Guilt**

In *The Ballpen with Refill Used Up*, Poroshor's identity crisis is inextricably linked with his complex relationship with his mother Lilaboti, and the expectations from society regarding the son. The story goes deep into the feelings of regret and guilt that he has neglected his mother, which sets the possible motive for his internal turmoil.

Poroshor is sent into crisis due to the perceived consequences of his actions or underperformance for the health of his mother. Every time he reflects on himself with Lilaboti, he becomes more aware of his failure as a son, mainly in performing his duties towards her. This realization is compounded by the societal pressure to honor and care for one's parents, a duty that Poroshor feels he has failed to uphold. He feels even more torn internally with his interactions with his wife and siblings, each having their own point of view regarding Lilaboti's sudden disappearance.

In this way, the story emblemizes Poroshor's guilt and his identity as a son in a culture in which great importance is attributed to family duty and respect due to elders. His crisis is symbolic of higher-order tension between personal wishes and societal demands, in which one wrestles with all the complexity of familial relations and one's pride. The story poignantly reflects on the inner conflicts that are compelled to emergence due to the challenge of family and societal expectations with which one identifies.

### **Nikhil in *Actor*: The Blurred Line Between Persona and Identity**

In Ashapurna Devi's short story *Actor*, Nikhil's crisis in identity is rooted in his inability to separate his real self from the roles he plays as an actor. Nikhil is a successful actor who can involve himself with the characters he is portraying. This very CCTV of his professional success slides into his crisis. Nikhil grows more incapable of differentiating his identity from those he plays on the stage, leading to a deep dislocation from his real entity.

This idolization by his audience and peers' compounds Nikhil's crisis, as they so often fail to see the man behind the roles. This further reinforces the personas he puts on, making it even more impossible for him to reconnect with his own identity. The boundary between reality and performance is very blurred for Nikhil; he lives in a state of perpetual confusion about just who he really is. The crisis here is symbolic of the greater human struggle to retain one's selfhood in light of expectations from the world outside and the pressures exerted therein. Das has elaborated on the fragile masculine self as an identity crisis in contemporary Indian fiction, portrayed similarly by Ashapurna Devi's male characters struggling with societal masculine expectations. (Das 2017)

Nikhil's identity crisis reflects the problem any individual faces when he has to negotiate between a public persona and the private self. The story elaborates on the psychological effects of living up to others' expectations all the time and how far such pressures can have an eroding effect on personal identity. Through Nikhil's experience, Ashapurnadevi touches upon the existential dilemma of losing out in this race of success and recognition-a theme which befits the universal human condition.

### Conclusion

Ashapurna Devi's dissection of the male identity crises in her short stories provides a poignant remark on the crossing between gender and identity. Her male protagonists are lost in the web of a patriarchal society, with feelings of loss of control, relevance, and self-esteem. These are not only mere personal crises but also linked with the societal norm that defines and catches them. Through these narratives, Ashapurnadevi points out the ephemeral nature of male identity in the face of ongoing alterations in power dynamics, family changes, and alteration of social functions. ■

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## Eunice de Souza : A protest against Female Subjugation

Ananya Mohakud

Society cannot advance without man's freedom in every sphere of his life. Good culture, respect to others, love and affection can build a better society. There should be a harmonious relation between man and woman. All should be given equal importance and opportunities. As a result an egalitarian society can be possible. But women always complain that man dominates them physically, mentally and above all socially. Female feminist activists protest against the subjugation of male chauvinism. Though Eunice de Souza is a Christian, she protests against the torture to women in India in a strict Indian culture.

**Key Words:** Patriarchy, orthodox, prejudices, strict marriage system, social restrictions, feminine, sensibility, subjugation and disillusionment, etc.

The post-colonial Indian English poetess and novelist, Eunice de Souza is a feminist activist in the tradition of poets like Kamala Das, Shobha De, Kamala Bhasin and the Western poet like Anne Sexton, Tony Morrison, Alice Walker, Simon de Beauvoir and Sylvia Plath. She expresses her disgust against the patriarchy and social restrictions on women in a wider perspective. She also presents her personal thoughts and expresses the feeling of her nativity in her works. The poetess like Kamala Das speaks on the base of her Dravidian Brahmin family at Malabar in Kerala, while de Souza talks of her Goan-Catholic community. Likewise, Kamala Das and Shobha De emphasize more on the freedom of women sex, while de Souza focuses how to change the strict social codes of conduct and restrictions on women.

Her anthology, "Fix" ridicules the orthodox prejudices in the Goan Catholic society, where women are subjugated by men. Her poems like "For Rita's Daughter", "Sweet Sixteen", "de Souza Prabhu", "Catholic Mother", "Marriages are Made", "Miss Louisa", "Visit", "Women in Dutch Painting", "He Speaks", "Remember Medusa", "And She Lived Happily" and "Songs of Innocence" present how women are rudely behaved with strict restrictions by the patriarchy. She voices for a big change in the society, where females can keep equal foot with males.

The poems reflecting de Souza's Catholic childhood are a means to gain control over private fears, anxiety and anger. Such poems are in the confessional vein. A combination of guilt and desires, especially one's emotional life has been

presented on a broad map of life. Self-exposure seems to be her defense. Disappointed with the patriarchal hegemony, she becomes comparatively bitter and harsh in her tone. Her poem, *Catholic Mother* is as an excellent critique of the representation of a traditional woman who is weak, docile, and seductive and whose sentiments are firmly rooted in a social ethos that permits and justifies such subjugation and oppression. The man boasts of large family, but the creator of the family, the mother-woman does not boast. Rather she is ignored. De Souza presents a lady's sense of disillusionment and the subordinate role in a patriarchal social structure. The Church prays Virgin Mary, but cannot honour woman in real life. However, the lady remains silent.

De Souza focuses on the Church, marriage system, motherhood, color distinction and sexuality of Goan Catholics in India. She also memorises her Goan Catholic culture in her poems and discusses her bitterness on prejudices, social injustices and the place of women in a male-dominated society. In the poem, "For Rita's Daughter, Just Born", de Souza addresses the new born girl as "luminous leaf." The speaker of the poem adds her wishes:

Luminous new leaf  
May the sun rise gently  
on your unfurling ("For Rita's Daughter, Just Born" 1-04)

As the new born leaf needs sun and rain for its growth, similarly the girl child requires care from her social and cultural environment to grow.

De Souza depicts how a lover asserts his dominance over his beloved. The poetess is an observant woman. She seems to be well informed about the male attitude that tends to demean women who are considered naive, insecure, and they are constantly deceived by men for the purpose of sex.

The name in the poem, "Miss Louisa" is a symbolic name of suffering. She is tortured under the foot of patriarchy. She satirises the notions of romantic love, marriage and upbringing of children by patriarchal system. The poem voices against the suppression of romantic feeling, in marriage and upbringing of children. The man tries to persuade and to have sex with her and persuades. Poet writes:

"Miss Louise, I feel an arrow  
through my heart." ("Miss Louise" 10-17)

The man abuses her chastity and blames her. She is abused by various men in various stages of her life, and is blamed as unchaste in the society. Men are attracted in her love and later on blame her. Poet writes:

Yes Louisa, we know, professors  
Loved you in your youth  
Judges in your prime. (Miss Louisa, L.21-23)

De Souza describes woman's position in a patriarchal society. She also reflects woman's revolutionary attitude for a better change in the society. In the poem, "He speaks", which is included in the anthology, "A Necklace of Skulls" she presents a revolutionary woman. The male chauvinism suppresses her. She writes:

... She was an affectionate  
creature and tried hard, poor dear,  
but never quite made the grade. ("He Speaks" 14-16)

The lover in the poem proudly speaks of her love relations with so many women. He always tries to subjugate and says:

I decided there was only one  
thing to do: fix her.  
The next time we were making love  
I said quite casually:  
I hope you realize I do this  
with other women. ("He Speaks" 28-34)

The society sanctions rights to man, who can have extra marital relationship, but a woman cannot do this. Simone de Beauvoir presents the same thought in "The Second Sex"- "She [woman] has no right to sexual activity outside marriage".

In the traditional belief marriage is the only destiny of a woman. She has to choose feminine rules and traditional codes of the society to live happily. Otherwise, she has to live an unhappy life. In her poem, "And She Lived Happily" (A Necklace of Skulls), she writes how a lady can live in the society happily. She can live happily after marriage, if she obeys her in-law's home members and her husband. Poet writes:

And she lived happily ever after.  
Or perhaps reasonably happy  
For some of the time. ("And She Lived Happily" 1, 6, 15-16)

A woman is the creator of the society: students, friends, mothers, aunts and others, but they cannot support her in her problems. By avoiding a mother, they run after Happiness and this aim for luxury remains as the major objective of their life. According to de Souza a woman should acknowledge this to raise her voice against the social and sexual inequalities suffered by her in this man-dominated society.

Girls live life as unwanted animals. She describes them in her poem "De Souza Prabhu," where she refers women as 'lame ducks'. Her parents wanted a boy-child, but her birth made them awe-struck. She feels herself unwanted in the society, and becomes emotionally weak. The harassing voice of the family punishes her: "words the weapon to Crucify" (De Souza Prabhu, L. 21-22). She claims that her birth depresses her family members, who expected a male child. She exerts control over her feminine emotions. She

states the negative feelings: “I heard it said/ My parents wanted a boy./ I’ve done my best to qualify./ I hid the bloodstains/ on my clothes/ and let my breasts sag” (2009, p. 26). The tortured lives bear the note of her autobiographical days. De Souza is frustrated with the relationship of her family members.

In her poem “Women in Dutch Painting,” de Souza aims to convey the varying degrees of calm and voiceless women, both in Dutch painting and in real life, like her aunt and Anna. In the poem she tells about the docile nature of women. In the painting the women are seen as sober, calm and silent. According to the poet the women are not bovine, but smart in real life. They are familial, devoted and submissive, homely and are also kitchen lovers. Their voice is sweet and honey like. Their nature can be contrasted with the rude behavior of man.

In her poem “Remember Medusa” de Souza tells us about the character of woman, who bears the note of dumb loyalty. She compares women with the mythic angel Medusa, who was beautiful and attractive. Once, she was punished being cursed as a demon by goddess Athena due to her secret love and sex. Later on she was murdered for her love. Very often it is seen that women are tortured by women, who cannot feel the feminesensibility of other ladies. Here goddess Athena being even the protector of women punished mercilessly Medusa. Being even a lady she could not understand the simplicity of a lady’s love.

The idea of restriction on women is projected in most of her poems like “Visit”, “Marriages are Made”, “He Speaks”, “Sweet Sixteen”, etc. In the poem, “Sweet Sixteen”, the nun, the lady of discipline restricts her in every sphere of life. She restricts the poetess for being sleeveless or uttering the words like sleeveless, etc. The society restricts her neither to go alone nor to go with a man as there is the possibility of rape or ravishment. The writer advises the sixteen year girl not to fear, but to have the strength of mind. She discusses how a girl is expected to abide by the societal rules from her childhood. Society and even the family restrict her and treat her as weak one. As a girl develops physically, she becomes conscious of her own fragility and sexual vulnerability, and she is compelled by society to abandon her bodily modifications. She is instructed in the following way: “Mamas never mentioned menses/ A nun screamed: You vulgar girl/ don’t say brassieres/ say bracelets” (2009, p. 6). The poet continues by describing how girls from a very young age are taught to be aware of their sexuality and to become conscious of boys and men. From an early age, girls are instructed for the male gender’s superiority: “Never go with a man alone/ Never alone/ and even if you’re engaged/ only passionless kisses” (2009, p. 6).

Marriage is criticized as it keeps social restrictions for women in the society. In the society, woman is considered as a commodity. An Indian girl must meet all the traditional formalities for marriage. Every part of her body is thoroughly investigated by the bridegroom and his family members. In her poem “Marriages Are Made,” de Souza presents the traditional Indian tradition of the marriage, which treats brides like cattle. Elena, her cousin, is regarded

as a product here, and “her eyes [are] examined for squints/ her teeth for cavities/ her stools for the .....” (2009, p. 4). The poetess feels horrified to see how Elena’s family is compelled to compensate with dowry.

In her poem “Visit,” she presents how a girl is disciplined from her childhood and is instructed to be calm and docile. She is also trained to hide the facts of her oppression and is forced to be silent and is restricted to obey the order of the males. The poet says: “I like to visit you, you say,/ You’re always calm and smiling/ Should I tell I wonder,/ I was a burly little girl/ who knocked her sissy cousins down” (2009, p. 72). According to the poetess, the girl has to live like a ‘shot dog’.

De Souza speaks against the excessive childbearing and widespread ignorance about family planning. The poem presents women as frail, servile, and alluring. She criticises those sentiments, which are deeply rooted in the social code of conduct. Such rules allow and justify subordination and exploitation.

Her poetry yearns for peace and tranquility in the normal familial life. De Souza opposes the restrictions imposed by her patriarchal Christian society. As an independent Christian woman, she also regards the culture and golden heritage of the society unlike Kamala Das. De Souza transforms herself into a protestor against traditional patriarchal values. By being a secularist, a revolutionary, and an activist she heralds a big change in the society, where a lady can be honoured and can get strength to walk with the same pace like a man. ■

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# Analysing the Self in Hesse's *Siddhartha* from a Psychoanalytic Perspective

Kanu Priya

Piyushbala

The spiritual bildungsroman *Siddhartha* by Hermann Hesse follows young Samana, who refuses to become a disciple of Gautam Buddha. Siddhartha seeks self-discovery after being dissatisfied with the teachings of his Brahmin father and Samanas. His route to enlightenment begins with directly experiencing life by following unorthodox paths. Siddhartha's search for his true self can be examined through Freudian psychoanalysis. Siddhartha's early pursuit of spiritual pleasure and transcendence and his material pleasure with Kamala and Kamaswami are driven by Freud's id, the unconscious wants and instincts. The superego, embodying internalised social norms and morals, guides Siddhartha through his father and Brahmins' teachings. However, Siddhartha soon questions these external pressures, causing a major clash between the superego's demands and his newly learnt principles. Siddhartha's battle centres on the ego, the rational mediator between the id and the world. His decision to quit asceticism to enjoy worldly pleasures and later renounce them shows how the ego balances his deepest wants with reality. This paper contends that Siddhartha's final enlightenment signifies a synthesis of these psychoanalytic components, wherein he amalgamates the id, ego, and superego into a cohesive self-concept.

**Key Words:** Siddhartha, Self, Id, Ego, Superego.

Sigmund Freud, in his personality theory (1923), has divided and structured the human psyche into three parts, namely the id, ego, and superego. The psychoanalytic theory describes the id as a part of the unconscious that is primitive and contains impulses. The id responds immediately to the basic urges and desires regardless of consequences as it operates on the pleasure principle (Freud, 1920). Similarly, Siddhartha and his dear friend Govinda left home to seek knowledge. They started living with ascetics, Samanas. Siddhartha's sole goal was to be empty of worldly desires, dreams, sorrow, and thirst. After days of fasting, his flesh began to disappear. He ignored society, emotions, beauty, and happiness as myths, an 'illusion of sense' and thus wanted his past 'self' to die and empty his heart for peace and purity. Siddhartha stood until his body was numb from sun, rain, thirst, and pain. He controlled

his breath and heartbeat through meditation and self-denial. He destroyed his soul, senses, and memory. Through voluntary suffering and self-denial, the Samanas taught him to overcome pain, hunger, and thirst. Siddhartha lost 'self' in a thousand ways, but the path led him back to his thirst. Self-repetition was inevitable; he was unable to break this self-becoming chain. Siddhartha believed he could have learnt these things in prostitutes' quarters. Meditation, fasting, holding breath, and abandonment of body are temporary escapes from the torture of 'self', just like a drunkard escaping life. Siddhartha has never been drunk, so he can't say about gaining wisdom after escape, as Govinda points out, but he's sure he's like a child in a womb when it comes to salvation and wisdom. Siddhartha didn't care about external approval for his wisdom because he has a high soul to please. Siddhartha doubts the knowledge of Samanas who have not yet reached Nirvana, and thus he too will never reach it by blindly following them. Following Samanas has not quenched his thirst. Siddhartha argues with Govinda that knowledge is the worst enemy of Atman, which is the only knowledge present everywhere and in every creature. Govinda reminds him of Upanishad verses that say a pure spirit sinking into atman, the soul, is blissful. After thinking about Govinda's words, he realised that something that is unaffected and preserved from all is called holy.

His id instincts drove Siddhartha to leave home and follow the Samanas. After meeting Gautam Buddha, young Siddhartha realises he must live and acknowledge his deep suppressed desires to understand himself. After seeing a strange dream in a ferryman's hut, Siddhartha began exploring his physical self. Govinda, an ascetic, dreamt of a woman embracing Siddhartha. This dream symbolises his suppressed feelings of experiencing the world in all its aspects. Siddhartha's spiritual teachings helped him pace his breath, heartbeat, and emotions, but not his soul's desires. His soul wanted to know himself, but he had to first address his body's carnal needs. Kamala, the courtesan, captivated Siddhartha with her beauty and grace. The servants of Kamala disapproved of his ascetic appearance, so he changed it. He was under the spell of Kamala, as he sensed her to have profound knowledge on matters of physical pleasure, unlike the washerwoman at the brook. The disciple chose his master, Kamala, the mistress of *kama* (pleasure), but Kamala rejects him and demands him to have expensive clothes, shoes, and money. Siddhartha flatters Kamala, praises her beauty, flexes his masculinity and tells her he can rob her. Kamala tells him she doesn't fear him because she's the master of love pleasures, like a Samana whose knowledge can't be stolen. Samana only shares knowledge when he wants. Siddhartha realised he had to work to win Kamala to taste the fruit of love. His poetry earned keen Siddhartha a kiss from Kamala."... Better, thought the young Samana,/To make sacrifices to the fair Kamala,/Than to offer sacrifice to the gods." ( Hesse 48)

Siddhartha has spent years learning enlightenment through the traditional ascetic path but couldn't get a grasp of it. His attraction towards Kamala and the above-mentioned lines, which he dedicated to her, signifies his shift in faith; he now wants to experience the world and learn from the so-called 'not-so pure souls' of the world. For the reward of his

pleasing poetry, Kamala kissed him long and showcased her power and knowledge through her lips. Siddhartha's words stammered, and he understood how clever and learnt she was in her art.

Siddhartha was enjoying this present life, which he considered easier than the life of Samana, which was irksome to him. The goal to earn money was easy as compared to the goal of an ascetic to identify their true selves. Siddhartha started assisting Kamaswami, the rich merchant. He wrote important letters, learnt about business, and surpassed the merchant. He accepted profits with calamity and laughed at losses. This irritated Kamaswami; he scolded him for taking a business trip as a pleasure trip to meet and greet people. Siddhartha explained that though this time there was no deal made, he has developed a friendly bond with the villagers, and next harvest, the farmers would happily do business with them. Kamaswami couldn't understand his ways. Siddhartha's calm nature and listening skills made a successful impression on strange people; it made him trustworthy and a good businessman. Kamaswami, though a rich and experienced businessman, couldn't keep his calm and control harsh words from mouth. Kamaswami reminded Siddhartha that he was eating his bread and he had learnt everything from him. Siddhartha corrected by reminding everyone that everyone eats bread of others as there are at least two parties involved in a business, and he might have learnt the basics of business from him, but he didn't learn to think from him. It is the capacity to think wisely that distinguishes him from others. He was a patient listener and observer; he gave helpful advice, was present, and, as part of the game, also allowed himself to be a little cheated. He considered this life as part of a game and enjoyed it, but never let this game affect him or his real nature. His real self wandered in imagination and had nothing to do with his life.

Siddhartha had a developed concept of 'id'; though his physical self was experiencing life in its rawness, his true self was still wandering in search of a direction. His inner thoughts used to trouble him; he wished to participate in the childish play of humans to enjoy life, but he remained an onlooker with his intellect. He saw similarities in Kamala and himself, both being different from others by a sense of stillness and sanctuary to which they can retreat when needed, to be themselves. Siddhartha explains this to Kamala by categorising two kinds of people; the first and majority ones are like falling leaves, whose course of action is defined by the wind, and they eventually fall to the ground. The second and scarce ones are like stars who travel in one defined path; no wind reaches and affects them; they have light of their own to guide them. Siddhartha and Kamala were best in their respective works, and he states that is the reason why they can't fall in love with each other as they loved their art truly and deeply. Kamala couldn't practice love as an art; if she starts loving him like an ordinary person, just like Siddhartha won't be able to experience life without any constraints if he gets attached to Kamala. This, Siddhartha points out, is the secret of ordinary people: love and attachment, which constrain their true selves, and those who experience bliss in ignorance.

Freud sees the superego as the moral component of the human psyche. It represents the internalised societal values and standards, which contrast with id's primitive instincts. The superego operates on the morality principle instead of the pleasure principle, and thus there is a strong tug of war between these two. Born into a Brahmin family, raised by his learned father, he naturally had knowledge of religion. He silently rendered the holy word 'Om' correctly. His parents were proud of his knowledge; his friend Govinda loved him most and wanted to be like him. Siddhartha became discontent when he realised that his parents and friends' love wouldn't satisfy his soul. His father and Brahmins had taught him most of what he needed to know, but there was still room for more to satisfy his hunger. Religious rights and rituals were like pure water—beneficial but unable to wash sins and heal the heart. He doubted these rituals, god, and Atman as the only truth. He wondered where to find the Atman and 'Self', but no scriptures or rituals helped. According to the scriptures and Upanishads, the soul is the whole world and is found when man is asleep, but could they retain and bring it to consciousness in speech and action? All the learnt men and his father bathed in the holy river, sacrificed, and read holy books but couldn't find peace. It should have been Atman, which should be cleaved, and not the body. Siddhartha's superego struggled to balance his core beliefs. Siddhartha was drawn to Samanas' still passion and self-denial as they passed through his town. After much thought, Siddhartha chose a new path to find his answers. Siddhartha told his father he wanted to become a Samana. After hearing his wish, his father was surprised and silent for a long time. He politely declined Siddhartha's request and told him not to ask again. Siddhartha stayed up all night, determined to get his father's approval. His father was troubled all night, filled with fear, anxiety, sorrow, and anger. His precious child, who meant everything to him, wanted to leave him. Siddhartha stood there until his father approved, willing to die. His instinctive id overcame his moral superego. He gave him two choices: become a Samana or die standing there. His father allowed Siddhartha to follow his heart because he knew he had left home in his mind. He was told to return and teach him bliss if he finds it, and to return even if he doesn't, and they'll sacrifice to the gods.

After three years with Samana and learning much, Siddhartha remained disillusioned. Siddhartha heard about Gautam Buddha; rumour has it that Buddha has attained Nirvana. A plague-stricken nation found hope in Buddha's world, which could heal. Siddhartha, who had given up on learning, was eager to hear Buddha after hearing Govinda was interested too. He followed his instincts because his id told him to. They left Samanas to visit Buddha. They were chastised by the senior Samana for this decision. Siddhartha responded by showing Samana his teaching. He hypnotised, muted, and subdued the senior Samana to do as he was told. The old man bows and blesses them for their journey. Siddhartha and Govinda visited Savathi to see the Perfect One, where devotees from far and wide gathered to hear Buddha. Siddhartha recognised Buddha immediately because of his body language, stillness, and calm face. Siddhartha was mesmerised by Buddha's aura; he carefully examined his head, arms, feet, and hands; he felt that every part of him was emitting knowledge. Gautam confidently explained the cause of suffering, the eightfold path, and its solution to the crowd.

After Buddha finished his speech, many pilgrims, including Govinda, asked to join his community; they were accepted. To Siddhartha's surprise, Govinda took his first step without him; he was happy for him but knew his path would be different. Siddhartha challenged Gautam Buddha about his teaching. He thanked the Illustrious One for clearly explaining the eternal chain of cause and effect, good or evil. But according to him, the logical outcome of everything breaks at Buddha's doctrine of salvation, rising above the world. Buddha praised Siddhartha's deep thinking. Buddha warned him about his insatiable curiosity, strong opinions, and conflict of words. Buddha said his opinions weren't important because he is only responsible for what he said and not what others interpreted. He said he wanted to save people from suffering, not prove intelligence. Siddhartha politely requested forgiveness and explained. Buddha was right that opinions don't matter; his salvation experience can't be expressed in words. Communication will fail because Buddha reached Nirvana through knowledge and meditation without teaching. Nobody can save someone with words or teaching. Buddha bid adieu to Siddhartha by suggesting he guard himself against his excess cleverness. Siddhartha wanted to be Buddha, the self-conqueror, but he refused to lower his eyes before others as no teachings have motivated him enough. Buddha took Govind, his friend and follower, but gave him a new Siddhartha with more clarity. Buddha's teachings supplemented his father's, Samanas', and his own intellect. He developed his superego by rejecting his father's, Samanas', and Buddha's teachings to follow the worldly path to knowledge through experience. He shifted his approach from seeking external guidance to following his own internal moral compass. "For the ego, perception plays the part which in the id falls to instinct. The ego represents what may be called reason and common sense, in contrast to the id, which contains the passions". (Freud, *Ego* 25)

The ego, the rational mediator between the id and the world, is central to Siddhartha's internal struggle. His decision to leave the life of asceticism to embrace worldly pleasures and to eventually renounce them reflects the ego's role in negotiating between his deeper desires and the demands of reality. In the Buddha grove, Siddhartha left his companion and his former self. He matured and stopped seeking teachers and their lessons. He rejected Buddha's greatest instruction and refused to learn himself. Siddhartha tried to master his 'self' but only deceived it. His mind struggled with these ideas. He recognised that only his worries prevented him from knowing himself. Fear of his subconscious id, his suppressed ego, prevented him from facing his true self. This realisation gave his anxious mind hope. He recognised that worldly wisdom literature could no longer teach him since he needed to follow his heart and satisfy his secret wants. He saw the world with his new eyes, without despising it by deep-thinking, without considering it Maya and meaningless. The world was never an illusion; his eyes perceived it that way. He was alone and had no sense of belonging after abandoning his Brahman and Samana identities. He embraced life in its full form, in the company of Kamala and Kamaswami. He explored the world without attachments. Sansara awakened his deadend Samana (saintly) senses. He lived his life thinking, waiting, and fasting like a Samana. He learnt how to do business, love, eat to

satisfy the palate, drink to delight, play dice and chess, sleep on the softest bed, and watch dancers. He always felt like superior, but that was fading. He envied simple people for their deep love and grief and the importance of life events. Devoid of bonds, Siddhartha had never felt such strong emotions. He felt dull and exhausted after achieving anything or being happy; this miserable feeling crept over him slowly. Gambling, addiction, and vices caused him worry. He enjoyed losing money and setting objectives to make more, gave himself pity goals to distract himself, and participated in a stupid loop that made him sick and old. After playing in Sansara, he understood it was over. After losing hope of seeing the light, his existence felt pointless. The emptiness inside him made him consider suicide. On the verge of destroying his life, his soul shouted out ‘Om’ to awaken him. He considered reclaiming the forgotten understanding of life’s indestructibility. His exhaustion sent him to sleep, mumbling Om. He was reborn when he woke up. In his profound sleep, his cherished old companion Govinda guarded him without recognising him. He recognised Siddhartha at first sight, but Govinda didn’t. Joy, deep slumber, Om in his spirit, and his dear companion reminded Siddhartha of his love of things, which he had forgotten. Without ‘fast, wait, and think’, he surrendered them for money, turning him into an average man with hunger, impatience, and lost reason. Seeing himself as ordinary has taken away his greatness. In books and lessons, vices are bad, but he’s lived and experienced their anguish. He struggled to understand himself as a Bramhin and Samana due to his wealth of knowledge and holy phrases. He always had too much knowledge, was smart, and arrogant. He tried to destroy it by fasting and penitence as a Samana, but his elder self didn’t realise that one must play life to destroy it. After leaving the Buddha forest and before reaching Kamala, a ferryman let Siddhartha stay in his hut and cross the river for free. River had taught him everything comes back, so he was sure they would meet again. Siddhartha lived by the river with the ferryman after meeting Kama. The ferryman loved the river, and Siddhartha wanted to love and learn from it. He discovered river secrets. “He saw that the water continually flowed and is yet there, its always the same and yet every moment it was new.” (Hesse 83)

The ferryman named Vasudeva very patiently listened to the life story of Siddhartha; he absorbed every word without judging any. Siddhartha learnt to row the boat, work in rice fields, and gather wood and fruits. He was not chasing anything and enjoyed everything. He learnt to listen with a still heart and open soul; he learnt to listen without opinions, judgement, and passion. He learnt from the river that there is no concept of time. “...the river is everywhere at the same time, at the source and at the mouth... the present only exists for it, not the shadows of the past, nor the shadow of the future.” (Hesse 88)

Siddhartha could relate his life with that of a river; the young boy, the mature man, and the old man are separated by shadows, not reality. His previous life is not in the past; his forthcoming life is not in the future; all of it has its reflection in the presence, in the reality. He realised that all sorrows, fears, and self-torment were in time. The river has all voices in its voice—the voice of a king, a warrior, a bull, a nightingale, and many more voices that it has absorbed. When one is able to hear all these voices at once, he listens to

the holy word Om; it was the voice of life. Siddharth and Vasudeva became like brothers; travellers on the ferry often felt an emission from them and confessed their sins and worries, seeking advice from them. It was the news to dying Buddha that Kamala, along with his son, was going to see the illustrious One. On her way, she was bitten by a snake and was taken to Vasudeva's hut. Siddhartha recognised her instantly and knew that it was his own son with a resembling face. Kamala took her last breath, seeing into the eyes of Siddhartha. Siddhartha was happy to have his son with him. He soon realised that the son was spoiled by riches and was also grieving his mother. He hoped to win over him with time, but the boy remained arrogant and unfriendly. Siddhartha was troubled and unhappy with the boy's behaviour. Vasudeva told him that the young boy didn't give up his riches like Siddhartha did, but they were taken from him against his will. "Water will go to water, youth to youth. Your son will not be happy in this place." (Hesse 96)

Siddhartha, for the first time in his life, has formed an attachment to his son. He was willing to part ways with him; he was constantly trying to win him over. Siddhartha has chained him with love, shamed him with his goodness, compelled him to live in a hut with banana eaters, and punished him unknowingly. Siddhartha was afraid to take him into the world and let him repeat the mistakes that he himself made. Siddhartha remembers his words with Kamala: the only thing that separated him from an ordinary person was his inability to love—to lose and forget himself in love of someone. But with his son by his side, he forgot himself completely, felt the strongest passion, suffered enormously, yet was richer in a way. He experienced the depth of Sansara, which came from himself only. The young boy despised his father and disobeyed on every opportunity; he spoke harsh words to his father. One day he ran away from the hut with money and crossed the river to reach the other side. This made Siddhartha restless, and he tried his best to track him, but the boy didn't wish to be chased and had to break the oar of the ferry and throw it somewhere. Siddhartha once again was standing at the same position outside the garden of Kamala, this time looking for his son. He then realised his foolishness to cage his son with his love, which was now deeply wounded. Emptiness filled his heart and soul, so he filled himself with Om.

In his ferryman career, he witnessed many travellers with children and envied their happiness. He thought like a normal person and had similar desires. He now respected ordinary people and no longer found their trivialities absurd. He realised average people have all the attributes of sages and thinkers except 'consciousness of the interconnectedness of all life'. He forced his father to let him join ascetics after seeing his reflection in the river. Likewise, his son never returned to him. The fateful cycle was repeated. Siddhartha told Vasudeva, the great listener, his problems. Siddhartha knew Vasudeva was the river and God from his silent listening. Vasudeva made him hear the river's sadness, his lonely father lamenting his son, him wishing for his son to return, and his son burning with desires. All were focused on their aims and suffering. After listening to the river without grief, laughing, or binding himself to any soul, Siddhartha heard the whole, oneness, perfection, and Om.

From then on, Siddhartha stopped fighting destiny. As a ferryman, Vasudeva enlightened Siddhartha and left him. Govinda again went to the town's famous ferryman due to his restlessness. Govinda wanted to discuss 'seeking' life and light. Siddhartha said searching is having a purpose, but discovering is freedom. One overlooks many important things by seeking. When Govinda learnt this ferryman was his old buddy Siddhartha, he wanted to talk to and learn from him. Govinda didn't understand Siddhartha's illumination and learning because he hadn't experienced them. After sinning, Siddhartha felt sick and didn't need to oppose it. Siddhartha tells his companion that knowledge is transferable but not wisdom. Siddhartha's journey of self-discovery is more than just a spiritual quest; it's a process of self-integration through a psychoanalytic lens. Hesse's *Siddhartha* illustrates the concept of identity as not being static and rigid but as a continuous negotiation between the id-unconscious desires, superego-societal expectations, and the ego-individual rationality. ■

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## Women Characters of *Sarala Mahabharata*

Abhinna Chandra Dash

The main elements of classic literature are subject matter, character and natural disposition. Classic poet always thought about an important subject matter when he created a literary based industrial art. Characters play vital role to advance the subject matter and to present his feelings before the reader and the learner. So introduction of characters in subject matter is indispensable for classic literature. Since the views of classic poet have social and universal significance, the characters are drawn upon the picture of social life. When classic poet accepted contemporary social life, his characters were not to be human centred rather built as typical characters. The main objective of the poet is to search for reality of contemporary life that is kindness, forwardness, conspiracy and search for life by way of inculcating reality of social life in different characters.

Sarala Dasa in *Mahabharata* has made use of the above thought. His epic is a peculiar art gallery of different characters, i.e. starting from heavenly being, demon, ghost, animal, bird and mankind etc all the material beings are the parts of it. All characters are filled with own skill and moral values. The poet has considered all the characters irrespective of essential and unessential point of view. In many places, the poet builds his character more realistically and beautifully reflecting the human follies and failings. Though the poet has accepted the characters of Sanskrit *Mahabharata*, he is able to maintain and apply his own features and moral values through describing different characters.

To quote Dr. Mayadhar Mansingh in this context “With all these practical experiences, through without much of formal education, and with the innate insight of a poetic genius into the heart of men and matters, Sarala Dasa has painted real life which he saw, men and women of real flesh and blood, and not-demi-gods and angels which are found in Sanskrit epics. His world is the world of a rural peasant. The broad feet of his heroes and dirty with the Common dust of the path of life, the dainty hands of his beautiful heroines are soiled with kitchen soot and roughened with daily chores. Sarala’s royal heroines, irrespective of their social status, are made, hilariously realistic also through the natural petty jealousies which are inseparable from feminine nature”.

The poet has assembled the integrated qualities like fault, Weakness, skill and greatness of common people and manifested it in his epic. When we analyse the characters

of *Sarala Mahabharata* we find that the poet has drawn the picture which is starting from royal family to common characters of rural life. With reference to this, critic Jatindra Mohan Mohanty has observed “Sarala’s distinction can also be seen in his character portraits. Basically Mahabharata characters have acquired colour and substance from Odissa’s environment, and in effect they have been held up as typically Oriya personalities. Thus, Shri Krushna, in part, becomes a smart and clever Oriya; Bhima a guileless, simple man but rash and stupid; Ganga an aggressive, quarrelsome village-woman”

Among the characters in *Sarala Mahabharata* women characters are to some extent more grimy and lustreless than men. Because the poet Sarala Dasa has described the characters on the basis of reality and it is oblivious for the reflection of contemporary social life in his epic. In the poet’s Creation women are entitled to mother, sister and wife. They are the symbols of love, affection, sacrifice, tolerance and faithfulness, still they are having the qualities of sex, lustfulness, intelligence, unholiness, pollution, autocracy and envy. In the words of the poet-

“Ambika said listen Satyabati  
We, the women race burnt out because for our wickedness.  
Always unclean, unjust, engaged in evil act.  
We destroy everything so we named as Satasriva  
Body trembling like drinking wine  
We are overwhelmed seeing handsome man”. (Adiparva-83)

That is why the characters of *Sarala Mahabharata* not only pour with ideology but also have the image of unprecedented coordination of facts and reality. Though the characters of Sarala epic like Yudhistira, Bheema, Arjuna, Duryodhan, Karna, Sakuni, Dhrutarastra, Shri Krushna, Ganga, Gandhari and Draupadi etc male and female characters were based upon Sanskrit Mahabharata, they looked like the Odia characters of Odisha. Dresses and ornaments, food and demeanour etc in every angle they were like genuine Odia. Jatindra Mohan Mohanty in this context opines “Sarala’s Mahabharata is a huge gallery of characters, both of men and women even of those who were neither men nor women and from all ranks, positions and status- an extraordinary creative documentation of life, manners and people of the 15<sup>th</sup> century Orissa. Beginning from royal, and divine and semi-divine personages, to important people who move in the precincts of the court and the town, to other types of people in the lower rungs of the society, such as the tillers in the field, soldiers who fight battles, the wrestling, the medicants and Yogis who move around with ground-cells begging, the birds who sing songs and tell tales, the dancers, both man and women, who move around entertaining villagers, the ascetics and Vaishnavas the village apothecaries and astrologers, the village artisans such as potters, carpenters, masons and blacksmiths, the caterers, boatmen and businessmen, as well thieves, drunkards and prostitutes etc. an extremely comprehensive and kaleidoscopic picture”.

Even the heroism of great emperor Kapilendra Dev and the then war situation are reflected in *Sarala Mahabharata* through the war between Kuru and Pândav. The poet Sarala Dasa has successfully used the characters of Sanskrit Mahabharata in the environment, situation and surroundings of the then Odisha and has made it useful for all ages and time. Taking into account the feeling of tenderness of life, anxiousness and different possibility, these characters have turned into a classic creation. Here we can analyse the importance of certain women characters.

### **DRAUPADI:**

Draupadi is the heroine of the great Epic, *Sarala Mahabharata*. She was an epitome of beauty of Panchal, with decent activities. During ‘Swayamvara’ the groom selection ceremony, the kings were attracted by her beauty. Her glazing of face and strong determination made her Janjaseni. SâralâDâsa made unprecedented imagination of Ketucachandi in the back of Jainaseni. Noted critic Jatindra Mohâna Mohanty opines “Sarala has not only kept her in that position- a position of great power and great virtue, on the whole an extraordinary personality, but also has added substantially to that, and has much elevated to her position. He has conceived her as the great Goddess Mahamaya, the female primordial power (comparable to Goddess Durga in Chandi Purana), manifested to fight against injustice, oppression and evil. This was at one level, at the other, she has been presented with a strong femininity—a strong vocal expression of a woman’s pain, unhappiness and anger. That is, Sarala endows Draupadi not only with power and beauty, but also with strong human elements - a sense of fairness, impartiality, tolerance and a continuous concern not only for the members of her family but for all”.

In *Sarala Mahabharata*, Draupadi’s character was depicted not only as beautiful, soft hearted, loving, imperious queen, image of Ketuka Chandi and inspiration to Pandavas but also as obedient, fearful and a common woman of great tranquillity. That is why she was the incarnation of love, affection, anger, envy and jealousy. Hence Sarala Dasa has illustrated that, when she saw the ashes bed in swayamber night of potter shed, she cried and condemned her fate and was scared when Bheema stared at her with anger. In the words of the poet-

“Bheemasena stared at her with anger,  
He said to Draupadi, why are you not sleeping?  
The daughter of Drupada was afraid of it when she saw  
Thought that cruel brahmin might kill me”. (Adiparva-886)

During Yudhistir’s rajswaya sacrificial ceremony, Draupadi has been presented not only as an adorable queen but also as a common woman. Ghatotkacha, the son of Hidimbika, Bheema’s forest wife, entered the royal court and by the inspiration of his mother he did not pay respect to Draupadi. Annoyed Draupadi cursed him and quarrelled with Hidimbika like countryside rural women in royal court which made her character unique one. As in *Vana Parva*, the poet disclosed secrecy of female characteristic through Draupadi’s character.

Women always feel attracted towards handsome man and Draupadi's character is so mystical that true secrecy has reflected in the words of Draupadi. The poet says -

“Says Draupadi, women are having this attitude  
Seeing handsome and mighty man get attracted.  
May be her brother or son  
Put her in their heart seeing a handsome man.  
Since I have five husbands  
Despite this I am attracted towards Karna”. (Vana Parva-1/579)

Her confession before Srikrushana and Pandavas made her a woman of eternity. If a woman by nature is always attracted towards handsome man then, Draupadi's attraction towards Karna is only a picture of boundless life of women. In this context, Dr. Mayadhara Mansingh has said “True Mango plant or her co-wifely quarrel with Hidimbika or her bewailing of her fate on her first nuptial night in the potter's work shed, make her any the less great in our eyes ? These are variant facets to this diamond of a woman. They bespeak the great creative powers. Unusual daring and deep insight into human nature of our peasant poet”.

### **Ganga:**

Ganga is another female character of *Sarala Mahabharata*. The poet tried to present this character deeply. She was not characterised as Shantanu's beloved Ganga Devi, which is described in Vyasa's Sanskrit *Mahabharata*. But he portrayed her as quarrelsome, hard hearted, selfish and autocratic rural women of Odisha. According to Mayadhara Manasingh “Ganga, for instance, is not the beauteous, aristocratic, and divine romantic wife of Santanu that she is in the original *Mahabharata* she is here an impetuous, and tyrannical shrew. Not having any access to the original in Sanskrit, the poet perhaps imagined Ganga's character in consonance with the spirit of the river which she personified - a most natural conception, though a little undignified in the eyes of the average Indian who looks upon Ganga as hallowed with sanctity”.

When we analyze the character of Ganga in the form of river and woman, we can meet unnatural incident of her life. Ganga was the charming lover of mahayogi Lord Shiva. She was born as daughter of Nirghata in the earth from the desire of Lord Shiva. But Lord Shiva, for repentance of cow slaughter and Brahmin murder, was busy with self mortification at Hatekeswar in the nether world. Despite two ages had passed, Ganga waited for Shiva at the home of Nirghata. But Nirghata felt that it was a crime to keep a matured daughter at home, so he was very tensed and tried to get his daughter married. In the words of the poet-

Nirghat said. oh! My mother what will I do  
You are a virgin, whom would I give you?  
XXX XXX XXX  
Ganga told, listen my father  
My husband is Lord Rudra.” (Ädiparva-17)

Meanwhile Rajashree Shantanu got second title of Eswara by praying Love Shiva. By wearing his dresses and by his advice, he set forth to travel in heaven. Ganga was by mistake attracted towards Shantanu who was in the guise of Rudra. Ganga fetched flower garland in the hand of her father and accepted Shantanu as husband. Father Nirghata was also committed to get her daughter married to Shantanu. But in marriage mandap, during the time of utterance and recitation of gotra the truth was exposed and she did not want to marry Shantanu. But in the fear of violation of father's swearword, Ganga married to Shantanu with a condition that, if she makes mistake, Shantanu will excuse her. He will not protest and can't use rough words "Gangee. If there will be any contradiction then she presumed that the truth would be broken and Ganga would become fully independent, she would go by quitting Shantanu forever". In the words of the poet-

"From today oh king, I vow  
I am mad, lunatic and rebellious.  
If I make mistakes you must not be agitated  
Will not give importance to my ten offences.  
Do not blame or abuse me  
You always serve me as per my wish.  
You always call me Ganga  
If you call me Gangee, my vow is completed  
and I shall leave forever." (Adiparva-23)

Ganga after marriage set different plans to make herself free from Shantanu. She started to show improper conduct and many times used rough words, beat him and had breached the vow. Her behaviour towards Shantanu has become very rude and bad. In the words of the poet-

"To pat over the head softly and serving her leg  
He hugged her with affection.  
When sage held her body tightly  
She beat the sage with dragging his hair.  
She blow fist on his fore head and kicked him  
Pierced his body by nails and tooth." (Adiparva-31)

Despite different assault and rough words of Ganga, Shantanu bore everything in the fear of breach of vow. After giving birth to six sons, Ganga killed all the sons one by one by sword. But Shantanu had lost his patience when he saw that Ganga was about to kill her seventh son. At that time he protested her and he had forgotten his Commitment and addressed "Ganga as Gangee". After that, Ganga quit Shantanu and her child and left the place forever. In the words of the poet-

"You called me Ganga I will stay.  
Called Gangee I will quit  
Since you called me Gangee I quit forever". (Âdiparva-40)

The character of Ganga in the *Mahabharata* clearly depicts the sorrowful result and familiar disturbances when she married against her wish for which a lady became disobedient and went far away from the love and affection of her husband and son. The poet Sarala Dasa by the character of Ganga tried to reflect the then Odisha where a woman who has full control over her husband became disobedient. In co-ordination of Godness and human tendencies the character turns into a classic creation. Ganga's character in *Sarala Mahabharata* despite having certain human tendencies like a common woman that is anger, discontentment, violence, lustfulness etc is still dazzling and amazing forever.

### **Kunti:**

In Mahabharata another classic character was Kunti for glorifying motherhood. She was one and only beloved daughter of Kuntabhoja king of Shiddhapurkataka and wife of Pandu. Princess Kunti in her adulthood had got engaged herself in the service of angry and dazzling saint Durbasa. Durbasa was satisfied with her service and gifted his rosary. To examine the effectiveness of the rosary, she curiously used it and had conjugated with Sun. With the blessing of Sun, she had given birth to a male child from her ear. As she was unmarried she was not happy after the birth of a child. She was very scared after thinking of her future and her new born baby. She forcibly tried to keep away her affection from her son. In words of the poet -

“Bhuja princess by holding the son in her lap  
That what to do she thought.  
What shall I do with this beautiful son?  
What will I say to my parents?  
Of course by seeing the child they will ask  
Where did you get the child.  
How can I tell the lie to my parents  
If I tell the truth, I will be ashamed”.

(Âdiparva-128)

When she was residing at Satyashrungha Mountain with Pandu her married life was deteriorated by the curse of Agnika saint i.e. she was deprived of conjugal life with her husband. Of the then social system to keep family race in live and the feeling of motherhood compelled her to deviate from the path of household duty. With the direction of Maharshi Agasti and approval of Pandu she has accepted prostitution. By the help of the rosary of Durbasa, she conjugated with invisible God of Dharma, Wind and the king of Gods (Indra). Consequently she gave birth Yudhistira, Bheema and Arjuna. After the death of Pandu and Madree, she shared her life with Pandavas. Before the bride selection ceremony of Draupadi, the shelterless life of Kunti with Pandav is noteworthy. In the words of the poet-

Kointeye said, by seeing the potter shade  
In my opinion this place is nice,  
No need to search for wood and fire

In need we found the new vessel easily.  
We have no cloth in winter  
To get warm prepare the bed of ashes”. (Âdiparva-765)

Kunti’s sacrifice, honesty and dedication towards her child has made her a glorious and eternal personality. As the mother of Pandavas she has not only become world famous but also she is worshipped by the world. At the time when Kunti went to lead the life of Banaprasta with Dhrutarastra and Gandharee, the poet tried to reflect her dignity of eternal motherhood. In the words of Yudhistira-

“Kunti’s son said politely  
Ohh! Mother why are you leaving us?  
you care us in dangerous situation  
But why are you leaving us during affluance”. (Shramika prava-28)

Like common women, Kunti has the tendencies of enviousness and arrogance. It is reflected when conflict arose between Gandharee and Kunti in the incident of Birajeswar Shiva worship. After the death of Pandu, Bhurishraba requested Kunti to leave Shatasrungha Mountain and to go to Hastina. But arrogant Kunti answered-

“Kointaye said oh! Preceptor you go to Hastina  
Why I will leave Shatasingha Mountain.  
You bring my son here  
Can I live with Gandharee?  
Gandharee is a wicked woman  
Her sons are wicked too”. (Adiparva-264-65)

This weakness of Kunti’s character in view of classic poet Sarala Dasa clearly studies the all time psychology of women. Through this character, the poet tried to illustrate the tendencies of revengefulness, enviousness, arrogance and how a woman felt proud when she got motherhood. It has clearly proved in the character of Kunti that the life of woman with morality, duty, law and principles dedicated for her beloved husband and son. Through this character the poet very beautifully coordinates the quality of Godliness and human tendencies.

### **Gandharee:**

Another classic character of Sarala Mahabharata is Gandharee, who was the soul of chastity. As she was born in the month of Jestha in new moon day and Kritika nakshatra, she was considered as evil and ill lucked. She married twenty two kings but they all died. So for the success of her marriage, on the advice of Vyasadev, Gandharee married Shahada tree and then Dhrutarastra. According to the poet-

“Great sage Vyasa went with Gandharee  
He gifted the bride to Dhrutarastra.

Dhrutarashtra's zodiac sign was brahmasurakurtikabrusarasi  
Gandharee's zodiac was brahmasuree, born in newmoon light.  
Brides whose names were proposed for  
Dhrutarastara they all died  
Twenty two kings died.  
When selecting Gandharee  
Dhrutarashtra had no bride and Gandharee had no groom  
By caste she was Brahmasuree and he was Brahmasura.  
Both were of same fortune and they fell in love  
Gandharee and Dhrutarashtra had same conscience". (Âdiparva-118)

After marriage Gandharee started the life of a chaste woman, devoted to her husband. By seeing her born blind husband, she shared her sadness equally with him. And willingly she tied a band over the eyes for the rest of her life. In the words of the poet-

"Gandharee, seeing the husband's blindness  
Contemplated herself.  
By what curse my husband faced such situation?  
Even he is unable to see the amusement of child.  
Since my husband is blind  
Why shall I see the grief of my husband?  
At Kapaleswar, a holy place, determined  
She tied a band over the eyes  
Not to see the grief of her husband". (Âdiparva-246-47)

Even she tied a band over the eyes with the grief of her husband, she was not totally out of mind like Dhrutarashtra. Gandharee was a lady of source of justice having the knowledge of what is good and what is bad. After she had known the enviousness of Dhrutarashtra towards Pandu she advised him to refrain from this evil work.

Another important feature of Gandharee's character was affection towards children. But she was not fully blind to her sons like Dhrutarashtra. In order to keep her son's faults away from injustice and illegality, she had repeatedly advised Duryodhan not to follow the words of wicked man Shakuni. In the words of the poet-

King of kuru, listen my words  
You should not follow the words of Shakuni.  
Whose family you destroyed, made him minister  
Sacred woman said.  
I would not be able to save both my families". (Âdiparva-477)

In *Sārālā Mahabharata* Gandharee was a personality of chastity and righteousness and her heart was full of jealousy and helplessness. During the time she worshipped Birâjeswar Shiva she had not only defeated but also felt ashamed and praised Kunti and Arjuna in

mind. At the end of the Mahabharata war, Gandharee was mourning at the death of hundred sons and had become retaliated. She wanted to burn Yudhistira in the pretention of seeing him by opening her tied band over the eyes. But due to clever diplomacy of Srikrushna, the life of Yudhistira had been saved and the last survived son of Kourava named Durdakshya who was seeking shelter to Pandav, was burnt accidentally in the radiation of Gandharee's eye. After the sad demise of Durdakshya, Gandharee blamed Srikrushna for the destruction of Kaurav race. Due to the conspiracy of Srikrushna, the Kaurav race was destroyed. Gandharee in anger imprecated to Srikrushna that your family race will be destroyed like Kaurav. In the words of the poet-

Because of your cunningness my race was destroyed  
O Srikrushna! Your family will also be destroyed the like  
You divide one family by creating dispute among brothers  
Your family will be destroyed like that.” (Ashramika parva-21)

The way Gandharee cursed Srikrushna for destruction of their family that clearly reflected the picture of a common village woman of Odisha having the quality of revengefulness. Her revengefulness and helpless nature have become more lively, when Pandavas ascended the throne. So she accepted the fourth stage of human life, which is Banaprasta, in the guise of stoic. She with her family member Dhrutarastra, Sanjaya and Kunti went to jungle. The poet Sarala Dasa by drawing the character of Gandharee tried to co-ordinate between Goddess and common women. We can easily feel a woman having heart of eternity, body of blood and flesh with chastity.

The way Sarala Dasa has used his creativity and sincerity to illustrate the characters of women in his epic that has made it a unique one in world literature. He has applied his deep inner vision to describe the role of different characters of *Mahabharata* which makes it a value oriented creation for all ages. Along with this, he presents the picture of ups and downs, sadness and joy, hope and desperation of life of different women characters. He has also tried to coordinate between them and establish his Excellency. ■

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# Exploring Socio-Cultural and Economic Degradation in Indian Tribal Fiction

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Tribal societies, with their rich cultural tapestries and unique ways of life, have been integral components of the global human narrative for millennia. Despite their diversity, these communities often share commonalities in their struggles against socioeconomic degeneration—a persistent issue that has been explored and portrayed in the world of literature, particularly in tribal novels. The pages of these novels bear witness to the complex interplay between identity, socioeconomic status and governance in tribal societies, offering readers a window into the multifaceted challenges faced by these communities.

This paper aims to shed light on the critical issues of socio-cultural and economic degeneration within tribal communities as depicted in literary works. By analyzing the narratives and themes in famous tribal fictions, it seeks to deepen our understanding of the challenges faced by these communities and the urgent need for social and economic empowerment. Through an in-depth analysis of select literary works, we examine the multifaceted aspects of tribal life, the challenges they face in the wake of modernity and the complex interplay between tradition and progress. By studying the narratives of renowned authors, we gain insights into the evolving socioeconomic landscape of tribal communities and the implications for their identity and well-being. Ultimately, this research contributes to the broader discourse on identity, representation and social-cultural dynamics in tribal communities.

**Key Words:** Tribal fiction, socioeconomic, degeneration, tribal society

## Introduction

Tribal fictions are the important genre of literature which provide a window into the lives and experiences of tribal communities and have always been a platform for exploring the complexities of tribal societies and their interactions with the larger world. These communities have a unique place in literature due to their distinct cultural identities and their often-ignored voices. One recurring theme in many of these works is socioeconomic degeneration, which is often portrayed as a matrix that impacts every aspect of tribal life.

The topic of socioeconomic degeneration in tribal novels is of paramount significance in today's global context. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, understanding the socioeconomic dynamics of tribal communities is crucial for devising inclusive and equitable policies that address the unique needs and aspirations of these marginalized groups. Tribal novels, often authored by individuals with an intimate understanding of their respective tribal cultures, provide invaluable insights into the lived experiences of tribal people and the challenges they encounter in an ever-evolving world. Socioeconomic degeneration has been a common theme in tribal fictions, which reflect the struggles and challenges faced by indigenous communities in a rapidly changing world. These fictions often explore the impact of colonialism, modernization, and globalization on the traditional ways of life and cultural values of tribal societies. The matrix of socioeconomic degeneration in tribal fictions is often characterized by poverty, marginalization, and loss of cultural identity. In many cases, the characters in these fictions are depicted as being caught in a web of socioeconomic constraints that limit their opportunities and threaten their existence.

This article is a portrayal of socioeconomic degeneration reflected in tribal fictions, and the ways in which it shapes the lives of tribal communities.

Socioeconomic degeneration refers to the decline or deterioration of the economic and social conditions of a community. This can occur for a variety of reasons, such as illiteracy, environmental degradation, exploitation of natural resources and so on. In tribal fictions, socioeconomic degeneration is often portrayed as a matrix that impacts every aspect of tribal life, from economic opportunities to social relationships.

One way in which socioeconomic degeneration is depicted in tribal fictions is through the portrayal of poverty. Many tribal fictions highlight the struggle of tribal communities to make ends meet, with characters facing constant challenges to secure food, shelter, and basic necessities. Poverty is often linked to the exploitation of natural resources, such as forests or mines, which provide economic opportunities for outsiders but leave tribal communities with little benefit.

Another aspect of socioeconomic degeneration in tribal fictions is the breakdown of social relationships. As economic conditions deteriorate, tribal communities may be forced to migrate or leave their traditional lands in search of work. This can lead to the fragmentation of families and communities, as individuals are separated from their support networks. Social relationships may also be strained by the influx of outsiders who exploit tribal resources or compete for limited economic opportunities.

The impact of socioeconomic degeneration on tribal communities is also reflected in the portrayal of cultural practices and traditions. In many tribal fictions, cultural practices are depicted as under threat, as economic pressures lead younger generations to abandon their traditional ways of life. This can lead to a loss of cultural identity and a sense of dislocation, as tribal communities struggle to maintain their traditions in the face of economic and social pressures.

Despite the bleak picture presented by many tribal fictions, there is also a sense of resilience and resistance in these works. Many characters in tribal fictions are depicted as fighting against socioeconomic degeneration, whether through political activism or direct action. Through these acts of resistance, tribal communities are able to assert their agency and work towards a better future.

## **Case Studies: Prominent Indian Tribal Fictions**

### **I. *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy:**

One example of a tribal fiction that explores the matrix of socioeconomic degeneration is Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. The novel is set in Kerala, India, and follows the lives of a family of Syrian Christians who are part of the indigenous community. The novel depicts the impact of colonialism and globalization on the traditional way of life of the family, as they struggle to maintain their cultural identity and economic stability in the face of rapid change. *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy is a powerful novel that intricately weaves together the themes of socioeconomic degeneration, caste discrimination, and the complex dynamics of a society in transition. Set in the southern Indian state of Kerala, the novel provides a poignant portrayal of the socioeconomic struggles faced by the central characters, the twins Estha and Rahel, who belong to a marginalized Christian family known as the Syrian Christians.

One of the central aspects of socioeconomic degeneration in the novel is the family's decline from a once-prominent position in society to a state of financial destitution. The decline of their family business, the pickle factory, symbolizes the broader economic decline of the region. The novel captures the economic hardships faced by the family and the consequences of their diminishing financial status on their social standing. This theme underscores the impact of economic factors on the lives of individuals and families in a rapidly changing society.

Caste discrimination also plays a significant role in the socioeconomic degeneration portrayed in the novel. The social hierarchy and caste system are deeply ingrained in the Indian society depicted in the story. The characters are subject to discrimination and prejudice based on their caste, which further exacerbates their economic and social struggles. The novel highlights how caste-based discrimination and social prejudice perpetuate socioeconomic disparities and create obstacles for upward mobility.

Arundhati Roy skilfully interweaves the personal narratives of the characters with the broader societal context, showcasing how individual destinies are deeply entwined with the socioeconomic and caste dynamics of their surroundings. The novel underscores the inescapable consequences of societal norms and economic factors on the lives of the marginalized.

In *"The God of Small Things,"* Arundhati Roy not only paints a vivid picture of the socioeconomic degeneration experienced by her characters but also explores the larger issues

of power, privilege, and oppression within the framework of a changing India. The novel's narrative intricacy and richly drawn characters offer a poignant commentary on the complex interplay of socioeconomic factors and caste discrimination, ultimately making it a compelling exploration of the theme of socioeconomic degeneration in contemporary Indian society.

## **II. *Breast Stories* by Mahasweta Devi:**

Another example of a tribal fiction that explores the matrix of socioeconomic degeneration is Mahasweta Devi's "Breast Stories." The collection of stories focuses on the struggles of tribal women in India, who are often marginalized and oppressed due to their gender and ethnic identity. The stories highlight the impact of poverty, landlessness, and discrimination on the lives of these women, as they struggle to survive and maintain their dignity. The *Breast Stories* by Mahasweta Devi is a collection of poignant and thought-provoking short stories that delve into the theme of socioeconomic degeneration among tribal and marginalized communities in India. Mahasweta Devi, a renowned Indian writer and social activist, uses her literary prowess to shed light on the harsh realities faced by these communities. Through her stories, she explores the complex interplay between identity, exploitation, and the erosion of traditional ways of life.

**Exploitation and Dispossession:** A recurring theme in "The Breast Stories" is the exploitation and dispossession of tribal communities by powerful external forces. Devi vividly portrays how these communities are often stripped of their ancestral lands, resources, and livelihoods, resulting in their socioeconomic degradation. The stories expose the ruthless exploitation by landlords, industrialists, and government officials, illustrating the dire consequences for the marginalized.

**Gender and Vulnerability:** Mahasweta Devi's stories also highlight the vulnerability of tribal women within these socioeconomic contexts. Women often bear the brunt of exploitation, facing not only economic oppression but also gender-based violence and discrimination. Devi's narratives challenge traditional gender roles and norms while portraying the strength and resilience of women in the face of adversity.

**Cultural Erosion:** Another prominent theme is the erosion of tribal cultures and traditional ways of life. As tribal communities are uprooted from their ancestral lands and exposed to modernization, their cultural identity and heritage are under threat. "The Breast Stories" examine the struggle to preserve cultural practices, languages, and customs amidst the pressures of economic survival.

**Struggle and Resistance:** Despite the grim realities depicted, Mahasweta Devi's characters often display remarkable resilience and courage. Her stories highlight the agency of the marginalized, who, in their own ways, resist exploitation and fight for their rights and dignity. These tales of resistance offer hope and inspire readers to question and challenge societal injustices.

**Social Inequities and Injustice:** The stories in this collection serve as a powerful critique of the broader socioeconomic and political structures that perpetuate inequality and injustice. Devi's narratives reveal the complicity of government institutions and the apathy of society in perpetuating the suffering of tribal communities.

In "The Breast Stories," Mahasweta Devi skillfully weaves together elements of fiction and social commentary to illuminate the harsh realities faced by marginalized communities. Her stories are a call to action, urging readers to confront the socioeconomic degeneration, exploitation, and cultural erosion that afflict tribal and marginalized populations. Through her powerful storytelling, Mahasweta Devi challenges us to rethink our understanding of justice, equity, and the preservation of cultural diversity in the face of modernization and industrialization.

In both of these examples, the matrix of socioeconomic degeneration is a key theme in the fictions, reflecting the challenges faced by indigenous communities in a changing world. These fictions highlight the importance of cultural identity, community solidarity, and resistance in the face of marginalization and oppression.

### **111. *The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai**

It is a novel that masterfully explores the theme of socioeconomic degeneration in the context of an isolated Himalayan village. Set against the backdrop of the mid-20th century in Kalimpong, India, the novel presents a poignant portrayal of the impact of colonial legacies, political turmoil, and globalization on the lives of its characters, particularly the indigenous communities.

One of the central facets of socioeconomic degeneration in the novel is the depiction of the erosion of traditional livelihoods and cultural practices. As globalization penetrates even the remotest corners of the world, traditional farming and artisan practices are rendered obsolete, leading to the economic decline of the villagers. The Gorkhaland movement, which seeks political autonomy for the Gorkha ethnic group, adds to the disruption and instability in the region, further exacerbating the economic hardships faced by the characters.

The novel also explores the issue of immigration and the pursuit of economic opportunities abroad. Many characters from the village, including Biju, migrate to the United States in search of better economic prospects. However, their experiences as immigrants, the challenges they face, and the alienation they feel in a foreign land highlight the complexities of socioeconomic mobility and the sacrifices often required to escape poverty. The theme of socioeconomic degeneration is intricately woven into the lives of the characters. The judge, a central character, represents the old world of privilege and colonial influence. His mansion, once a symbol of power and wealth, now stands as a decaying relic of the past, mirroring the degeneration of traditional elites in post-colonial India.

Kiran Desai's "The Inheritance of Loss" thus presents a rich tapestry of characters and narratives that collectively depict the intricate ways in which socioeconomic degeneration

affects individuals and communities. The novel underscores the importance of understanding the historical, political, and economic forces that shape the lives of marginalized groups and calls attention to the complex interplay between tradition and modernity, privilege and poverty, and hope and despair in a rapidly changing world.

In tribal fictions, socioeconomic degeneration can also be seen as a source of conflict between different social groups. For instance, in the novel *The Moth Eaten Howdah of the Tusker* by Arupa Patangia Kalita, the story is set in the aftermath of the anti-foreigner movement in Assam, which resulted in violence and displacement of tribal communities. The novel explores the tensions between the dominant Assamese community and the tribal communities, and how these tensions have played out in the economic and political sphere.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, the depiction of socioeconomic degeneration as a matrix in tribal fictions reflects the live experiences of many tribal communities around the world. These works highlight the struggles of these communities to maintain their economic and social conditions in the face of exploitation and marginalization. By exploring these themes, tribal fiction plays an important role in amplifying the voices of these communities and raising awareness about their struggles. However, they also demonstrate the resilience and resistance of tribal communities and their on-going struggle for justice and dignity. ■

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# Mahesh Dattani's *Bravely Fought the Queen*: A New Woman's Struggle for Identity

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Mahesh Dattani's *Bravely Fought the Queen* is a powerful exploration of gender, patriarchy, and identity within a contemporary Indian family. This paper examines the concept of the "New Woman" in the play, focusing on the struggles of the women characters as they seek autonomy and liberation from the constraints of traditional gender roles. The paper highlights how Dattani critiques the patriarchal structures that dominate both the public and private lives of the characters, with particular emphasis on the ways in which women navigate their emotional, sexual, and psychological repression. Through the complex portrayals of Dolly, Alka, and Baa, the play presents a subtle yet impactful depiction of women's search for identity and self-expression. The concept of the New Woman is examined through the lens of these characters' internal conflicts, illustrating how they challenge societal norms, albeit within the limitations imposed upon them.

**Key Words:** New Woman, gender roles, patriarchy, Indian drama, women's identity, autonomy, repression, sexuality.

## Introduction

Women have always played a crucial role in shaping society, laying its very foundation. Despite this, they have struggled to attain their rightful place in life. In 21<sup>st</sup> century, as the world moves towards modernisation and embraces new ideologies of equality, the notion that all individuals are equal is gaining prominence. However, Indian culture and tradition continue to grapple with this change, and gender discrimination remains a persistent issue. Our society still finds it challenging to fully embrace gender equality, particularly in relationships. When discussing status, we refer to an individual's social and legal standing in relation to others. In the past, women were revered as incarnations of goddesses, and their status was unquestioned. Yet, the unfortunate reality is that the status of women in India, which should have been a symbol of empowerment and respect, has instead become a subject of ongoing debate.

The effort to reposition women within the patriarchal order has been a longstanding focus for writers and thinkers in post-colonial India. Feminist writers, in particular, have sought to highlight the subjugated status of women, often aligning with the humanist ideals emphasized by post-colonial critics. Gayatri Spivak famously remarked that marginalized groups within society are denied the right to voice their claims to rights and responsibilities. Women, confined to the domestic sphere, are forced to endure the weight of patriarchy in silence. Historically treated as the “second sex,” women were excluded from the world of business and commerce. They were portrayed as inherently weak, submissive, and dependent on the identities of their male counterparts for recognition—whether culturally, economically, or biologically. In Indian society, where religious traditions often revered women as “goddesses,” the expectation for women to embody sacrifice, love, patience, and endurance further stifled their personal freedom and independent identity. Beneath the surface, women were treated as mere lifeless figures, stripped of their will and autonomy. So disconnected were they from their own sense of self that they were unable to think in terms of personal ego, even on a basic physical level. Their existence was often restricted to the confines of the home, dedicated to family welfare. This domestic space, far beyond physical boundaries, became the mental framework of the feminine psyche. In postcolonial literature, especially in women’s studies, efforts have been made to give voice to the silenced experiences of women. These writings encourage women to step out of the shadows, participate in the socio-political mainstream, and engage in various spheres of life. Many postcolonial critics agree that the marginalisation of women is rooted in sexual politics, acknowledging that women are fundamentally human beings with vast potential. Feminists argue that weakness is not an inherent gender trait but rather a result of societal discrimination. As Carden, a member of the National Organization for Women, suggested, it is the damaging effects of social conditioning that force women to suppress their human potential. In Carden’s *The New Feminist Movement* suggests “I want to have part in creating a new society ... I want Women to have something to say in their own lives I have never reached my potential because of social conditions. I’m not going to get the reward, I have been crippled... I want to see the kind of system that facilitates the use of potential (12).” It suggests that the only fundamental difference between men and women lies in certain biological distinctions. The awareness of a woman’s position encompasses a recognition of her identity as a woman, alongside a focus on addressing issues unique to her gender. Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* suggests, “A man is in the right in being a man, it is the woman who is in the wrong (15).” The focus of feminine consciousness is to reclaim a rightful place in the pursuit of social justice. A woman’s humanity must be recognized, valued, and respected.

A contemporary issue faced by every country, whether in Western or Indian literary traditions, is the question of women’s identity. Women are increasingly asserting themselves in search of self-definition. The “New Woman” of today challenges the traditional roles of the submissive “Angel in the house” and the overly sexualized stereotype. This New Woman is characterized by her awareness and consciousness of the low status she occupies within

the family and society. Feminist literary criticism has emerged as a key component of the women's movement, significantly influencing literary studies and sparking a revolution in the way literature is analysed.

Mahesh Dattani's play *Bravely Fought the Queen* explores the struggles of women from affluent backgrounds as they resist patriarchal dominance in Indian society. The title of the play is inspired by a Hindi poem about the fearless Rani of Jhansi, who fought against the injustices she faced in her own land and kingdom. The Rani symbolizes a woman of awareness, consciousness, and rebellion, fighting for her rights—a spirit reflected in the female characters of Dattani's play.

Mahesh Dattani's plays focus on the emotional, sexual, and financial issues faced by Indian urban middle-class and upper-middle-class families within the family structure. He challenges traditional and stereotypical gender roles, raising universal questions about societal expectations. The title of his play *Bravely Fought the Queen* reflects this theme, drawing on the story of the Rani of Jhansi. Through the characters of Dolly and Alka, Dattani portrays two women who, despite their subjugated positions in the Trivedi household, fight bravely against emotional adversities, much like warriors, in their struggle to carve out their own identities.

## Literature Review

This literature review will examine various scholarly perspectives on *Bravely Fought the Queen* and its connection to the concept of the "New Woman."

Aparna Dharwadker's *Theatres of Independence: Drama, Theory, and Urban Performance in India since 1947* (2005), examines how Dattani's plays explore urban middle-class life and the intricate power dynamics within families. Dharwadker argues that Dattani's plays, including *Bravely Fought the Queen*, reflect the socio-cultural constraints faced by Indian women, particularly within domestic spaces. Dattani's portrayal of female characters speaks to the ongoing feminist struggle for personal and social autonomy, making his works highly relevant to discussions on the New Woman.

In a similar vein, John McRae's *Indian English Drama: A Critical History* (2008) analysis of the play underscores how the female characters struggle against the patriarchal control exerted by the male characters. He emphasizes that Dattani presents the family structure as a microcosm of a larger patriarchal system that pervades Indian society, making it difficult for women to assert their autonomy. McRae observes that while the male characters uphold the outward façade of power and control, it is the women who suffer the consequences of repression, neglect, and emotional isolation.

Tutun Mukherjee, in her essay "*The Plays of Mahesh Dattani: A Critical Response*" (2005), explores how the play exposes the hypocrisy of patriarchal norms and the subjugation of women in Indian society. Mukherjee contends that Dattani's characters, particularly Dolly and Alka, represent women who are struggling to break free from their oppressive

surroundings, yet remain trapped within societal constraints. This tension between societal expectations and personal desires is a key theme in Dattani's work, with the play offering a powerful commentary on the psychological damage caused by patriarchal structures.

In her article "*Gender Politics in Mahesh Dattani's Plays*" (2012), Anju Bala Agrawal explores how Dattani addresses the complex dynamics of gender and patriarchy, particularly in *Bravely Fought the Queen*. Agrawal highlights how Dattani critiques the patriarchal oppression that confines women to traditional roles, focusing on the emotional, sexual, and social struggles they endure within urban Indian middle-class families. She argues that Dattani portrays his female characters, such as Dolly and Alka, as embodying the feminist concept of the "New Woman," who, though entrenched in a patriarchal system, subtly resist their subjugation and fight for autonomy and identity. Agrawal also notes Dattani's nuanced depiction of male characters, showing that patriarchal dominance damages not only women but also men by emotionally repressing them. By situating Dattani's works within feminist literary criticism, Agrawal underscores his contribution to Indian theatre as a powerful commentary on gender politics and societal structures that limit women's freedoms.

Usha Bande's book is *Writing Resistance: A Comparative Study of the Selected Plays of Mahesh Dattani and Manjula Padmanabhan* (2011). This book explores the themes of gender dynamics, identity, and resistance in the works of both Dattani and Padmanabhan. Usha Bande explores the intricate power relations between men and women, focusing on how Dattani challenges traditional gender roles in Indian society. Bande notes that Dattani's plays often depict the emotional and psychological struggles of women as they navigate oppressive patriarchal structures, particularly within the confines of the family. She highlights how Dattani portrays his female characters as trapped in gendered expectations, yet subtly resisting and challenging their subjugation. Bande also emphasizes the complexities of male characters in Dattani's works, showing that men, too, are victims of rigid societal norms. By delving into issues of sexuality, gender identity, and power, Bande argues that Dattani's plays not only critique patriarchal dominance but also advocate for a more fluid and equitable understanding of gender, making his theatre a significant commentary on modern Indian society.

From a feminist perspective, scholars have lauded Dattani for addressing women's issues in a nuanced and empathetic manner. Shyamala A. Narayan's book *Modern Indian Literature, an Anthology, Plays and Prose* edited by K.M. George (1992) argues that Dattani's women are not merely victims of patriarchy; they are also agents of their own destinies, even when their agency is constrained. Narayan's reading of *Bravely Fought the Queen* positions Dattani's women as representing the struggles of countless Indian women who navigate a complex web of familial duty, societal expectation, and personal desire.

However, some critics, like Rituparna Roy's *Gender, Identity and the Politics of Representation in the Contemporary Indian English Novel and Drama* (2013), critique the play for not offering concrete solutions to the issues it raises. While *Bravely Fought the*

*Queen* exposes the deep-seated problems of patriarchy, Roy contends that Dattani leaves the characters in a state of limbo, without fully empowering them to break free from their circumstances. This, she suggests, reflects the limitations faced by real-life women who, despite their desires for independence, are often caught in the crossfire of tradition and modernity.

The critical literature surrounding Mahesh Dattani's *Bravely Fought the Queen* highlights its significance as a work that interrogates the patriarchal structures of Indian society while offering a complex portrayal of women's struggles for autonomy. Through his nuanced depiction of the female characters, Dattani presents the "New Woman" not as a fully liberated figure, but as one caught between the pressures of tradition and the yearning for freedom. The play invites readers to question how far women have come in their fight for independence and how much farther they still need to go. The scholarship on the play underscores its relevance as a work that not only engages with feminist discourse but also challenges audiences to think critically about the intersections of gender, identity, and power in contemporary India.

### **Research Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative research design to analyse Mahesh Dattani's *Bravely Fought the Queen* through feminist literary criticism, focusing on themes of patriarchy, gender, and the New Woman. Using the primary text and secondary sources from academic journals and critical essays, the research examines how the play portrays women's struggles in a patriarchal society. Key theories explored include patriarchy and gender roles, the New Woman's challenge to societal norms, and intersectionality concerning class and family. A close reading of character development and themes like repression, sexuality, and identity reveals Dattani's critique of patriarchal norms and highlights women's forms of resistance. The feminist critique emphasizes oppression, female agency, and the quest for autonomy within a repressive family structure.

### **Analysis**

In *Bravely Fought the Queen*, Mahesh Dattani examines how patriarchal norms control women's lives and shape family dynamics, creating a suffocating environment that restricts their autonomy. The play highlights the Trivedi household as a microcosm of broader societal structures, where traditional gender roles dictate the expectations and behaviours of its members. Women characters like Dolly and Alka are depicted as navigating a landscape fraught with familial duty, societal pressure, and the emotional turmoil that arises from their subjugated positions.

Dattani illustrates how patriarchal control manifests in various ways, such as emotional neglect, repression of desires, and the imposition of societal expectations. The male characters, while seemingly empowered, often reinforce the status quo, using their perceived authority to maintain control over the women in their lives. For instance, Dolly's

struggles with her self-identity and her desperate desire for love and validation reveal the psychological impact of patriarchal dominance.

Furthermore, Dattani emphasizes the contradictions inherent in the family structure, where women are expected to embody qualities of sacrifice and nurturing while being denied agency and independence. The women characters' attempts to assert their identities often lead to conflict and tension within the family, reflecting the challenges faced by women in reconciling their desires with the oppressive norms surrounding them.

Through the interplay of power dynamics, emotional isolation, and the desire for autonomy, Dattani critiques the patriarchal norms that govern the characters' lives, ultimately illuminating the broader implications for women navigating similar struggles in contemporary society. The play serves as a powerful commentary on the limitations placed on women by patriarchal structures, urging a re-evaluation of traditional roles and the necessity of challenging these oppressive norms.

In *Bravely Fought the Queen*, Mahesh Dattani presents the characters of Dolly, Alka, and Baa as nuanced representations of the New Woman, each embodying distinct aspects of female agency and resistance against patriarchal norms. Through their dialogues and interactions, Dattani illustrates their struggles for identity and autonomy within a repressive family structure. Dolly epitomizes the emotional turmoil faced by women striving for independence. Initially portrayed as a woman caught between societal expectations and personal desires, her journey reflects the New Woman's quest for self-identity. Dolly's line, "I am not just a daughter, I am a woman," (80) encapsulates her frustration with being defined solely by her relationships. This assertion of identity marks her rebellion against traditional roles and her yearning for a more profound recognition of her individuality. Throughout the play, Dolly grapples with feelings of neglect and emotional isolation, often expressing her desire for love and validation, highlighting the conflict between her aspirations and her family's expectations.

Alka serves as another crucial representation of the New Woman, symbolizing the emerging awareness of women's rights and desires. Her character evolves as she confronts the patriarchal control exerted by her family, particularly through her relationship with her husband. Alka's dialogue, "I refuse to be a mere spectator in my life," (99) signifies her determination to take charge of her narrative. This line reflects her struggle against the constraints of her marriage and the societal expectations that confine her. As Alka navigates her desire for autonomy, she becomes a powerful voice for women challenging traditional norms, embodying the courage to seek a life beyond prescribed roles.

Baa, a character deeply affected by her abusive marriage, is subjected to exploitation by her alcoholic husband, who stifles her passion for singing and asserts his dominance through physical violence. His harsh treatment extends to their sons, shaping the family dynamics. Baa's suffering under his brutality leaves her emotionally trapped in the past, unable to fully engage with the present. Even after his death, the memory of her husband

haunts her, leading her to despise her elder son, Jiten, who bears a striking resemblance to his father. In contrast, Baa seeks solace in her younger son, who shares her physical and emotional traits, trying to find the love she was denied. Her unresolved guilt over making Daksha a special child and her unjustified resentment toward her daughters-in-law's family further complicate her relationships. In the end, she leaves the house to Daksha, with Praful appointed as trustee. Baa represents an older generation grappling with the remnants of traditional values, yet her character also reveals the complexity of the New Woman's evolution. As a mother, Baa embodies both the protective instincts of motherhood and the ingrained patriarchal beliefs that limit her understanding of women's aspirations. Her dialogue, "What will society think? We must maintain our honour," (126) underscores the weight of societal expectations and the pressure she feels to conform to traditional norms. However, Baa's character also undergoes a transformation, as she begins to recognize the struggles faced by her daughters. This realization signifies a shift toward understanding and supporting the New Woman's quest for identity. Through the character arcs and dialogues of Dolly, Alka, and Baa, Dattani crafts a compelling narrative that encapsulates the struggles of the New Woman against the backdrop of patriarchal oppression. Their individual journeys reflect the broader societal challenges faced by women in contemporary India, as they navigate the complexities of identity, autonomy, and familial duty. Dattani's portrayal serves as a powerful commentary on the ongoing fight for women's rights and the need for a revaluation of traditional roles within society.

In *Bravely Fought the Queen*, Mahesh Dattani explores the profound impact of emotional and sexual repression on female characters, particularly through Dolly, Alka, and Baa. Dolly epitomizes emotional repression, expressing her feelings of entrapment with the metaphor of living in a "cage," which symbolizes her lack of freedom and internalized beliefs about her worth tied to familial roles. This entrapment leads to a deep identity crisis, as she struggles with feelings of inadequacy and isolation. In contrast, Alka confronts sexual repression, asserting her autonomy with the declaration, "I won't sacrifice my happiness for the sake of tradition." (165) Her journey reflects the broader struggle of women reclaiming their desires, as societal expectations distort intimate relationships and create emotional turmoil. Baa, representing an older generation, embodies the reinforcement of patriarchal norms, emphasizing the conflict between tradition and the emerging consciousness of her daughters. Her concern for being an outcast in society, which limits her understanding of her daughters' struggles. As the play progresses, Baa begins to recognize the repression faced by her daughters, highlighting the potential for change and the necessity of breaking the cycle of oppression. Ultimately, Dattani advocates for the reclamation of women's voices and autonomy, urging society to support the complex identities and desires of women in their quest for liberation and self-fulfilment.

In *Bravely Fought the Queen*, Mahesh Dattani employs the symbolic reference to Queen Jhansi, a historical figure renowned for her bravery and resistance against oppression, to frame the struggles of his female characters—Dolly, Alka, and Baa—within a context of

defiance against patriarchal norms. As Queen Jhansi serves as a powerful symbol of courage and rebellion, inspiring the characters to challenge societal expectations that seek to confine their identities. Dolly's expression of frustration, encapsulated in her dialogue, "I feel like I am living in a cage," (173) represents her yearning for freedom and autonomy, while Alka's assertion, "I won't sacrifice my happiness for the sake of tradition," (165) reflects her defiance against traditional obligations and her desire for self-assertion. Even Baa, who initially embodies conventional values, undergoes a transformation as she begins to recognize her daughters' struggles, indicating a subtle rebellion against the patriarchal structures she once upheld. This interplay between the legacy of Queen Jhansi and the characters' acts of defiance underscores Dattani's message that the fight for identity and autonomy is both a personal and collective endeavour, resonating through generations as contemporary women continue to challenge societal norms and assert their voices in a world that seeks to silence them.

## Conclusion

In *Bravely Fought the Queen*, Mahesh Dattani vividly portrays the struggle of the New Woman in her quest for identity within a patriarchal society. Through the experiences of female characters like Dolly, Alka, and Baa, the play highlights the emotional and sexual repression that constrains their autonomy and self-expression. Dattani explores how these women confront and resist traditional expectations, using their subtle acts of defiance to challenge the societal norms that seek to limit their identities. The nuanced depiction of their struggles serves to illuminate the complex dynamics of gender roles, familial duty, and personal desire, ultimately advocating for women's empowerment and self-determination.

Dattani's approach to gender in the play is multifaceted, showcasing a deep understanding of the intersectionality of women's issues within the context of Indian society. He presents female characters not merely as victims of patriarchy but as agents of their destinies, even when constrained by societal expectations. This nuanced portrayal allows for a richer exploration of autonomy, revealing the psychological and emotional landscapes that shape the characters' identities. By drawing parallels between the struggles of contemporary women and the historical figure of Queen Jhansi, Dattani underscores the ongoing battle for self-identity and agency, encouraging a revaluation of traditional gender roles and the societal structures that uphold them. Through his critical lens, the play serves as a powerful commentary on the need for change in attitudes towards women, celebrating their resilience and capacity for resistance against oppression.

## Significance of the Study

Mahesh Dattani's *Bravely Fought the Queen* plays a crucial role in advancing feminist discourse within the realm of Indian drama, marking a significant departure from traditional representations of women in literature. By addressing themes of gender, identity, and autonomy, the play offers a nuanced exploration of women's struggles in a patriarchal

society, challenging the historical narrative that often marginalizes their voices. Dattani's female characters—Dolly, Alka, and Baa—are depicted with depth and complexity, showcasing their emotional and psychological landscapes. Unlike the conventional portrayals of women as passive victims, these characters exhibit agency and resilience, making choices that reflect their desires and aspirations. This characterization challenges stereotypes and elevates the portrayal of women, thereby enriching feminist discourse by presenting multifaceted identities that resonate with contemporary audiences.

The play critically examines the entrenched patriarchal norms that dictate women's roles and behaviours in society. Dattani does not merely depict the struggles of women but delves into the structural barriers they face, such as familial expectations, societal pressures, and emotional repression. By highlighting these issues, *Bravely Fought the Queen* encourages audiences to confront the realities of gender inequality and inspires dialogue about the need for change in societal attitudes toward women. The use of the symbolic reference to Queen Jhansi draws parallels between historical and contemporary struggles for women's rights, reinforcing the importance of resistance and empowerment. This work contributes significantly to the evolving landscape of Indian theatre, setting a precedent for future playwrights to engage with feminist themes and inspiring a new generation of artists to explore women's issues with depth and complexity. Through its compelling critique of patriarchal norms, the play celebrates the resilience and agency of women, fostering essential conversations about gender equality and representation in society. ■

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# Magic Realism: A Perspective in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and *Grimus*

Mamata Mohanty

Post modernist meta-fictional historiography is reflected all the significant trends that stress the fluid relationship between fiction and history. The academics, all over the world in last few decades, have been devoted to work on historical reconstruction. This article looks into Rushdie's "Midnight's Children" and "Shame". Here history is interfused with fantasy with an artistic excellency, what one calls it the magic realism in the true sense of literary term. The struggle for independence of India may be the central point. Every religion is unique and said to be universal but its interpretation is multifaceted. Sometimes it is misinterpreted, reinterpreted and re-accessed. But no religion goes against the human ethics.

Religious fundamentalists sometimes misinterpret its acuteness which becomes the ethnicity. There are various cultures which humble and fabulous as a result it seem to be multicultural. Rushdie has twisted the history in a new form to discover the truth and the reality which are to establish universal brother hood. Though "Grooms" is a since fiction but it represents Rushdie's concept of historical and cultural consciousness. Rushdie has invariably stressed that imbibing western and Eastern literary traditions should by no means be regarded as infidelity towards one's own cultural heritage but as a broadening of horizons, a bridging of gaps; and he has expressed his conviction that Indo-Anglian literature which is for historical reasons, a cross cultural phenomenon.

**Key Words** – Magic Realism, History, Culture, Fantasy.

## Introduction

Salman Rushdie has established as one of the most significant Indian writers in English of 21<sup>st</sup> century. He has earned a wide name and fame as a fiction and non-fiction writer in India and abroad. His works have earned considerable amount of critical acclaims in the Indian sub continent, Europe, America and indeed much of the world. Most of his major fictional, non-fictional works, pieces of journalisms, talks, interviews have been translated in dozen of languages in the world. Specially his historical perspective in the form of fiction and meta-fiction are myth and allegories of the modern world. Through he is

supposed to be a revolutionary writer in the history of Islam but he is true human being in search of humanity without any caste, creed, religion and races. Rushdie remains an intellectual committed to a firmly articulated belief system, who will not water down or alter his deeply held convictions.

Salman Rushdie, the most iconoclast of Islamism, may be more considered as a social scientist than as a mere writer of the existing time. He is a revolutionary writer of the time who has brought a radical transformation in the history of Islam fundamentalism.

Salman Rushdie has immersed as one of the most powerful novelists of the post-colonial world whose position remain as an incredible mark among the writers like Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Chaman Nahal, Mukul Keshavan, Alka Sarogi, Khuswant Singh and others. His most powerful novels like 'The Satanic Verses' and 'Midnight's Children' have brought him to the pandal of great gossip and discussion. The most controversial novel 'The Satanic Verses' has brought him to the great school of criticism and life-risk where he has added new twist of anti-Islamic spirit and multi-cultural consciousness. He has displayed a pervasive influential and several younger generations of Indian and British novelists in a great magnitude of historical, cultural and consciousness. He has gained rich experiences through his realization and recognition of different historical and cultural perspective. His works seem to be milestones, not mere standing as a silent slab but symbolize self-stand fundamentalism and deconstruction of religious doubts and despair with the touch of new historicism. His novels 'Gimus' (1975), 'Midnight's Children' (1981), 'Shame' (1963), 'The Satanic Verses' are the milestones of cultural and historical perspective.

*Grimus* was published after many publishers had rejected it as a pointless exercise rather than a work that merited serious attention. It was written to be entered in a science fiction competition. On the occasion he failed to sustain his mental flights and simply had to crash land. So it appeared to many of the early readers of *Grimus*. A close analysis of the multiple layers at which the narrative functions is the first step towards a fuller, more meaningful appreciation of the earlier work of an author who later gave us such complex narratives at 'The Satanic Verses'.

*Grimus* is a fantasy of imagination. It opens with Virgil Jones, "a man devoid of friends and with a tongue rather too large for his mouth" sitting in his rocking chair on a small beach away from the Mediterranean Sea. He leads a lonely life and considers himself a great historian. He sees a body is flowing on the incoming tide. He soon brings it to the shore in a state of unconsciousness. He and Dolores O' Toole are surprised to see a new body entering the Island. It is the body of a Flapping Eagle. Flapping Eagle narrates his past. He was an Axona Indian and an orphan. His original name was Joe-sue. He and his sister Bird-Dog were abandoned by the Axona Race for some peculiar reasons. His sister broke the law by entering the town for the first time. She met Mr. Sispy, a peddler, who lured her by giving her two bottles; one filled with bright yellow liquid and other with bright blue liquid. She drank the bright yellow liquid and broke the bottle and also broke

the bright blue liquid bottle. She and her brother entered the town and saw many curious things there. Joe-sue saw an Eagle sitting on a rock at a shoulder height. When he stretched both hands, the bird came peacefully in his grasp and attacked him on his chest. Joe-sue fought with it bravely and so called by his sister as Flapping Eagle.

Flapping Eagle had wandered the earth. He fell from his yacht, fell through a hole in the sea and was washed ashore on a Calf Island. For him there is a mountain called Calf Mountain and the town bearing name 'K'. The town was full of reprobates and degraded types. Flapping Eagle enquired of his sister Bird-Dog and peddler Sispy. Soon Virgil Jones drew his attention to the Grimus effect which gets more powerful. It is just a question of waiting until power reaches down there. Jones felt that it was not advisable to climb Calf Mountain. The description of Calf Mountain naturally reminds one of the Mountains in Erebon by Samuel Butler. Flapping Eagle saw the inhabitants of K who became immune to Grimus Effect. There was Ignatius Gribb who was compiling a compendium of aphorisms. He was introduced to Elfrida, the pretty child wife of Professor Gribb. She was more delicate than a porcelain rose.

Another was Irina Cherkassora whose husband was a weak, stultified, barren, empty headed fool. She narrated a serious tale about the hatred of the countless towards her. Flapping Eagle met Flanch fool whose pleasure was being whipped and whose wife was partial to Virgil Jones. She made her husband unhappy in the town K. K in the novel remains as a town of obsession. There every inhabitant becomes a prey to it and keeps himself or herself shielded from the bizarre effects of the Grimus Whine. Here service is freely received, whores are never given good remuneration for the supply of hedonistic pleasure. Flapping Eagle in his search for Bird-Dog and Grimus reached K and was awestruck by the conditions there. He forgot his mission for a moment. He enjoyed the beauty of a couple of women and indulged in guilty love. The sameness and dissociation with Grimus were responsible for luring agony in K. The violation of 'Love' was also a cause of disorder.

Flapping Eagle wanted to escape from the vengeful inhabitants. He went up to the Calf Mountain. He met the mysterious Grimus surrounded by beings who were akin to mummified aves. Grimus is an anagram of simurg in Persian mythology the bird with reasoning power. Flapping Eagle came to know that the concept of free will was a delusion there. He felt that he was destined to meet and deliver Grimus from his captivity. The Gate to Grimus is similar to one enough which entered the sea of Calf. Though less crude, impossible to find it unless you know where it is. Grimus will certainly know you are coming, he may well try and close the gate. Flapping Eagle envisaged the reconstruction of Calf Island. But the inhabitants of K only experienced monotony and stagnant sameness fostered by Stone Rose. Moreover they could not flap their wings of spiritual explorations. The novel closes with the decision of Flapping Eagle to resurrect Calf Island without Stone Rose. *Grimus* played the part of the Creator with his Stone rose which enabled him to traverse time and space and materialize things by a mere flash of thinking.

Grimus is a powerful fantasy dealing with the vagaries of various characters. Uma Parameswaran says, “it is an epic fantasy of vaulting imagination, full of strangely echoing, mysterious and extra-ordinary adventure.” There are Gorfs who live on the planet there lit by Nus. They are an ingenious race who feels they need no science or art, no job or interest in the Divine Game of order. In the words of the novelist, “Gorfs through their bodies move with great difficulty, can transport themselves instantly from place to place by a process of physical disintegration and re-integration, supervised by their disembodied selves.” The inhabitants of Calf Island are mysterious persons whom we do not come across in day to day life. They are all immortals, who had found their longevity too burdensome in the outside world, yet had been unwilling to give it up, with Sispy’s guidance they had come to Calf Mountain to be with their own kind.

Word play is a technique which Rushdie employs to make his novel powerful. The very title of the novel is an anagram of Simrug, who is a monstrous bird of Persian legend, imagined as rational, having the power of speech and great age. The Mountain Calf is named after the Arabic letter ‘Kal’ which is esoteric connotations. The very word ‘Gorfs’ is an inversion of frogs. ‘Nus’ is an inverted of Sun. The Galaxy ‘YAWIKILM’ is an anagram of Milky Way.

Flapping Eagle, the protagonist of the novel, falls through a hole in the sea after making gyrating on the earth for over seven centuries. He becomes an enquirer of reality. His contact with the people of K violates the order of the town. He withstands the inner turmoil which almost batter the Calf Island. Flapping Eagle meets a similar fate in Axona because of his confused sex. His whiteness was a thing of contempt in the land inhabited by a dark skinned race. So he was an exile in the isolated community. Flapping Eagle symbolizes a realized soul. Calf Island is a symbol of disorder. The people of K represent passivity and monotony. Stone Rose is a symbol of monotonous stagnation. Grimus is a symbol of rational thinking. Flapping Eagle is an adventure who sets right the muddled Calf Island by resurrecting it without Stone Rose.

Rushdie’s *Grimus* presents us an apprehended mundane. The epitaph from T.S. Eliot’s Four Quartets, “Go, go, go said the bird, human kind cannot bear very much reality” –reveals to us that there is a need for a search for the real among the temporal. Rushdie fits in a story about the Angel and God which is the most seminal to the novel. In the myth God wants to be replaced by the Angel and the Angel in turn awaits his own deliver. Flapping Eagle feels the complex effect of de-realizing of routine common sense world together with the evoking of a reality that lies hidden among the unrealities. The reality is sought because it is to confront the spirit with the necessity of supreme decision of the ultimate choice and so give a meaning to life.

In European literature India has never ceased to be a fascinating topic. Even a genre such as Anglo-Indian literature, which in the past has been and even now-a-days may be somewhat problematic for historical reason has survived. The strongly emerging Indo-

Anglian literature has for a very long time found its identity. It is not generally familiar with Indian languages. Indo-Anglian writing has through the English language, facilitated access to a body of modern and contemporary Indian literature. The West is increasingly becoming aware of the emergence of a national and international literature in its own right which opens up fascinating the differentiated images of India. This development has been going on for quite some time and aficionados in the West have been familiar with Indian literature in English for very long and have always been impressed by its originality and scope. They have been intrigued and baffled by what is generally called 'Indianness'. Critics, scholars and lovers of Indian literature were inevitably led to deepen their knowledge of and develop affinities for Indian writing through English.

Indian writers like Mulk Raj Anand, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Nirad Chaudhury, Anita Desai, Manohar Malgonkar, Kamala Markandaya, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao and Nissim Ezekiel to make a random and certainly incomplete little list, all those writers have gained national and international reputation and have to a certain extent even been translated into European languages other than English. From the literary critics and scholars point of view it may be too early to make definite and long lasting, let alone objective, observations on the new comment of Indo-Anglian writing. Salman Rushdie and it is perhaps no exaggeration to say that unexpected and overwhelming changes in Western attitude towards India and Indian literature were brought about by the sensational publication of Rushdie's novel 'Midnight's Children' in 1981. With the publication of *Midnight's Children* it was clear that a rare thing had happened. It was something like a Copernican turning point in the history of literature and of ideas. One thing he cannot be denied: the world-wide, almost unanimous enthusiastic acclaim of 'Midnight's Children' and two years later in 1983 of his novel 'Shame' is a very rare and sensational phenomenon. Rushdie's sensational and triumphal success in the English speaking world found its contain in West Germany. Reviews and articles in daily papers and in weekly literary supplements are usually first impressions and immediate reactions to newly released publications on the book market. The assessment of Salman Rushdie will in the future assume different proportions but even this is mere speculation.

No doubt that Salman Rushdie is a cosmopolitan and an international writer. He is at home in the East and in the West and the two profoundly different cultures have undeniably conditioned his identity and his writings. He is an outsider, a deracine. In several interviews this problematic question of identity has been mentioned. The normally negative connotations associated with such a situation obviously worry Rushdie very little. He has variably stressed the positive and optimistic aspects of his cosmopolitan footing which enables him to broaden and differentiate his world view. To intensify his awareness of Indian reality and from his somewhat detached view point, throw into more poignant relief the historical, the social, the political problems of his countries. One should say, namely India and Pakistan and the human, the existential predicaments of the individual. Rushdie has variably stressed that Western and Eastern literary tradition should by no means be regarded as infidelity towards

one's own cultural heritage but as a broadening of horizons, abridging of gaps. He has expressed Indo-Anglian literature as a cross-cultural phenomenon.

For the Western critic and reviewer the international part of Indo-Anglian writing is the *since qua non* for accessibility. It applies both to the English language and to the Western literary traditions. There is hardly a review that the Western and the German reception have primarily concentrated on. A review of refrains from comparisons with literary ancestors and relatives of Rushdie in the West. This is not meant as derogatory disqualification of the author's originality. Critics very often place him amongst first-rack writers of International reputation, above all Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Gunter Grass. The central theme with Grass and with Rushdie is not social criticism but the presentation of certain phases of history in the course of which the world and human nature have undergone radical and irrevocable changes. The author creates a fictional world which is highly symbolic and historical reality. In India and in Europe the phenomenon of all pervading inhumanity and absurdity can imaginatively only be dealt with historiography from grotesque and absurdist point of view. This technique is narrated with Saleem Sinai as well as with Oskar Mazwerath, a peeping Tom who is all the time and everywhere present as an eye-witness. Saleem Sinai's gradual amputations is symbolic for the loss of freedom, sanity and individuality in modern man. Saleem Sinai is basically much more of a compassionate moralist than Oskar Mazerath. Rushdie's world, his fictional setting is the big city, an environment where cosmopolitanism is unavailable. It makes for modernity for topicality and highlights a facet of India and 'Indianness' which in Indo-Anglian writing. This is associated with the eternal rural, immutable, the real India.

Sibylle Cramper equates Saleem Sinai with India herself. This metaphor where an individual consciousness and the body politic are conceived as one indivisible whole, is basically the way of thinking of mythologist. Saleem Sinai's creative act of writing under the aegis of his Muse Padma, is at the same time the genesis of a continent. The complexity and the stratification of several layers of reality in the fictional world of Mitternachtskinder leads Lea Sarkar to the observation that the novel is a modernist work of art. The modernist concept takes into consideration the revolutionary changes in the history of European novel since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Rushdie himself has an expression for the specifically Indian 'mania' to grasp and embrace the whole of reality. This reality for Saleem Sinai is in constant dynamic motion: "the different parts of my somewhat complicated life refuse, with a wholly unreasonable obstinacy."

*Midnight's Children* gives us the impression of a vast ambitious work in which the author's intentions and devices are at cross-purposes. The protagonist strikes one as not only preternaturally clever but also as impish, omniscient and an incredible human being. Saleem Sinai intended to be Rushdie's fictional alter ego and an allegorical representation of India's Independence and the life of Saleem is really the history of that Independence. Saleem like Rushdie, having been born at the precious hour, Saleem Sinai is a highly self-

conscious narrator. He is by turns aggressive, coy, strident, subtly, fatalistic, rebellious, finical and grave. The dominant mood of the novel seems to oscillate between the apocalyptic and expansive. Saleem is maddening keeping his interlocutrice Padma, on the tenterhooks, being dilatory in revealing his parentage. He is pouring a long narrative out all at one go in breathless haste in large paragraphs without any full stops. Padma described by Saleem as “the lotus goddess, whose most common appellation amongst village folk is ‘The One who Possessed Dung’, is also his artistic conscience. She pulls him up whenever he appears to be straying.” Saleem is confident about his virtuosity as story teller.

Rushdie is obliged to invest his narrator protagonist with Superman vision and extraordinary powers of thought-reading in order to make his omniscient accounts of a dozen different lives as well as the life of the nation credible as coining from a single witness. Saleem is intensely conscious about the impact of his narrative on listeners. From the beginning Rushdie maintains a continuous effort at synchronizing national and domestic life. On the day the World War ended, Saleem developed the longed for headache. Such historical coincidences have littered, and perhaps befouled. *Midnight's Children* is essentially an autobiography of Saleem Sinai, but simultaneously it is the history of India during the period of the action. It contains within it some significant political events that occurred between 1947 and 1978. It gives a fairly authentic history of contemporary India in the matter of facts, but its interpretation of history is not always reliable. Forty five years ago, the independent nation of India and Salman Rushdie were born within eight weeks of one another. Rushdie came first. This became the germ of the novel ‘Midnight's Children’ in which not just one child, but one thousand and one children born in the mid-night hour of freedom. This random recreation of the political history of India is connected to the personal history of Saleem Sinai. There are a number of inaccuracies in ‘Midnight's Children’. Saleem Sinai makes a number of references which are erroneous. According to Saleem, the brand of cigarettes, State Express 555, is manufactured by W.D. and H.O. Wills. *Midnight's Children* is a novel of memory. The protagonist is remembering constantly and one of the simplest truths about any set of memories is that many of them will be false. Rushdie says that he has a clear memory of having been in India during the war of China. In ‘Midnight's Children’, he tries to recapture the city of Bombay, his erstwhile home, and its surroundings. He is gripped with the conviction that he, too, had a city and a history to reclaim. Before beginning ‘Midnight's Children’ he spent many months trying simply to recall as much of the Bombay of the nineteen fifties and sixties as he could. He was genuinely amazed by the fact that he could recollect a great deal of the past. He found himself what clothes people had worn on certain days and school scenes and whole passages of school dialogue. He even remembered advertisements, film posters, toothpaste ads etc.

Histories, according to many post-colonial works, ‘a yarn’, told by the ones who have the power to be heard. Truth is nothing more than a cultural definition or acceptance and while all cultures define themselves in relation to others. The important question in constructing History becomes one of identifying which culture has the military, political

and economic power to spread its own definition most effectively. Independent nations that were once colonized find themselves in a unique position. Though the piece of land may remain constant before and after an independence movement, natives and imperialists perceive the significance of that land and the nature of the events that have taken place there simultaneously but not identically. Like revolutionaries who now must redefine an acceptable form of authority while questioning the work ability of any form of government.

Of the legends that contribute to the history of a post-colonial nation, it sometimes seems that all are true and none is reliable. The post-colonial author must convey this paradox effectively within what is essentially, just another legend. Magic realism often results since fantasy becomes a virtual necessity when representing the meshing of two cultures, because at least two separate realities, both of which are relevant and neither of which is completely accurate work simultaneously. Fantasy, according to Rushdie, is an effective way of dealing with problems of less compatible societies. The use of fantasy may also be helpful in creating a distance from actuality, which would make things less offensive. Perceiving interconnection between reality and fantasy, Eric Rabkin has pointed out that the fantastic “reveals not only our deepest fears, but also our greatest aspiration; not only our hidden shames, but also our finest hopes.”

Occasional trips to the dream world are, according to Rushdie, an essential part of our essence: “Given the gift of self-consciousness, we can dream versions of ourselves, new selves for old. Waking as well as sleeping, our response to the world is essentially imaginative.”

## **Argument**

A distinction must be made here between the conscious use of history and its sub-conscious presentation. The setting of most novel is in the context of some historical frame work unless the novelist willfully places his action in an imaginary locale hoping to highlight a special metaphysical or political point of view. A pertinent question that arises is the relevance of history in a work of art. As a matter of fact, historical sense and reality enter into the sphere of art imperceptibly. They are important factors in determining the ultimate value of art. The intellectuals, be they philosophers, historians or literary artists, have traditionally played significant roles in all national revolutions of the world. Not only do they reach the minds of the people through their writings, they also subject every institution of the society to a specific political philosophy. One thing, however, cannot be denied : the world-wide, almost unanimous enthusiastic acclaim of ‘Midnight’s Children’ and ‘Gimur’.

## **Conclusion**

Rushdie’s narrative technique has a great deal in common. The special decorum that the non-fiction novel imposes upon the authors renders much of the grotesquerie of Midnight’s Children – its frequent Rabelaisian or sneeciftian excursions into the bawdy or the merely revolution as satirical weapons – not only understandable but wholly acceptable.

The interaction between fiction and the film would seem to deserve a volume of itself. But it may not be long before some talented director, taking the cue from Rushdie, discovers the filmic possibilities of *Midnight's Children* and sets about filming it. The novel, one and all, is political without politics and historical without history in real sense. The general feeling of loss and retreat and the new political constellation of a common wealth of Nations may have been reasons for suppressed nostalgia on the one hand, but also for a new political orientation on the part of the West on the other.

In the course of this process the historically incriminated past lingered on a perpetuated feelings of sentimental nostalgia, delicacy in contacts, and touchiness. Specially I have given much more focus to his cultural, historical perspective in the term of human love, sympathy and fellow feeling without any imaginary lines of culture and estheticise. His innovative idea on magic realism gives a new moment of literature for times to come. To conclude, the world is one, in which anything is more that likely to happen; in which almost everything does happen. The most delightful, most atrocious, most ludicrous things, it is a world of magic and reality of sweet day-dreams and shivering awakenings of delicate poetry and brutal horse – play. It is a world in which all the senses feast riotously, upon sights and sounds and perfumes; upon fruits and flowers and jewels; upon wines and staffs and sweets upon yielding flesh, both male and female, whose beauty is incomparable. It is a world of eternal fairy tale and there is no resisting its enchantment'. ■

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# Feminist Reinterpretations of Myth in the Works of Margaret Atwood and Jeanette Winterson

Sudipta Pandey

The feminist retelling of myths in Atwood's and Winterson's writings is the focus of this study. The works of Atwood, Winterson, and *Circe/Mud Poems* are the primary targets of the inquiry, along with *Frankenstein* and *Weight* by Winterson. The study delves into the ways in which the writers challenge gender stereotypes, critique patriarchal structures, and provide a voice to women by reimagining old mythological stories. Through their reimaginings of classic characters like Penelope, Circe, Atlas, and Heracles, Atwood and Winterson provide new perspectives that highlight the strength, independence, and fight for gender equality throughout history. This study analyses the narrative strategies employed by Atwood and Winterson, drawing from feminist literary theory. Subverting stereotypical roles, using narrative voice changes, and intertextuality are all examples of such techniques. Evidence suggests that these approaches have the potential to shake up existing power structures, opening the door to questions about sexism in legendary narratives. Their works are examined further as literary acts of activism through the lens of feminist critique that uses myth reinterpretation to address contemporary social issues related to gender, identity, and power. The research zeroes down on the ways in which their works function as literary protest. This study sheds light on the broader ramifications of feminist myth-making by showing how the stories of Atwood and Winterson challenge long-held beliefs about gender and culture while simultaneously generating fresh perspectives on these topics. Scholarly work on feminist myth-making has benefited greatly from this. Based on the findings, it is concluded that feminist myth revisions provide a paradigm for reform that restores narrative to include marginalized perspectives. This exemplifies the relevance of reimagining the past to shape the contemporary and future cultural environment.

**Key Words:-** feminist, reinterpretation, myths

## INTRODUCTION

Stories have their roots in mythology, which have been around for a very long period. It sheds light on societal institutions, cultural norms, and human nature. From their earliest days as oral traditions, myths have mirrored patriarchal values. In addition to excluding women's perspectives, they often perpetuate rigid gender norms. This led to the

development of feminist reinterpretations of myth as an effective literary device. Contemporary authors are able to challenge conventional wisdom and address the pervasive sexism in ancient tales through these reinterpretations. Notable voices contributing to this reworking of mythological frameworks include Jeanette Winterson and Margaret Atwood, two famous authors whose works offer alternative viewpoints that emphasize on female agency and empowerment and strongly criticize patriarchy.

Margaret Atwood and Jeanette Winterson are famous for more than only their feminist beliefs; they're also famed for the complex plots that include mythology, history, and contemporary issues. By reimagining biblical and ancient stories, Atwood draws attention to the subjugation of women and the interplay between power and control in her works. While exploring themes like sexuality, identity, and freedom, Winterson frequently uses stories from the past and the present to undermine traditional gender binary classifications. Both writers use mythological themes to construct stories, but they also use them to critique patriarchal values and tear them down.

Mythology has always played a significant role in human civilization, capturing the essence of people's deepest fears, hopes, and worries. Rather than being retold from generation to generation, myths continue to have an impact on modern values and worldviews. For a long time, patriarchal beliefs have dominated these stories, and women have often been shown as helpless, evil, or supporting roles. Whether it's Pandora's silent misery or the Sirens' lethal allure, female characters in ancient stories are often reduced to tropes that uphold sexist standards. Several perspectives can be taken into account here. This sexist perspective has permeated society at large, influencing ideas about gender and power dynamics outside the realm of literature. Feminist readings of literary theory provide a fertile ground for rethinking and subverting myths.

Through reimagining these traditional stories, feminist writers are fighting patriarchal narratives' cultural dominance and giving women a voice again. Among the most prominent figures in this literary movement are Jeanette Winterson and Margaret Atwood. In their works, they delve into themes like resistance, gender, power, and identity via the lens of mythology. Classical and biblical narratives are reimagined by these artists to highlight the feminine experience, challenge male supremacy, and delve into the complexities of human identity beyond traditional gender norms. By reimagining these myths through the lens of female experience, their works provide ground-breaking new readings of these stories. Atwood and Winterson employ distinctive storytelling styles to show how myths may be adopted to further feminist aims. By analysing patriarchal ideas and myths via Atwood's witty and occasionally incisive prose, we can see the inherent biases and provide alternative perspectives that strengthen female characters. Seasoned with lyricism and experimentation, Winterson's art questions the traditional mythological stories that have persisted over time by dismantling gender binary and exploring the flexibility of identity and desire. By combining their voices, these writers do more than just debunk long-held myths; they create ground-breaking new stories that speak to the issues facing modern feminists.

Margaret Atwood's 2006 novel *The Penelopiad* and Jeanette Winterson's 2006 novel *Weight* are two works of contemporary female literature. This research looks at how these two authors' modern fictions relate to ancient mythology. The literary works under consideration make use of mythical characters such as Penelope, Odysseus, the Twelve Maids, Atlas, and Heracles. Jungian archetypes like scapegoat, trickster, rebirth, and shadow are embodied by these characters. Both novellas by Atwood and Winterson reimagine traditional tales and Jungian archetypes in a way that highlights the relevance of these ideas to contemporary human culture and society.

*The Penelopiad* and *Weight*, two novellas by Atwood and Winterson, respectively, reimagine and dismantle the classic stories. As a sardonic nod to the past, the writers of these two novellas bring to life the stories of ancient figures who had hitherto been silent. Atwood and Winterson purposefully emphasize the persistence of myths as crucial representational systems that continue to influence modern culture and literature through their use of famous tales. Thus, the novellas' intricate frameworks not only allude to the many archetype forms, but they also highlight the relevance and validity of archetypal critique in contemporary literature and culture.

A mythic awareness may need to persist if we are to have any sense of meaning in the world at all: the configuration within which human life can most fundamentally be understood as falling ... may in the end need to be understood as a matter not of scientific order but of a poetic order which is inherently mythic (Falck 1994: 119).

According to Falck, the study of myths in literature leads to the formation of a mythological consciousness, which in turn provides significance to our lives. This is due to the fact that myths offer a framework that may be utilized for the purpose of analyzing and comprehending personal and societal narratives through the utilization of archetypal trends. Tales from mythology and works of literature that contain myths both reflect and project ideas about mankind, society, and the individual, as well as attitudes toward nature, birth, death, life, and love. Myths are a part of both of these categories.

Therefore, stories and archetypes play a key role in both *Weight* and *The Penelopiad* as representations of the gender roles and attitudes that people naturally experience. This is because both stories are based on true stories. In addition to this, they are symbols of the standards and ideals that people hold in high respect when it comes to society. The Jungian archetypes of scapegoat, shadow, trickster, and rebirth are investigated in these novellas, which exist within the context of contemporary literary and cultural concepts. The purpose of this endeavour is to dive further into the "individuation" process of modern man as a whole, not simply the individuals that are featured in the novellas only. "individuation" is characterized as "the process by which a person becomes a psychological 'individual,' that

is, a separate, indivisible unity or ‘whole’” As a consequence of this study, Jung’s (1955: 275) assertion that the primary purpose of these two novellas is to demonstrate that the purpose of human life is to achieve completeness via the discovery of one’s own inner knowledge is supported by the findings of this academic investigation. In order to acquire such an inner understanding, one must first go on a trip that will lead them to the very heart of their own brain. Readers go through the same process as the characters in the novellas as they unknowingly fulfil this journey. This is accomplished by connecting with the legendary figures and becoming aware of the existence of archetypes such as the scapegoat, trickster, rebirth, and shadow in their own lives and civilizations. The mythical characters of *The Penelopiad* and *Weight* play the part of a “shadow” of modern man, symbolizing our anxieties, insecurities, and other components of our personalities that are kept concealed from view. When we confront our inner psyche head-on, we open the door to the possibility of integrating ourselves into a completely functional whole. The significance of myths and archetypes in the process of growing into one’s own identity is emphasized here.

through this process of individuation one has to enter his unconscious part of psyche and encounter with a number of forces and images which Jung calls archetypes (Sophia 2010: 75).

This is why this study is intellectually motivated by the idea of rebirth, shadow, trickster, and scapegoat as they pertain to Jungian archetypes in *The Penelopiad* and *Weight*. The focus of this archetypal study is myth, with its distinctive representational system that has had and will have future impacts on literature and society. Myths are timeless tales that reflect and impact our existence, as underlined in the Paratexts of both *The Penelopiad* (2006) and *Weight* (2006). Stories that remind us of our humanity are found in myths, which explore our desires, fears, and longings.

Also, one of the main goals of this study is to look into what it is about myths that makes them so popular all over the world and keeps them alive in contemporary literature and society. Myth and mythical thinking will be defined in the first chapter of this research, along with the effects of mythical thinking on cultural evolution. To make sure the study covers all the bases, this will be done.

The first book in the *Myths* series was published in 2005 by Canongate Publishing House. Canongate aspires to unite several renowned writers, all of whom have retold old stories from modern perspectives, offering new insights. “The Myth is a long term global publishing project where some of the world’s most respected authors re-tell myths in a manner of their own choosing” (About The stories), according to the series’ official website. You may find this information on the website’s section dedicated to the series. Authors such as ASByatt, Karen Armstrong, Margaret Atwood, Jeanette Winterson, Milton Hatoum, Natsuo Kirino, Alexander McCall Smith, Tomás Eloy Martínez, Victor Pelevin, Ali Smith, Su Tong, Dubravka Ugresic, and Salley Vickers have all made contributions to this series. His main

sources for this research are the novellas “The Penelopiad” by Margaret Atwood and “Weight” by Jeanette Winterson, which tell the stories of Penelope, Odysseus, and Atlas and Heracles, respectively. There is widespread agreement that these two writers rank high among America’s literary giants.

Although this time it is written from Penelope’s point of view, the *Penelopiad* recounts the story of Odysseus’ returned. Like the first example, *Weight* is a modern take on the tale of Atlas and Heracles. Both novellas use the Jungian archetypes of scapegoat, shadow, trickster, and rebirth in rather similar ways while retelling the classic legends. Atwood and Winterson are essentially analyzing our modern knowledge of archetypes via reworking and altering the ancient stories and archetypes within current literary and social settings. The examination of ancient archetypes, which are thought of as a “common psychic substrate of a suprapersonal nature which is present in every one of us” (Jung 1955: 4), gives the readers a consensus view of contemporary reality. The literary and social context of the time is used for this purpose.

(As stated in Margaret Atwood’s 2013 book “In Other Worlds: Science Fiction and the Human Imagination”)

The novel proper has always laid claim to a certain kind of truth- the truth about human nature, or how people really behave with all their clothes on except in the bedroom- that is under observable social conditions

But in *Weight* and *The Penelopiad*, we see ancient people barefoot, liberated from the “boundaries and the limitations of the ancient epic story world” (Steals: 2009: 101), confronting their unconscious and shadow sides. Readers are liberated from their assumptions and prior knowledge about classic tales in the same way that heroes of yesteryear are liberated from the confines of their fanciful homelands. A mythological consciousness can be fostered in new literary contexts through the debunking and rewriting of old myths. The recent advances in our knowledge of the mind have brought this insight to light, which arises from a deeper necessity to rethink cultural and individual identities. While arguing in “Anatomy of Criticism,” Northrop Frye states:

[myth] serves to connect the collective unconscious with man’s self in the modern world.  
Myths are transcendent in nature and explore the psychic residue in man’s consciousness.

This study of ancient myths reimagined in a contemporary literary context brings the age-old topic of the connection between literary creativity and specific, deeply ingrained human tendencies and impulses back into the spotlight, an area that archetypal criticism has long sought to illuminate.

Academic study in cultural anthropology and psychology forms the backbone of archetypal critique's theoretical infrastructure. A person's mental and psychological traits can be better understood by delving into myths and archetypes. In a similar vein, archetypes and myths are considered as symbolic representations of an individual's characteristics, including his beliefs, values, aspirations, fears, and overall character. This is related to the idea that dreams represent our deepest desires and anxieties. In other words, archetypes are the "first and foremost psychic phenomena that reveal the nature of the soul" (Jung 1955: 6), according to Jung's study on archetypes and their manifestations. Thus, this study's theoretical foundation rests on Jung's work on archetypes, including Jungian archetypes like shadow, trickster, and scapegoat, and his idea of individuation.

It is of paramount importance to employ historical archetypes within the confines of our contemporary literary and cultural traditions. It is stressed in the paratexts of *Weight* and *The Penelopiad* that people become estranged from their roots when they rely too much on reason. "Our intellect has accomplished the most incredible things, but in the meantime, our spiritual dwelling has fallen into despair" (Jung 1955: 16), which is all down to this. Examining how archetypes are understood in connection to modern man in the literary and social contexts in which we find ourselves is crucial if we are to grasp the spiritual truth of the here and now.

## **OBJECTIVE OF THE SYUDY**

1. To Examine Jeanette Winterson's and Margaret Atwood's feminist reimaginings of myth in their respective works.
2. To Delve into the role of myth reinterpretation as a tool for literary activism and feminist literature criticism.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Atwood's *The Penelopiad* (2018) highlights the undervalued heroine in comparison to her husband, Odysseus, and provides a compelling feminist retelling of Homer's *Odyssey* through the perspective of Penelope. Milne (2019) is one of the scholars that highlights Atwood's reversal of ancient heroes and how her portrayal of Penelope as a powerful and resourceful heroine challenges the patriarchal notion of feminine passivity in myth. The narrative technique that Atwood uses, as stated by Milne (2019, pages 45–59), does more than merely restore Penelope's voice; it also raises issues about the systematic oppression of women throughout the course of history. For the purpose of presenting Milne's thesis, the narrative approach is utilized.

*Circe/Mud Poems* (2020) Here we see more evidence of Atwood's exploration of female autonomy by retelling legendary themes. Although Circe is usually depicted as a fearsome witch, Atwood presents her as a complex figure who faces the challenges of power and desire in a male-dominated society. As pointed out by Wisker (2020, pp. 115-131), Atwood's depiction of Circe exemplifies her broader literary goal of reimagining

mythological female characters in a way that celebrates their strength and independence rather than perpetuating harmful stereotypes.

Winterson's *Weight* (2014) Through the narrative of Atlas and Heracles, the author investigates topics like as personal freedom, resistance, and burden. In this instance, the myth is shown in this manner. Winterson deconstructs the conventional male-centric narrative by depicting Atlas and Heracles as individuals who are coping with emotional and existential problems. This is something that Sheckels (2020) points out. Sheckels contends that Winterson's retelling of myth serves as a feminist critique, and she does so by pointing out that inflexible gender standards and the adoration of male heroes are both the subject of her criticism. The writings of Winterson, as stated by Sheckels (2020, pages 1-12), offer a sophisticated study of strength that takes into account fragility.

*Frankissstein* (2019), A modern adaptation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* incorporates aspects of AI, gender inclusivity, and the ethics of creation. According to Glover (2021), Winterson challenges gender, identity, and humanity binaries through her use of the creation story. When it comes to the nature of humanity's connection to gender, this is consistent with broader queer and feminist theoretical positions. According to Glover (2021, pp. 89-103), *Frankissstein* is an important piece of feminist fiction because Winterson uses myth and modern technology to critique current concerns about power and gender.

Cooke (2018) seeks to understand how Atwood challenges patriarchal structures embedded in traditional myths through her examination of gender reimagining in her mythological stories. According to Cooke (2018, pp. 123–135), Atwood's feminist reimagining challenges and alters traditional beliefs in order to provide a broader understanding of gender roles. You may find Cooke's reasoning in his paper.

Wilson (2019) compares and contrasts the works of Atwood and Winterson, focusing on how they both use myth to explore gender and power dynamics. According to Wilson, both authors challenge societal conventions and conventional gender roles by using mythological frameworks. Because of this, their writings are important to the feminist canon of retelling ancient stories (Wilson, 2019, pp. 178–192).

Rooney (2021) This article explores Atwood's and Winterson's feminist revisionist myth-making in further detail, focusing on how their reimagined stories question the cultural supremacy of myths focused on men. According to Rooney, these new readings not only shake up the conventional wisdom about mythological women, but they also give rise to stories that mirror contemporary feminist ideals (Rooney, 2021, pages 211-227).

### **Myths and the Functions they serve in the works of Feminist Authors**

With the purpose of studying and altering cultural myths that have historically oppressed women, feminist literature mainly depends on the reinterpretation of legendary tales as a method. There is a unique chance for writers to dive into the complex power

dynamics that exist inside a civilization, and this opportunity is provided by the deeply embedded myths that exist throughout that community. The purpose of feminist reinterpretations of myth is to save these stories from being relegated to a canon that is dominated by men. This is accomplished by their singular points of view, which reflect the wide range of difficulties and experiences that women go through throughout their lives.

Through their skilful utilization of myth, Atwood and Winterson have provided venues for female conversation, which is a great accomplishment. The *Penelopiad* and *Circe/Mud Poems* are two examples of Atwood's writings that explore the reinterpretation of Greek mythology through the lens of female characters. The authors of these works contend that the experiences of women have been obscured by narratives that are controlled by males. A couple of Winterson's works, including *Weight* and *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, are examples of works that include elements of mythology and fairy tales. In these works, conventional narratives are called into question, and the dichotomous concepts of heterosexuality and homosexuality are viewed as potentially problematic. These reimaginings are used by both authors to challenge the underlying misogyny that is present in traditional myths. They both advocate for more varied and inclusive understandings of the human experience.

Adrienne Rich, Hélène Cixous, and Luce Irigaray are examples of feminist literary theorists that have emphasized the need of reinventing myth, literature, and history through the perspective of a female perspective. According to Rich's idea of "re-vision," it is advised that female authors should reread and reinterpret earlier stories in order to bring to light female voices that had not been heard before. Cixous's concept of *écriture féminine*, which embraces the flexibility of language and identity, asks for a literary style that contradicts the rules of patriarchy. In their writings, Atwood and Winterson are able to communicate feminist concerns and undermine patriarchal standards through the process of recreating myths with their characters. They have constructed their work on the basis of these theoretical frameworks.

The conventional depictions of women as submissive or malevolent characters are challenged by Atwood and Winterson's rewriting of mythology, which presents women as being multifaceted and capable of navigating their own lives. Through the use of female protagonists, they shift the focus of the story, so revealing the gendered dynamics that are present in traditional myths and questioning the cultural traditions that continue to perpetuate the oppression of women. This is one manner in which the gendered interactions that are present in traditional myths may be observed. This subversion of patriarchal storytelling, which interrupts normal narratives, provides readers with fresh insights into gender roles and how they are produced. These new insights are made available to readers. Atwood and Winterson, via their feminist reinterpretations, bring back the concept of myth as a place where authority and transformation may take place.

## Myths re-examined via Margaret Atwood's Feminist Lens

Margaret Atwood's broader critique of gender inequality and the power structures that affect human interactions heavily informs her stance on reinterpreting mythology. In her 2005 contemporary book, *The Penelopiad*, Atwood revisits the tale of Odysseus's faithful wife Penelope from Homer's *Odyssey*. Through a feminist lens, the story of Penelope—a figure often portrayed as a model of patience and faithfulness—is reanalysed, shedding light on the complexities of her character and the injustices she endures even now. Atwood uses her work to highlight the plight of Penelope and her maids, who were killed by Odysseus upon his homecoming, and to offer Penelope a voice. Cultural norms that devalue women's experiences, the effects of male aggressiveness, and suppressed female voices are the main topics of this retelling.

By focusing on the enchantress Circe—typically depicted in Greek mythology as a cruel seductress—Atwood's *Circe/Mud Poems* delves further into the concept of feminine marginalization. By giving the reader Circe's perspective, Atwood investigates the ways in which women's sexuality and power contribute to their stigmatization. Her new take on the narrative questions the status quo by showing Circe as a complex, self-reliant woman whose acts are driven by her own ambitions and life experiences rather than only a reaction to the male heroes in the story. By showing female characters as multifaceted individuals negotiating a patriarchal society, Atwood undermines the binary opposition of good and bad women. She accomplishes this by exposing the false dichotomy between good and evil female characters.

### The Work of Jeanette Winterson: Questioning Conventions and Dismantling Myths

Jeanette Winterson explores gender, sexuality, and identity via her experimental work, which combines elements of myth, magic realism, and postmodernism. Dismantling heteronormative frameworks and altering gender roles are common themes in Winterson's interactions with legendary narratives. In her 2005 novel *Weight*, a retelling of the story of Atlas and Heracles, Winterson challenges the traditional depiction of heroic men. She delves into topics like vulnerability, resistance, and burden in this book. She sees Atlas as a symbol of defiance and persistence in the face of an unfair fate, rather than merely a figure meant to sustain the heavens.

By adding a feminist lens to the story, Winterson emphasizes the importance of perseverance and the strength of individual choice.

Although it is not a simple narrative retelling, Winterson's (1985) *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* challenges societal norms on gender and sexuality through its heavy use of mythological and fairy tale elements. Jeanette, the protagonist, faces the challenges of coming of age in a very conservative religious community while simultaneously grappling with her own lesbian identity. Winterson uses symbolism and allegory to question the inherent duality of gender, good and evil, and the ordinary and the abnormal. While doing so, Winterson

weaves themes from legendary tales throughout the plot. By subverting these outdated dichotomies, Winterson not only challenges the rigid norms that govern sexuality and gender, but she also celebrates the multiplicity and fluidity of human identity.

### **Rethinking Feminist Views as Resistance Activists**

Feminist readings of myth in Atwood's and Winterson's works may be seen as defiance of dominant cultural narratives that have long oppressed women and other disadvantaged people. Women and other oppressed groups have traditionally been portrayed in these narratives. Reclaiming these myths is a form of literary activism that both of these authors are participating in. Through narrative, they are questioning patriarchal ideas and envisioning new ways women might be empowered. Myths may be reclaimed and rewritten in a way that serves to both critique and inspire new perspectives on the world. The reclaiming and rewriting of mythology is the reason behind this.

The power of narrative to challenge established norms and shift cultural perspectives is emphasized in the writings of Atwood and Winterson. Their retellings of myths show how these stories may be changed to reflect contemporary feminist issues, which is a testament to how relevant these stories are. Works by Atwood and Winterson redefine the potential of myth, provide a voice to the voiceless, and empower the underprivileged, all of which contribute to their enduring popularity. This encourages introspection and helps people learn more about gender roles in the past and the present.

### **CONCLUSION**

The goal of this study is to put light on how Margaret Atwood and Jeanette Winterson use mythical stories to criticize male systems and fight for equal rights for women. To achieve this goal, we will analyze how each author's works features feminist reinterpretations of myth. Atwood and Winterson question the traditional portrayals of women in their reimaginings of classic stories. They offer new stories that respect women's agency and break the binary models that have been used for a long time to describe gender roles. Reading their works compels people to question, challenge, and ultimately change the beliefs that shape our worldview. They have shown, via their writings that literature can be a vehicle for feminist ideology. ■

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# Anita Desai's *In Custody*: A Transition from Escapism to Realism

Srujanika Sethy  
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Anita Desai is the pioneer of psychological novels in modern Indian English literature. The most prominent aspect of her art is the delineation of character. She depicts female characters that live in separate, closed and sequestered world of existential problems and passions with a remarkable ease and adoration. In the present novel she emphasizes on male character. For her, the quest for truth consists in the life of the mind and soul – the inner life and in the life of the body – the outer life. She is least concerned with the ordinary traditional notion of reality. For her it is the depth which is interesting, delving deeper and deeper in a character, situation or a scene rather than going round about it. *In Custody*, “strictly a dialogue”, deals with an important issue namely, the politics of language. Desai, a lover of Urdu, expresses her distress over the breakdown of a pluralistic multicultural society. A college lecturer's adoration of a poet and his poetry is the central issue of the novel, *In Custody*. Deven the idolater and Nur is the idol. From time out of mind, artists have held generations of admirers ‘in thrall’. Desai explores this facet of the human psyche in the present work providing it depth. Meenakshi Mukherjee opines that her language is marked by three characteristics: sensuous richness, a high-strung sensitiveness and a love for the sound of words. This paper aims at examining the special identity of the novel and how it is a novel of transition from escapism to realism.

**Key Words:** Escapism, Realism, Psychological, Poet, Existential,

## INTRODUCTION

Anita Desai has given a new direction to Indo-English fiction. Desai is not a novelist whose predominant interest is social or sociological. She is obviously not pleased with the achievements of her contemporary Indian women novelists in English in the domain of writing novels. It is because of the fact that they have been content to record and document either social or economic or political issues. But their interest in the psychological aspects of

their characters has been, at its best, generally marginal. Desai has had her credit of writing a number of excellent psychological novels, which she describes as purely subjective.

Anita Desai's thematic range is wider than most of her contemporaries and the treatment of her themes is both insightful and thought provoking. Her chief concern is the complexity of human relationship, particularly man-woman relationship. Her central theme is the existential predicament of individuals which she projects through the problems of self, incompatible couples-acutely sensitive wives, callous and ill-matched husbands in an emotionally disturbed milieu. The major novels of Desai deal with the existential crisis, the existential choice, their dilemmas and commitments.

Her main concern is to incorporate in her theme the psychological stresses, mental sufferings, anxieties and worries experienced by highly sensitive persons confronting a world of tremulous restlessness and uncertain values. In their behavioural temperament they clearly display existential attitude. In an age of social reforms and political upheaval after independence, it is natural that the social world in which the individual has his existence, should receive due emphasis. As a serious thinker, Anita Desai presents her protagonists as individuals struggling hard against the odds and obstacles of a complex society.

Another recurring theme in most of her novels is women's struggle to negotiate the traditional roles of femininity that pervades the patriarchal society of India. Her female protagonists are often portrayed as women who silently rebel against their lot. They are delicately strong who prefer to say Great No' to life and say it also boldly. But they always suffer from existential angst, loneliness, isolation and a growing sense of alienation, and consequently a vacuity of meaning in life. Instead of creating fictional characters who are explicitly feminist in their behaviour and critical in their attitude, Desai creates characters that are complex and ambivalent, and clearly struggle with the limitations which the society imposes on them.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The nineteen nineties has been the most momentous decade for the Indian English novels, which bring about significant changes in literary discourses in spite of the survival of the old and the classical. The third generation (the first and the second being the 'great trio' and their followers) of novelists have produced novels which reflect a new kind of awareness, radically different in thought and attitude from that of the preceding one. They clearly march towards globalization of Indian writing in English, particularly Indian English fiction. Though in some respects the novels of the nineties are continuation of the eighties, they have a futuristic growth too in the matter of technique, theme and the use of English in a decolonized trend. Moreover, in their works, we see feminism, existential agonies of the individuals, and search for identity, regionalism, and communalism, nepotism, post-colonialism and postmodernism. The novelists of the late nineties are different from those of the eighties like Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Shashi Deshpande etc. in respect of their central concern, i.e. the problems of the teenage youth, mainly the

socio-cultural one. The new generation of English novel is free from the craze for modernity and novelty and is concerned with national character and destiny. It makes a diversion from the weird and technique-conscious fiction set by Rushdie. It largely deals with reality, the roots of Indian psyche, family-centred life, generation gap, to be precise about the problems faced by the contemporary youth and the irreparable partitions that have taken place in their consciousness. Indian English novel towards the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century can no longer be confined to resident Indians only. Indian English fiction has a salubrious growth in the recent years. It has brought revolution in the whole range of Indian English literature.

Desai always prefers inner reality to the outer, in shape to outer shape. Her sole purpose is to uncover the truth and convey it through her writing. To her, truth is synonymous with Art, not simply a conventional presentation of reality. Desai succinctly comments on her writing process:

Writing is to me a process of discovering truth, the truth that is nine-tenth of the iceberg that lies submerged beneath the one-tenth visible portion we call reality. Writing is my way of plunging to the depths and exploring the underlying truth. All my writing is an effort to discover, to underline and convey the true significance of things. That is why, in my novels, small objects, passing moods and attitudes acquire a large importance. My novels are no reflections of Indian society, politics or character. They are part of my private effort to seize upon the raw material of life. (Anita Desai Biography)

## DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

*In Custody* is a departure from Anita Desai's earlier novels where the concentration was on the internal consciousness of individual. In *Custody* she depicts a world beyond the individual. This novel has a male protagonist who comes from a lower middle-class family and who seeks to reach out into a wider world in the hope of self-fulfillment. Deven Sharma is a lecturer in Hindi in a college in Mirzapur, a small town near Delhi. He is portrayed as an average man completely lacking in initiative because of his timidity. However, he has literary aspirations and longs for distinction. The conflict between fantasy and reality is one of the themes in the novel. The story revolves round his weaknesses, and his trials and tribulations to become a success. He thinks that life so far has been empty and that "marriage, a family and a job had placed him in (a) cage" (p. 131). He resents the fact that he is chained to the necessity of "earning a livelihood" in order to "support his family". He longs to transcend the "entirely static and stagnant backwaters of his existence" (p. 104) and the liberating event is to be his interviewing the famous Urdu poet Nur Shahjahanabadi. The interview and recording of his memoirs end in a fiasco leaving his literary aspirations crushed. However, these humiliating experiences bring about a sudden change in Deven and he begins to look within to find his own strength and to know his real self.

*In Custody* (1984) marks a departure from her earlier novels in the sense that the protagonist in this novel is not a female but a male. He is Deven and not his wife, Sarla. In *Custody* presents before us a realistic picture of a trapped male character whose wife despises his inability to succeed financially and whose friend, Murad exploits him by casting his selfish ambitions on him. In the novel, Anita Desai reveals again the complicated world of human relationship. She is equally concerned with the simplicity and purity of human relations and with the cunningness and duplicity of human behaviour. In fact, the theme of this novel is different from her earlier novels. This novel challenges the power hierarchies that underlie the politics of language in post-Independence India. There are three major protagonists in this novel -Deven, Nur and Murad, who struggle hard to realize their respective ambitions. Deven, the chief male protagonist has been presented in a different way. Being the son of a school teacher, Deven belongs to a lower middle class family. Socio-economic incidents shape the personality of Deven and mould his psyche. Desai has concentrated more on characters rather than social milieu.

The novel unfolds the story of credulous and worldly Deven Sharma, who is swayed away by an idea of creating a lifetime achievement but is unfortunately defeated by his own helplessness. A temporary lecturer in Hindi in a private mofassil college named Lala Ram Lal College in Mirpur, a suburb of Delhi; Deven is interested in Urdu literature. He dreams up achieving great name and fame in the world of poetry. As the novel opens, his friend Murad, the editor of the Urdu Magazine 'Awaz' requests Deven to interview Nur Shahjehanabadi, a great Urdu poet, for a special number of his forthcoming issue.

The prime characteristics of Deven that attract our attention are his helplessness, humanity, suffering and nobility. As a child, he had watched closely the bitter disappointment of his mother and the apologetic smile of his father for his failure in measuring up to her expectations. It appears that Deven is born to be bullied. He finds neither respect nor consideration from his colleagues, students and neighbors. For the promotion of Urdu poetry, Deven does all possible things. He ignores all the stark realities of life. He lives in a self-created world of idealism, fantasy and illusion. He ignores his household responsibilities for the sake of his ambition.

As a man of defeated vision, Deven understands the sufferings of his wife but the thoughts of his mind are eclipsed by his poetic consciousness. He, therefore, keeps himself at a distance from his wife. Because his wife, Sarala, is stupid and disappointed in her romantically silly notion.

Deven seeks his fulfillment of artistic desire in poetry. Accordingly, Murad advises him to take the interview of the famous Urdu poet, Nur with a promise of publishing it in his literary journal, *Awaz*. Deven always lives in 'ambiguity'. He is ready to interview Nur. When Murad inspires him to associate himself with Nur, he feels excited with happiness. Deven comes to Delhi to meet Nur, but he is disappointed. Then he comes back to Mirpur. Murad with one more trick comes to Mirpur and meets Deven. This time he persuades him

to be the secretary of Nur. Deven succumbs easily to the academic temptations of Murad. Deven arranges a tape recorder on the advice of Murad, as he has to tape the poetic talent of Nur. Deven comes again to Delhi as an interviewer. He again gets disappointed at Nur's house, because of his too much involvement of wine and two wives. He observes "vulgar family quarrel" in his house. His begum has "planted herself in his house like a witch"(124). The house of Nur appears as a brothel to Deven, and it is like a restaurant where wine and dance are rampant:

A loud protest broke out. Another bottle of rum was opened and a fresh drink poured. Someone shouted hilariously, call up women. Let us have women and dance. Let us see whose blood is stilled. Deven jerked up his head to see who could be so crude, so insolent, but Nur was smiling as he shook his head (168).

Evidently, it seems that women and dance since long have overtaken him since long. The occasional flashes of a few lines create an illusory appearance of the poetic skill in him.

Though Deven encounters failure after failure in his life, but finally determines to keep his spirit intact for the promotion and preservation of Nur's poetry. In this way he becomes a custodian of Nur's poetry. Indeed, all of the protagonists of Anita Desai undergo defeatist and negative vision of life but subsequently they develop a will-power to overcome it. Here Deven even acknowledges an unimaginable friendship that has brought him so much pain.

An important theme presented by Anita Desai *In Custody* is that of hero-worship. The poet, Nur is the hero, Deven, Murad the editor of "Awaz", Safiya Begum and the whole rabble of the city of Delhi surrounding him are the worshippers. Nur is praised and admired by them as he is a great creative artist. He has extra-ordinary talent and creative genius. With magnetic power, he can charm anybody of sensibility. The other important theme of the novel is the relationship between the master and his disciples, the poet and his "chelas" who come to learn from him. Deven is the most distinguished among them.

Anita Desai states the theme of Hindi-Urdu rivalry through Murad and Nur. She depicts religious sentiments to awaken the spiritually idle people in India. The descriptions of mosques and temples in Mirpore and of Hindu-Muslim antagonism and riots and the resulting chaos give the thematic depth to the novel. The history of Mirpore also enriches the Muslim background of the story. The material concerns of day-to-day existence and life get the thematic significance in this novel.

In fact, existential tendencies form the core of the novel. As a lecturer, as a husband, as a father and a friend, Deven's existence raises serious one is a trapped creature who has no clues as to how he should place his steps. In his ventures there is a sense of bleakness and opacity which surrounds his state of affairs. In the end of the novel, we see how "he had accepted the gift of Nur's poetry and that meant he was the custodian of Nur's very soul and

spirit. It was no doubt a great distinction. He could not deny or abandon that under any pressure' (204). It is significant to note that Deven's plight is echoed in many modern novels where the protagonists get desolate thought of pulling up in spite of crises.

While Deven allows himself to be trapped in the custody of Nur's poetry, his wife, Sarala opts to be in his custody without being able to realize her aspirations. Thus, both though suffering from marital discord still want to remain "in custody" of hostile forces over which they have no control. Finally, Deven surpasses his personal problems and gains an awareness of the existential problems of man. He accepts the human condition as it is and achieves the existential facet of personality. This shows the transition from escapism to realism.

### CONCLUSION

To sum up, Anita Desai is a great analyst of human mind, a creator of brilliant characters, and an astute interpreter of life. She presents a gallery of vivid and realistic portraits in her novels. When we grasp her characters' psychology we begin to visualize them as humans with their weaknesses and potentialities. Anita Desai is one of the major voices in the modern Indian English fiction. Her vision is confined to life of the cities. External details are few and far between. Wherever such details are given, the plots gain in solidity as in the novels, *Voices in the City*, and *In Custody* or even in *Clear Light of Day*. The dark vacuities of the consciousness and the misty speculations of the mind will give little consolation to the readers, although to many they are interesting enough. Her forte in characterization is the delineation of female protagonists but the present novel is an exceptional. ■

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# Evolution of Transgender from Ancient to Contemporary India

Alpna Poswal  
Arvind Kumar  
Anuj K. Agarwal

The social life of transgender in India is not that easy. Day to day life of such a community is in doldrums. This community confronts a lot of problems like isolation and disdain by the masculine and feminine genders of Indian society. The roots of transgenders are more ancient, evidenced in the Vedas, Puranas and religious manuscripts like Ramayana, Mahabharata and Ardhnareeshwara in Shiv Puran. Sometimes such a community has shown with spiritual power of true words as same as good angel or soul. Balmiki Ramayana imbues that Lord Rama blesses transgender or kinner with boon voice and Shikhandi as transformation in the *Mahabharata*. Medieval and modern histories have also a magnificent depiction of transgender including ancient part of transgenderare discussing with further writing of this paper.

## Introduction

The history of Transgender in India has its ancient origin . We know its community by different names like Hijra, Transgender, Intersex, and Eunuch etc., all are popularly known in India whereas Aravani, Aruvani, and jogappa are some names in Pakistan. Many issues are normal for a community of any nation if it is recognized by different names. As per the Authors' opinion, there are two major genders—male and female but one more gender as third gender draws our attention that have weak or immature organ irrespective of gender. A glance for its existence has been seenduring the Delhi Sultanate (1206-1526) and Mughal (1526-1707) but the roots of its community are much more ancient, many examples have been seen in Indian religious texts. For this concern, Dr. C. K. Gariyan, a retired IAS officer illustrates history of transgender in her book title *Transgender In India: Achievers and Survivors*:

Indian society has recognized the third gender from ancient times in some way or the other. They have been addressed variously as ThrityaPravartis, Shiv- Shaktis, Kinnars, Jogtas or Hijras. None of these names were

considered derogatory. The ancient Indian language, Sanskrit is also a rare language to recognise the presence of third gender in society.

The Transgender lives in organized communities led by a leader. Indian society or major community of any nation separates the community of transgender who are marginalised with a complete sense of rejection and abomination, has been looked at them only for sex purposes from generation to generation.

The word "Hijra" is a Hindustani origin, "eunuch or hermaphrodite" into English translation. However, other people from different societies think negatively about transgender, a difference between both communities remain permanently from ancient to modern. Nirvaan is an initiation rite for some transgenders who has to pass under the tough and painful activity as the removal of the penis, scrotum and testicles.

Since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, some transgenders from non-government organization have received a label of another name as "third gender" or third sex, neither complete man nor woman biologically. In India the Supreme Court in April 2014 has focused on transgender, Hijras, Eunuchs, and Intersex people and placed them in separate category as "Third Gender" in law.

### **Transgender People from Ancient India: A depiction in Religious Manuscript and Epic**

We have an example from Shiv Purana in which Lord Shiva appears in both human forms (Man and Woman) known as the name of Ardhnareeshwara who is treated and worshipped like God. Both human forms of Lord Shiva present a sense of equality not a matter of gender bias.



**Ardhnareeshwara**

In the *Mahabharata* there are many glimpses of transgender people such as Shikhandi who takes birth as Princess Amba in previous life. As per mythological tales, Bhishma kidnapped and forced her to commit suicide. She takes rebirth in King Drupada to take revenge. She transforms into man form as she grew up. Her father peeps into her heart and knows her revenge for Bhishma in previous life as a result he trains and prepared for fighting against her enemy. In the epic, there is another tale of transgender in which Arjuna becomes a eunuch as Brihanalla by the name under influence of Urvashi's curse.

It may be an interesting to know about the myth in *Ramayan* that the citizen of Ayodhya City including community of transgender or kinner follow Rama when he left Kingdom to exile for fourteen-year. Rama requests men and women to return to Ayodhya City not mention the transgender or kinner in this list (Transgender Monika). All citizens go back, while transgender remain at the boundary of Ayodhya. Rama becomes delighted to see them remaining at same spot where he left them fourteenth- year ago. He blesses them that their words become divinely and eternally truth for someone when transgender utters with pleasing heart. After that moment it is believed that the transgender bestows divine power to boon someone. In Buddhist manuscript title as "Vinaya Patika" makes separate laws for Monk transgender who live in Vihar. The following lines glimpse on transgender (Third Gender in the Kamasutra) mention in C.K. Gariyali's book *Transgender in India: Achievers and Survivors*:

Vatsyana in his ancient text *Kamasutra*, the Science of Sex, mentions third gender as Tritiya Pravarti meaning 'third nature' or 'third instinct.' He mentions two types of third gender namely those who dress as women or those who dress as men. Hence, the third gender was known and the sexual role of the third gender well recognized along with male and female gender in this ancient text.

### **Transgender in Early Medieval India**

From Paramara dynasty, a great king Bhoj (1010 to 1055 CE) ruled Malwa and its surrounding areas which was a part of West central India. At present time Bhujariya festival is celebrated after Raksha Bandhan on the Raja Bhoj's memory in Bhopal. A great famine occurs due to no rains for many years that can only be ended through the King's invitation must be to all the Kinnars for praying. Here, we come to know the value of Kinnars who appear like God and able to end the problem and difficulty as a name of famine.

### **Transgender in Sultanate Era**

During this period, there is an interesting story of third gender named Malik Kafur who has charming personality was captured as a slave by Alauddin's general Nusrat Khan for one thousand dinars during the 1299, a period of invasion of Gujarat. Kafur commands of Alauddin's force and defeats the Mongol invaders in 1306. He loots many treasures, elephants, and horses for Delhi Sultanate during many expeditions in Southern part of India.

In 1310 he looted a huge amount of wealth and pleased Alauddin by presenting precious Koh-i-Noor.

### **The Transgender or Kinner who make his/her life meaningful and valuable**

Narthaki Nataraj is the first transgender woman who receives India's fourth-highest civilian award Padma Shri in Bharatanatyam dancer in 2009.



**Shri Pranab Mukherjee presents the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award-2011 to Narthaki Nataraj**

Narthaki Nataraj takes birth in Madurai Tamil Nadu and becomes aware of her dark feminine side at early age. She ran away from her home at the age of twelve. The journey from unfavourable childhood to Bharatanatyam dancer is not easy to her. In an Interview she says:

I am a Bharatanatyam artist. My childhood is like a poem. I had all the dream of a normal child but I could not express them I could not tell who I really was to my family, my relatives, my friends, and my community. I could not say that I am a wonderful woman inside a male body. My femininity was like a bright glowing light inside me.

A woman can be a good daughter for her parents, a good sister for her brother, a good wife for her husband but all relations are much difficult for a transgender who always tries to exist himself/ herself in a society where she is born and has to fight against pitiable condition. K Prithika Yashini is the first trans-woman sub-inspector in Tamil Nadu, India.



Madras High Court Board rejects her application just because of her third gender. To get service in Police department and to become first police officer as transgender is not easy to her. The following lines defines her circumstances as :

Prithika was born in Salem as a male child named Pradeep. Her father was a driver and mother was a tailor. While studying for plus-two she realized changes in her body. She feared that her conservative parents would not accept her desire to change her gender. Even though her style and speech were always more 'feminine' since she was a child, her desire to undergo sexual reassignment surgery came as a shock to them. She formally holds a card that identifies her as transgender woman

A proverb truly says that a person stands always alone in difficult situation. The community of Transgender are left alone by Indian society whereas India's first Prime Minister PT Nehru tries to teach Indian People for unity in his book title as *Discovery of India*, contains a famous chapter "A variety and Unity of India." An essay "My Struggle for an Education" by Booker T. Washington (1856-1915) has same story in which a negro boy gets an admission on challenging and tough condition and becomes a highly educated person. Grace Banui is first transgender to become an engineer which is a tough task to her. To become an engineer or writer or social activist is not an easy path to walk by deprived people like transgender who has a life with much difficulty and problem. She presents her tough situation in following lines:

After completing the 10<sup>th</sup>, when I wanted to join the 11<sup>th</sup> standard, the principal of the school refused to give me admission. I was very keen to study so my parents begged the principal to admit me to the 11<sup>th</sup> standard. He finally agreed but he put many painful conditions such as I should enter

school only at nine am instead of eight when the school started. I must leave the school half an hour before the school ended. The school used to end at 4 pm but I had to leave by 3: 30 pm. This was to ensure that no one talked to me or mingled with me, or became friends with me. (Grace Banu)

Passionate and strong-minded person like Namitha Marimuthu who thinks always about positive side of life – teach a valuable lesson to get success in life. She shares her experience in these lines as “I had always been a keen socialite and loved attending various social and fashion events. I have been invited as a judge for a beauty pageant or fashion show and have often mingled with models, fashion designers, journalists and event managers.”



**Namitha Ammu**

### **Depiction of her charming personality**

Namitha had a charming personality since school days and had good followers as friends. She was even favourite among the teachers for her feminine dancing and ability to entertain them. Since school days, she shows her inclination towards dance and performance and not knows about gender issue till tenth class. For her dance and performance skill, School authority has appointed her The Secretary of Cultural Programme, it happens only by developing her skills and ability in dance and performance.

### **Relaxation and reservation of Transgender or Kinner in Indian Constitution**

Supreme Court of India gets first time an attention on Transgender and his/her condition in Indian society. The following lines consider as:

The matter went up to the Supreme Court of India. In National Legal

Services Authority v. Union of India Writ Petition (Civil) No. 400 of 2012 decided on 15 April 2014, the Hon'ble Supreme Court went deep into the history, present problems and the practices pertaining to transgenders in different countries. I am reproducing a few important portions from that decision.

We are, in this case, concerned with the grievances of the members of Transgender Community (for short TG community) who seek a legal declaration of their gender identity than the one assigned to them, male or female, at the time of birth and their prayer is that non-recognition of their gender identity violates Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution of India. Hijras/ Eunuchs, who also fall in that group, claim legal status as a third gender with all legal and constitutional protection.

### **Rights of Transgender Persons and How to obtain them**

On 5 Dec. 2019, Parliament has passed Protection of Rights, Act 2019, It effects from 10 Jan. 2020. The Act provides protection of right and welfare of transgender and it is reframed in 2020 with a deep concern to provide them a respectable life. Necessary steps to Transgender have been discussed such as:

1. Recognition of Identity of Transgender
2. Prohibition against Discrimination
3. Welfare Measure by Government



**Interview picture with Transgenders**  
**Dr. Alpna Poswal (centre) & Dr. Arvind Kumar (from her left)**

On 17 Oct, 2024, in an interview with transgender of Rabupura, Jewar, Gautam Budh Nagar, Uttar Pradesh, Dr. Alpna Poswal (centre) and Dr. Arvind Kumar (her left hand) receive a valuable information that community of transgender has also a pattern of Guru Paddhati as same as other communities or societies of India have. A thirty-five-year-old transgender Monika shows from Dr. Arvind Kumar's left hand says that transgender or kinner has boon voice by Lord Rama's blessing mention in Indian Mythology.

### **In an interview with transgender:**

1. Have you known or contacted with educated transgender?

Ans: Chavi Shrivastav discloses that I have B. Sc. in Biotechnology and six months H.M. diploma.

2. Indian Constitution has reserved you as "Third Gender." Do you think that your community (transgender) must be educated?

Ans: No

3. Do you have any relation to The Vedas and Puranas?

Ans: Yes. With Lord Rama who blesses transgender with spiritual or voice.

4. Do you have different health issue?

Ans: No.

5. Have you strong connection of your community of other states of India?

Ans: Yes. We have strong connection with our community members of other states of India.

6. Do you think that to live a life of transgender or kinner is cursed?

Ans: Yes. We face many problems and difficulties in our surrounding area which is known as society – a place where we live. The people of male or female gender comments negatively and tries to molest us.

7. Do you want to live as a life of man or woman if it is possible by medical?

Ans: Yes. Off course everybody wants a family. Somya says that I went to AIIMS Delhi where the doctors diagnosed the organs which recognize a person whether man or woman but they firmly make a statement that it is not possible to transform you as transman or transwoman by medical.

### **Conclusion**

Thus, the roots of transgender or kinner can be discovered in religious texts like the *Vedas*, the *Puranas*, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* – all depict them with his/her different personality. Our epics recognize them as human body of two transformations (i.e., Ardhnareeshwara) not a disorder of organ system. Few people fight against circumstances

because of luck is not favourable to them. There is another example of transgender or kinner like Malik Kafur was able to attract anyone with an extraordinary personality and keeps a separate place in Indian History. Transgender or kinner of modern age with an unfavourable condition has been depicted such as Padmashri Narthaki Nataraj, Prithika Yashini, and Namitha Ammu who make their life meaningful and valuable. Third gender is a marginalized community with improper position in Indian Society. As we think that India must be United and it can be possible by united people, don't leave transgender separate from all dimensions of Indian society.

We interview Chavi Shrivastav, an example of qualified transgender (B.sc Bio Tec and 6 months H.M.)—denies firmly to serve outside and has compulsion to follow Guru and Shishya Parampara. Somya, another example of deprived transgender who wants to transform herself as transwoman but receive hopeless perception by AIIMS Delhi Doctors. It is clear that transgender live a deprived life and always want for a life of man or woman. ■

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# Feminism as delineated in Tagore's *Natirpuja*

C. Pushpavalli

Rabindranath Tagore's play *Natirpuja* offers a profound exploration of feminist themes within the context of colonial-era Bengal. The play delves into the internal conflicts of its female protagonist, who is torn between religious duty and personal desires, questioning traditional gender roles and societal expectations. Through the character of the female dancer, Tagore critiques the patriarchal structures that confine women to submissive roles in religion, family, and society. This article explores how *Natirpuja* reflects Tagore's progressive views on women's empowerment, examining themes of sacrifice, freedom, and rebellion against rigid gender norms. It also situates the play within the larger framework of Tagore's literary treatment of women, arguing that it was both a reflection of and a contribution to the social reform movements of the time. Ultimately, *Natirpuja* remains a significant feminist work, offering timeless insights into the struggle for gender equality and the quest for personal liberation.

**Key Words:** Rabindranath Tagore, *Natirpuja*, feminism, gender roles, women's empowerment.

## Introduction

Rabindranath Tagore shaped Indian literature, music, and social philosophy. The polymath Tagore combined traditional and modern ideas in his writings to awaken colonial India's intellect and culture. He addresses social issues, particularly those affecting women in patriarchal cultures, in his plays, poems, novels, and essays. One of his most famous plays, *The Priestess*, explores gender, autonomy, and social expectations, making it essential to Indian feminism (Kumari, 2022). Tagore explores female agency and oppression through a woman whose religious duties and personal desires conflict in *Natirpuja*. Tagore's story critiques social norms. Feminism emerged in early 20th-century India to overthrow patriarchal systems and traditional gender roles that kept women in subordinate roles in society and the home. Indian feminists like Sarojini Naidu, Kamini Roy, and others fought for women's suffrage, legal equality, and social independence at this time. Feminist Tagore was active in the intellectual currents of his day and wrote progressively. Many of his writings, including *Natirpuja*, challenge gender roles and depict women's struggles for self-empowerment, intellectual freedom, and emotional independence.

This article examines how *Natirpuja* echoes feminist ideas through its female protagonist and gender, autonomy, and social expectations. Tagore criticizes patriarchal systems that limit women's agency by focusing on the protagonist, a woman. This article will argue that Tagore uses *Natirpuja* to contemplate gender equality, women's agency, and

tradition-modernity conflicts through her personal growth and challenges. *Natirpuja* reveals Tagore's progressive feminist views, which shaped his time and continue to influence gender and identity discussions today.

### **Historical and Cultural Context**

During India's colonial period, Rabindranath Tagore revolutionized women's education and empowerment. Tagore believed in women's emotional and intellectual abilities at a time when women were expected to stay home and raise children. For him, women could not achieve social and intellectual freedom without education, and he fought tirelessly for this. Tagore encouraged his female relatives to get degrees and leave the house to make an impact for women's rights. He also championed social reform, including women's equality, legal rights, and marriage and family opportunities (Chakraborty, 2018). Tagore's writings portrayed women as autonomous beings who could want what they wanted and question conventions, not passive objects of devotion or love. When Tagore wrote, cultural norms and colonial control shaped women's roles. As in most of India, Bengali women were expected to stay home and raise children, so they had few opportunities to study or participate in public life. Marriage defined many women's roles as wives and mothers. Women had to put family and society before themselves to maintain family honor. Girls were often married young, their opinions were silenced in public, and they couldn't attend school. Social reformers and progressive thinkers like Tagore questioned these traditional roles because they believed women could build a fairer society.

A larger literary movement in Bengal and India, which Tagore joined, sought to change women's stories. Around the turn of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Bengali literature began to portray women as more complex, independent characters who struggled with conflicting desires and societal expectations. Rabindranath Tagore, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay helped change the conversation about women's rights from helpless victims to powerful forces for change (Kumari, 2017). Tagore's plays, poetry, and stories depicted women as complex people, which drove this change. *Natirpuja* is notable for its examination of societal frameworks that limited women's freedom and personal and familial dilemmas. Tagore advocated for a feminine identity that valued emotional and intellectual autonomy and social and academic participation.

In this context, *Natirpuja* contributes to Bengali literature's discussion of women's empowerment and rights. This environment explored and promoted feminist self-identity and autonomy. Tagore's complex and powerful female characters changed public perceptions of women and their place in society, making him a key figure in the literary and social reform movements of his time.

### **Analysis of Feminism in *Natirpuja***

The way Rabindranath Tagore's *Natirpuja* explores women's inner and outer struggles between society's norms and their own desires is fascinating. According to different readings, the play's female protagonist, who remains unnamed, struggles between religious

duty and personal freedom. Although religious and cultural, her role as a devadasi (temple dancer) in the story puts her under patriarchal control. As a temple devotee, she must balance her independence with societal expectations (Chakraborty, 2019). Tagore's character criticizes gendered expectations that limit women's autonomy and emotional independence.

The female protagonist's inner conflict between freedom and sacrifice drives *Natirpuja*. She should prioritize her religion and society as a devadasi. The idea of sacrifice echoes a larger social theme: women were expected to put their families and communities before their own desires, goals, and freedom. In the play, the main character struggles between temple duties and emotional and personal freedom (Pal et al., 2015). The religious system demands her complete submission, forcing her to choose between her love for a man and her duty to the system. Her struggle represents the norms that limit women's autonomy and emphasize submissiveness. Her inner turmoil reflects Tagore's society, where women were expected to put others' needs before their own, whether it was their families or society as a whole, leaving little room for individuality and desires. Tagore's *Natirpuja* emphasizes gender roles and defiance. The protagonist fights society's gender norms throughout. The play depicts her struggle to break free from her religious servant role. One way she defies societal norms that limit women's autonomy is by dating a man. The play's female characters defy gender norms in many ways. Most of the play's women face social pressures, but the heroine defies them. Their subtle rebellion criticizes patriarchal systems that force women to serve and sacrifice. These women prove they can stand up for themselves in oppressive situations by challenging and rejecting their roles.

*Natirpuja*'s religious symbolism criticizes patriarchal control over women. Due to its religious power, the temple shapes the protagonist's identity through sacred rituals that limit her choices. Tagore criticizes this religious system by showing how religious rituals are used to control women's bodies and desires (Chakraborty, 2014). The protagonist must attend the temple for religious reasons, but she also feels oppressed there. Sacred temples promote gendered hierarchies by prioritizing religious and social norms over women's autonomy. Similar to Tagore's social critique in *Natirpuja*, the protagonist struggles to assert her agency. This work depicts religious institutions as patriarchal tools of control. Tagore uses the female protagonist and the temple to criticize religious and patriarchal power structures. Through *Natirpuja*, he examines how these systems control women and limit their freedom. The heroine fights back against systems that force women into their roles, not just gender roles. Thus, Tagore's feminist critique of religion and society challenges women's submissive roles and demands a reassessment of their independence in all areas.

### **Feminist Themes in Tagore's Work**

Although social conventions limited women's roles, Rabindranath Tagore's portrayal of women as strong, independent, and intellectually capable made him an innovative champion for women's rights. In his plays, poems, and short stories, Tagore depicts women as complex, emotional, and intelligent characters who defy gender norms (Tufail & Sheikh,

2020). In his famous short story “The Broken Nest,” Charulata, a passionate and bright woman, is neglected by her husband. Charulata struggles to find emotional and personal fulfillment from her romantic feelings for her brother-in-law and her intellectual curiosity. Tagore gives her agency and complexity and explores how her patriarchal society limits women to being housewives.

In *Chandalika*, Tagore plays lower-caste girl Prakriti. Prakriti defies gender and caste norms to find love and acceptance. A critique of patriarchal systems and social hierarchies that dictate women’s roles by social status, Tagore shows how gender and caste oppress women in Prakriti. Tagore’s poems like *Strir Patra* (The Wife’s Letter) reveal women’s hidden desires and frustrations. In her letter to her husband, *Strir Patra*’s protagonist challenges societal expectations for women and demands emotional autonomy. This letter defends women’s freedom and identity while challenging the idea that they must be silent and submissive in marriage (Chakraborty, 2017). Tagore’s works often criticize patriarchal systems by highlighting women’s constraints. Through her struggle between religious duty and personal desires, Natirpuja’s heroine embodies Tagore’s critique of patriarchy. The protagonist’s inner turmoil represents women’s oppression in cultural and religious systems that discourage them from pursuing their own goals in favor of nurturing and worshipping. Tagore often depicts characters whose lives are limited by societal expectations about a woman’s role in the home, as a mother, or as a religious woman. These characters are usually on the brink of emotional and intellectual liberation as they fight for independence.

### **Cultural and Societal Implications**

The feminist aspects of *Natirpuja* that challenged gender norms and expectations shaped Tagorean society. The play’s depiction of a woman’s inner conflict between freedom and duty resonated with colonial India’s social reform movements. The early 20th century saw social reform, especially in women’s rights, education, and emancipation (Mubarak, 2022). Tagore’s feminist portrayal of women in *Natirpuja* would have resonated with social reformers like Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (who advocated widow remarriage) and Ram Mohan Roy (who wanted Sati abolished). Tagore’s writings would have contributed to women’s empowerment by challenging social norms that held women back and highlighting their emotional, intellectual, and spiritual agency. In addition, *Natirpuja* supports Tagore’s women’s empowerment goals. He believes that women must have autonomy in the home, community, and faith to achieve full equality. Tagore encouraged women to develop intellectually and emotionally rather than just being housewives and mothers. He criticizes patriarchal religious and social structures that limit women’s agency and bodily autonomy, especially in temples, in the play. The heroine’s defiance of patriarchal systems and gender roles in *Natirpuja* shows Tagore’s support for women’s autonomy.

### **Conclusion**

The *Natirpuja* heroines question authority and express their desire for freedom and expression, exemplifying feminism. Agency, sacrifice, and gender roles are central to feminist

thought, and the protagonist's conflict between religious duty and desire reflects this. Tagore portrays women as complex, multi-faceted individuals who can defy society by voicing their inner struggles and criticizing repressive systems that limit women's autonomy. *Natirpuja* influenced feminist thought. Tagore's portrayal of women as autonomous, intelligent, and emotional remains relevant in feminist discourse. The play reminds us to fight patriarchy and for women's rights everywhere. Tagore's writings inspire readers to fight for gender equality and empower women beyond their traditional roles. *Natirpuja* shows Tagore's social reform and progressive writing. One of the first critiques of patriarchy, religion, and gender roles in Indian literature, *Natirpuja* is a feminist classic. *Natirpuja*, Tagore's progressive and timeless novel, depicts a gender-free society that influenced feminist theory. ■

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# Enigmatic Worlds of Unseen Characters in *Old Stone Mansion* by Mahesh Elkunchwar

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This paper aims at delving deep into the intriguing realm of unseen characters as depicted in Mahesh Elkunchwar's play, "*Old Stone Mansion*." One of the striking features of this drama is Elkunchwar's exceptional ability to breathe life into characters that never make a physical appearance on the stage. These unseen characters hold a considerable sway over the entire narrative. Their influence is pervasive and can be associated to a hidden force that lingers throughout the play. This mysterious presence they wield creates an aura of fascination, keeping the audience in a state of perpetual curiosity and engagement. Its creative technique adds an additional layer of intrigue and complexity to the play, elevating it to a level of exceptional storytelling.

Elkunchwar's mastery in achieving this feat is truly commendable. His talent in infusing life into characters who remain offstage is a testament to his skill as a playwright. Furthermore, it plays a pivotal role in shaping the overall impact of the play, enhancing its depth and leaving a lasting impression on the audience. This paper attempts to critically examine the effects of the unseen characters on the overall plot of the play.

**Key Words:** Unseen, Literary world, Mansion, Ornaments, Financial circumstances

## Introduction:

Mahesh Elkunchwar is a versatile figure in Indian theatre. He was born on October 9, 1939, in Nagpur, India, and began his education in Nagpur before moving to Pune for further studies. In the 1960s, he started his theatre career at the Theatre Academy in Pune under the guidance of renowned director Vijay Tendulkar.

Elkunchwar gained recognition as a playwright in 1967 with his impactful play *Sultan*, which explored complex themes like power, politics and human nature. His theatrical works often delve into intricate social and psychological subjects, making him a prominent figure in contemporary Indian theatre. Some of his notable productions include *Wada Chirebandi*, *Garbo*, *Holi*, *Party*, and *Atmakatha*. He is known for introducing a more modern

and experimental approach to Indian theatre, challenging traditional storytelling and expanding the boundaries of theatrical expression. Elkunchwar is celebrated for his insightful exploration of various social and political issues through his plays, which resonate with contemporary Indian society.

In 1985, Mahesh Elkunchwar wrote a play in Marathi called *Wada Chirebandi*, which was later translated into English as *Old Stone Mansion* by Shanta Gokhale in 2004. This play sparks conversations and raises questions about various aspects of Indian society. It reveals the hidden truths within the stone walls of old-fashioned mansions in rural India. The play does not just tell the story of a specific feudal lord named Deshpande. Instead, it aims to bring attention to the changes in Indian society after the colonial period. It shows the ongoing struggle between long-standing cultural values and the harsh realities of today's global world, with a noticeable decline in the former.

## **Review of Literature**

In his scholarly article titled Mahesh Elkunchwar's *Old Stone Mansion- End of an Ethos*, Somnath Barure examines a central theme in the play. He talks about how the mansion in the story finds itself caught between the values of tradition and the demands of modernity. Barure points out that the presence of both a palanquin, which is a symbol of tradition, and a tractor, representing modernity, in the mansion's surroundings illustrates this complex situation. Barure also delves into the family members' struggle to adapt to the changing times. He raises a question about whether their inability to do so is because they lack the capability or if it's a matter of destiny, and this question remains unanswered in the narrative.

In *Culture Roots vs. Modernity* Dr. Haresh Kakde examines the Deshpande family's complex situation. They face a dilemma: wanting to let go of their cultural traditions, often represented by valuable gold items, yet fearing damage to their long-standing family reputation. This leaves the Deshpande family in a state of uncertainty, torn between two paths. On one hand, they wish to preserve their cultural heritage by following traditional values, like maintaining their identity and addressing women's roles in society. On the other hand, they are tempted by a more progressive approach, which includes embracing modern education and advocating for better conditions for women.

In her scholarly work titled *Search of Space and Peace in the Selected Plays of Mahesh Elkunchwar*, Dr. Nisha B. Gosavi delves into the significance of innovative technical elements employed in the theatrical production of "Old Stone Mansion." These technical components function as a means of conveying thematic messages and emotions within the play. More specifically, with regards to the play's lighting design, the initial scene of the first act and the entirety of the second act are enveloped in darkness. This deliberate use of darkness holds profound meaning as it symbolizes the ominous future looming over the Deshpande mansion and the Deshpande family, signifying the impending disintegration of the mansion into ruins.

Dr. Ahilya Bharatrao Barure's article, titled "Gender Subalterns in Mahesh Elkunchwar's *Old Stone Mansion*," explores how the play challenges mistaken beliefs about family reputation and respect. In the play, three characters, Aai, Dadi, and Prabha, face difficulties because of the dominance of men in society. They experience discrimination in terms of their gender, access to education, and economic self-reliance, all of which play significant roles in reinforcing gender inequality. The reviews mentioned earlier indicate that Mahesh Elkunchwar's play, *Old Stone Mansion*, has undergone comprehensive and critical evaluation from a variety of scholars. Yet, it is notable that none of these scholars have chosen to delve into the intricacies of the unseen characters that inhabit the play's narrative. This observation highlights an unexplored area in the current body of scholarly work.

Considering this gap in research, the proposed study aims to investigate the unseen characters within *Old Stone Mansion*. The intent is to shed light on their roles, motivations, and significance within the narrative. By doing so, this research seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the unseen characters in the play that enables in deeper appreciation of Mahesh Elkunchwar's work.

### **Enigmatic World of Unseen Characters**

*Old Stone Mansion*, stands as a captivating work of art set in the ancient confines of a centuries-old stone mansion. This theatrical masterpiece takes a profound dive into the complexities of human relationships, unveiling emotions and secrets that have remained hidden for a considerable span of time. Elkunchwar's storytelling brilliance comes to the forefront as he adeptly intertwines a variety of characters, each possessing their own distinctive idiosyncrasies and intricacies.

One remarkable aspect of this drama is Mahesh Elkunchwar's skill in giving life to characters who never appear physically on the stage. Despite their absence in the flesh, their influence permeates the entire play, creating an enigmatic atmosphere that captivates and intrigues the audience. This artistic technique introduces an additional layer of mystery and complexity to the narrative, making it even more exceptional. The following unseen characters play a significant role in the *Old Stone Mansion*.

#### **Tatyaji:**

He is the supreme of the Deshpande family and feudal lord of Dharangaon, passed away before the play begins. His second son along with his wife return from Mumbai to their ancestral home to carry out the traditional customs to be observed on the thirteenth day after Tatyaji's death.

Though Tatyaji is a key figure in the story, never physically appears on the stage. Still, his presence has a significant impact on the entire plot. As the entire story revolves around him, even though the audience never sees him directly.

When Sudhir, one of Tatyaji's sons, returns from Mumbai and meets his mother, the scene is filled with deep emotions. Sudhir's mother expresses her profound sorrow and sense of loss. She describes Tatyaji as a vital and unwavering source of support for the Deshpande family. His absence has created a significant void that deeply affects everyone.

Furthermore, it is revealed that Tatyaji held a firm belief against allowing his daughter, Prabha, to pursue her education beyond completing her matriculation, even though she was the most intelligent girl in the family. This decision is presented as a source of shame and regret for Tatyaji. He feels that he has inadvertently ruined Prabha's life by limiting her educational opportunities, a decision he deeply regrets to his wife before passed away.

#### **Abhay:**

Abhay is Tatyaji's grandson and the child of Sudhir and Anjali. Like Tatyaji, Abhay never makes an appearance in the play because he resides in Mumbai. Abhay's upbringing took place in the bustling city of Mumbai, and he strongly dislikes the slower-paced rural life of the village. He finds village life uninteresting and easily becomes bored, which is why he refuses to visit the village.

Bhasker's wife, Vahini, labels Abhay as a 'Bombaywallah,' emphasizing the difference between urban and rural ways of life. This term reveals one of the consequences of urbanization that the playwright, Elkunchwar, intends to portray in the play.

Despite Abhay's reluctance to visit the village, there is another character named Parag who enjoys Abhay's company. They share many childhood memories, and their bond is strong. At the start of the play, Sudhir explains that Abhay could not come with them in observing the traditional customs on the thirteenth day after Tatyaji's passing due to his exams. However, he is anticipated to send him during the Diwali vacation. This absence of Abhay due to his city commitments underscores the contrast between rural and urban lifestyles depicted in the story.

#### **Bansilal:**

Bansilal, a Marwari shop owner, who never makes an appearance on the stage. The Deshpande family encounters a challenging situation because they are unable to repay a debt owed to Bansilal. Consequently, Bansilal makes a significant decision – he buys a portion of the Deshpande family's ancestral house. This decision carries substantial consequences for the family and adds layers of complexity to the storyline. It brings to the forefront the financial hardships that the family is grappling with. Their incapacity to settle their debts has tangible repercussions, impacting not only their day-to-day lives but also their ancestral property.

Bansilal, though unseen, assumes a pivotal role in the family's narrative. He becomes a central figure in their story, despite never physically appearing in the play. His involvement underscores the financial challenges that the family is facing and how these financial difficulties

become a driving force in the unfolding events of the plot. In this way, Bansilal's presence, though invisible, leaves a lasting impact on the Deshpande family and the overall narrative.

### **Gaja:**

The character named Gaja who remains unseen throughout the play. Gaja held dual roles as both a servant and a cook for the Deshpande family. However, the story takes a turn when Gaja can no longer sustain his employment with the family. The primary cause of his departure stems from the fact that his earnings were insufficient to meet his basic needs and expenses.

When Gaja leaves his position, it triggers significant changes within the household dynamics. With his departure, the burden of household chores falls on the female characters in the family. They must now take on additional responsibilities related to running the household. Additionally, Chandu, the younger son of Tatyaji, is compelled to step into the role of a servant to assist with the family's needs.

This shift in roles and responsibilities within the family signifies a noteworthy change in their circumstances. It showcases the challenges they face due to financial constraints, and how they are forced to adapt and make sacrifices in their daily lives to cope with the situation. Gaja's departure, although unseen, has a profound impact on the family and serves as a reflection of the economic pressures that can affect people's lives.

Elkunchwar presents that Gaja eventually secures employment as a cook in a restaurant situated near the bus stop. This development in the storyline highlights the deteriorating financial condition of the Deshpande family.

### **Nagarmal:**

The next unseen character, Nagarmal is a grocery shopkeeper. Though he did not appear on the stage but serves as a vital part of the Deshpande family's life. His role is momentous because he supplies them with essential groceries and household items. However, a challenging situation arises due to certain circumstances.

Over the course of two years, the Deshpande family faces financial difficulties, and during this time, they are unable to pay Nagarmal for the groceries they buy. This situation sheds light on the deteriorating financial condition of the Deshpande family. Their inability to settle their payments to Nagarmal highlights the financial strain.

Nagarmal's role in the story is crucial because it reflects the family's economic struggles. His unpaid bills serve as a clear indication of the worsening financial situation faced by the Deshpande family. This aspect of the narrative adds depth to the story and underscores the challenges they are encountering in maintaining their household and meeting their financial obligations.

### **Tuition Teacher:**

In the play, one of the significant but unseen characters is Ranju's Tuition Teacher. Bhaskar, while describing him, mentions that this teacher was a distinctive personality often seen at the local pan shop, indulging in the act of spreading pan juice all around. He had a habit of carrying a transistor radio slung around his neck, constantly immersed in music, and had a penchant for whistling as he strolled along.

Ranju, one of the characters in the story, has a special fondness for Bollywood films. Her exposure to these movies has a lasting impact on her behaviour. She often imitates the dialogues spoken by Bollywood heroes, bringing elements of the film world into her everyday life.

Towards the end of the play, there's a dramatic twist involving Ranju and her Tuition Teacher. Ranju elopes with her Tuition Teacher to Mumbai, taking with her all the traditional ornaments that hold sentimental value within the Deshpande family. This act deeply concerns her family, especially her father, Sudhir. In his desperate search for Ranju, Sudhir travels to Mumbai and finally locates her in one of the hotels. He brings her back home, but to his dismay, the Tuition Teacher is nowhere to be found. The teacher has fled, taking with him all the family's precious ornaments, which carry not just monetary value but also hold traditional memories of the women in the Deshpande family.

Through the portrayal of the unseen character named Tuition Teacher, the playwright, Elkunchwar, attempts to convey the adverse effects of Bollywood on society. The teacher's influence on Ranju, leading to her elopement and the loss of cherished family heirlooms, serves as a commentary on how media and popular culture can impact individuals and families in both positive and detrimental ways.

### **Conclusion**

In *Old Stone Mansion* by Mahesh Elkunchwar, several unseen characters play significant roles. Tatyaji is central to the play, as it revolves around his death and the traditional customs observed after it. Abhay represents urbanization's impact, while Nagarmal supports the Deshpande family with groceries for two years. Gaja's departure highlights the economic strains on individuals and families. Bansilal's purchase of part of the ancestral home adds complexity to the story, revealing the family's financial struggles. Lastly, the Tuition Teacher symbolizes the negative influence of Bollywood on society, impacting Ranju and leading to her elopement and loss of family heirlooms.

Thus, enigmatic world of unseen characters in *Old Stone Mansion* by Elkuchwar creates an enigmatic atmosphere that captivates and intrigues the audience. This artistic technique introduces an additional layer of mystery and complexity to the narrative, making it even more exceptional storytelling. ■

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# Exploitation of the Earth Represented in Kavita Kane's *Sarasvati's Gift* and its Relevance to Current Environmental Issues: An Eco-feminist Approach

Prasenjit Das

Papari Kakati

Today, a considerable number of modern writers talk about the exploited environment where we are living in and endangering our lives. These writers are concerned, also seen worried about the very physical and mental health of both natural and human beings. By adopting a unique way of expression of grief and disappointment on this issue, writers of this twenty first century have accelerated their pens on papers. A specific number of authors among them have started re-writing some popular and interesting mythical stories extracted from the two great epics of India to address this issue. Kavita Kane is one among them who has embarked upon writing popular feminist fiction highlighting neglected women characters in Indian mythology. Her fiction 'Sarasvati's Gift' (2021) shows the devastating and selfish acts of humans on the earth causing the earth less habitable and destroying. This paper attempts to analyze this issue in Kane's narratives along with the oppression and devaluation of women as represented in the myths through an eco-feministic approach.

**Key Words:** Eco-feminism, Environmental Issue, Sarasvati, Myth

**Introduction:** Ecofeminism is a movement that sees an innate connection between the exploitation and degradation of the natural world and the subordination and oppression of women in contemporary society. It challenges the existing paradigms and holds that there is an inseparable connection between women and nature. Ideology plays a great role in India. The major streams of ecofeminist thought are found guiding ideology behind the fight for justice and dignity. Ecofeminism as a movement has developed gradually over the decades and finds itself as a relevant school of thought that explores the co-existence of feminist, activist and environmental theories. Introduced by the French writer Francoise d' Eaubonne the term ecofeminism has been increasingly adopted by a few authors and activists. It has gained popularity in India through a few women authors, activists like Vandana Shiva, Volga, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Kavita Kane, and Arundhati Roy. Vandana Shiva argues that the path to liberation of nature,

women and men is one, based on sustainability and harmony, not exploitation and surplus. For Shiva both nature and women are producers of life.

Ecofeminism tries to examine some common causes linked to environmental destruction and social injustices like poverty, racism and sexism. In the present world literature, the Indian myth has created much literary and critical interest among contemporary writers. The twenty first century has witnessed a new kind of literature approaching and enriching the world literature that is Re-writing of mythology. Presently a few modern Indian authors are re-writing the mythical stories from the two great epics of India and some other scriptures with a view to withstanding and abolishing the atrocities, oppression of both the women folk and the nature (natural resources). The similarity that lies in the relationship between environmental exploitation and the injustices received by both the animals and the women can be seen in the context that they can't fight loudly and directly to get justice in the midst of patriarchy. Now a day's more and more activists are caring about these issues. Modern thinking intellectuals, writers are found challenging ideologies established by the mainstream myths. Unlike modern Indian writers, the writers of the ancient period in Indian literary context seem to exhibit the mythical stories devoid of sensitivity, adequate care and love towards women and nature. This lack of sensitivity towards both the nature and women has aroused an idea of studying some mythical stories through the lens of ecofeminism to give sufficient platform for the articulation of thought and action on the part of both woman and nature.

Ecofeminism states that a kind of hierarchical thinking has developed in our society over the years which places humans above nature and thereby justifies the domination of nature by human beings. This hierarchical thinking is manifested in the domination of women in patriarchal Indian society. This paper attempts to explore the intimate link between the oppression of women and the degradation of nature by closely analyzing Kavita Kane's celebrated fiction *Sarasvati's Gift*. It presents before the reader an array of strong willed and independent female character who shares an intimate bond with her immediate surroundings or environment. This paper advocates the preservation of all natural resources, equal access, improvement of quality of life, safeguard of the rights of every living being, also intends to foreground the fact that life in nature is maintained through co-operation, mutual care and love.

### **Objectives:**

- a. To justify that the re-writings of myths succeed in showing the parallel oppression and exploitation of both the women and the nature or natural resources.
- b. To find out reasons for re-writing of myths from eco-feminist perspectives that protect both the women and nature.

- c. To discuss the relevance of eco-feminist reading of the Indian myths for the healthy and safe existence and maintenance of both the women and nature in literacy context.

**Methodology:** The approach in this study is interpretative. Throughout the study the method will be descriptive, analytical and qualitative. The primary and secondary sources will be analyzed with the help of historical interpretations of mythology in Indian context

**Discussion:** “In your arrogance, you forgot the gift I presented to mankind/You forgot to preserve Nature, its beings; be it the vale or the hills/The flowers or the trees, the air or the waters/You ravage all, in your blind worship of profit/And power, war and violence” (Kane).

Kavita Kane's *Sarasvati's Gift* explores the central claim of ecofeminism that there remains an inherent connection between the degradation of nature and the oppression of women. The peaceful existences of the three popularly known Indian mythical rivers on the earth namely Ganga, Yamuna and Sarasvati are shown threatened by man's selfish acts, extortions. The very fiction starts beautifully with an eye opening and thought-provoking conversation between Brahma, the creator of the universe and his consort the mythical goddess of knowledge, music and art, embodied also as the feminine force and a fiercely independent mind, goddess Sarasvati. Instead of being submissive to the rules or customs of a society based on patriarchal structure, Sarasvati decides to live her life on her own terms. Sarasvati along with the other two popular mythical female characters Ganga and Yamuna has taken the narrative of the fiction forward. The theorists of eco-feminism are of the view that all kinds of oppressions are connected and must be examined together. The author Kane has beautifully validated this ideology by delineating the oppression of the natural world and of the woman folk. Kane's characters are providing cathartic voice trying to distance themselves from the patriarchal anxieties puncturing the idolized images of nature. Every mythical female figure in this fiction is seen appealing to human community to regard her as living entity.

A protagonist in her fiction is screaming in pain, at the loss of its original beauty and purities as a consequence of man's mindless selfish activities on this earth. The portrayed figures are powerful enough in voicing the notion that every piece of nature should be considered as hope for the future rather than objects of pleasure:

“A river in my land means people, human settlement and a new civilization. I don't want them to disturb my peace. Man is a plunderer. He shall destroy the trees and foliage and the animals living in this kingdom. He has done it before, leaving many hills and tracts wasted and barren in the wake of his destruction” (Kane 107).

A strong objection is made by Krtsmara, a mythical mountain when the fiercely independent Sarasvati begins to flow herself around it to make her mission accomplished. Krtsmaracriticizes man's mindless selfish acts on natural world. The foul odors, pollutions, deceptive sights of the bustling landscape are manmade. Sarasvati succeeds in making krtsmara understand the urgency of water for animals and all living beings. Sarasvati's existence is a means for subsistence for all, not a threat to this mountain while justifying: 'a mountain and a river can exist together (Kane)'. Thus, the fiction successfully engages its readers with longstanding debate like the inseparable connection between women and nature in an emotive way. Dangers of over-exploitation of the fragile ecosystem are clearly hinted by the conversations between many characters in this fiction. Kavita Kane has tried to seek solutions to the degradation of the planet Earth through her fiction. She has shown the anxieties, pain, and hopelessness on the part of the women figures through the conversation of Yamuna and Ganga and Sarasvati: "Each time you descended the Earth was because you were told to do so, to rinse away the sins of mankind" (Kane 123).

In the chapter 'Triveni', Sarasvati appreciates Ganga, the mythical river of India for her role on the earth. Ganga is regarded as the holiest river in India. Yamuna, another mythical river venerated in Hinduism, is one of the seven sacred rivers in India, now grieved enough as she looks dark and green. In her birthplace she has been pure and bright and later gets polluted by human interference. Yamuna admits that they (the three rivers) are interconnected framing the term Trinity. She says that Ganga stands as a river of salvation and purity in Indian religious conscience whereas Sarasvati stands as a river of wisdom from which flows the river of consciousness and creativity, although invisible on the earth now. Yamuna continues: "We are the necessary complement to each other. The three of us are one, we are the Triveni, and so essential to life on Earth... We are the confluence of knowledge, dispassion and devotion. As rivers, we are the life source" (Kane 126).

The Gangadoubts and questions about reality of true faith and reverence upon her. In utter hopelessness the river Sarasvati says for the humans: "They don't have to worship us; they don't need to dip themselves in our water to wash their sins. All Man has to do is realize and understand that it is more fulfilling to bathe in the sacred rivers within him/her" (Kane 127). River Sarasvati explains that within every human being the three holy rivers are present spiritually taking the name as Ida, Pingala and Sushumna representing Ganga, Yamuna and Sarasvati. They are energy pathways through which the Life Force (the Prana of human beings) circulates or survives. Sarasvati is introduced as Kundalini, the divine feminine energy. By equalizing both Ida and Pingala Humans will be able to strike the right balance, be it health, attitude or aptitude. But humans rarely give importance to Sushumna for which Sushumna, the very holy river Sarasvati remains neglected and almost dormant. Humans fail to realize the latent potentials within them and uselessly dive deep into these rivers to clean their mortal sins.

The three rivers then utter commonly: "Yes, we fear humans, we fear our future, we fear for our very existence. We are sisters; our tributaries come from the same source where the waters are pure and fresh. But Man has polluted us...while washing mortal sins...Man's crimes...His mindless violence inflicted on us-the rivers, the aquatic life within us, not to forget the surrounding air, the soil, the vegetation, leaving a barren waste in his wake. they don't have to worship us; they don't need to dip themselves in our waters to wash their sins..." (Kane 128). The utter hopelessness and emptiness in the hearts of these three rivers are clearly reflected in their dialogues and this appeals us to realize the present conditions of today's Ganga, Yamuna and Sarasvati (although presently river Sarasvati is almost invisible). By polluting the rivers as well as other natural resources, humans are causing not just the rivers dying, indirectly welcoming the humans' own death and that of their planet. In the chapter entitled *Creating Music* in this fiction Sarasvati says that she does not believe in war or violence. For her wise actions and wise words are her weapons to fight with any oppression: "I don't believe in war or violence. Words and wise action can be sharper than swords. I don't need any weapons" (Kane 146).

Glancing at the veena(lute) in Sarasvati's hand and hearing her voices, Indra(lord of the Heaven) realizes that it is really possible to conquer an enemy than killing by some weapons. It is realized that war and violence often cause damages to innumerable natural resources including living beings and spreads only bitterness and the idea is taken up by the ecofeminist movement. The demand for more inclusivity in developmental policies for the betterment of women and ecosystem has been urged by the ecofeminists in their activities and here the author Kane through her work Sarasvati's Gift has tried to seek a solution to the degradation of the environment on the earth with the help of her narratives. In 'The Request', Sarasvati has placed some strong arguments advocating the personal choice over some obligations concerned with woman's life. She questions why women are pressured into marriage and motherhood. In a rebelling tone she states that she won't be that woman who accepts motherhood as an obligation rather than a personal choice if married to Brahma:

"I know you love me but marriage goes beyond love, it's easier to love than stay married, is it not? ...but being a mother is not what I see for myself either. In fact, I don't want to have a child either. I am just not 'womanly' enough to measure up to patriarchal hopes! Or because Nature gave me a womb and breasts, do I need to create a child in that womb, and hold a baby to my breasts? I don't want to be that woman who accepts motherhood as an obligation rather than a personal choice...I dislike rules and rigidity: both constrain ideas, hardening beliefs to disallow further viewpoints. Both demand a certain obedience, almost subservient (Kane 201-202).

In Indian society it is believed that parenthood is Nature and marriage and motherhood mean the fulfillment of a woman's life. The state of motherhood has been made to be a

woman's fate. This societal belief is advised to be changed through this mythical figure's words. The decision of a woman regarding motherhood should not be seen as unconventional. The non-parenthood decision of a woman should be accepted firmly whenever a woman refuses to become a mother. Choices are to be left to a woman because it is she only who becomes a wife, a mother, not the man. The unwritten norms about women designed by the patriarchal society have been devalued by the character Sarasvati. The ecofeminists are of the view that nature gives every being a choice to live, to exist, to co-exist, and to choose and eventually it rests on the individual decision. Being a part of nature, a woman should be freed or relieved from the force of manmade society. Only in this the dignity and self-respect of a woman is protected and justice can be found.

The personal decision of a woman whether she wants marriage, motherhood, motherhood without marriage, marriage without motherhood or wants neither or both should be granted considerably. Interestingly in this chapter Sarasvati is shown as a 'Chikitshwini' (lady doctor) who is expected to be relentlessly protecting the sacred bond between the human kind and the nature. Observing Sarasvati losing her hair untied always Brahma enquires the reason for it. Brahma is answered as she regards herself as a free existence so does her hair too. It needs no binding. An urge for eternal liberty to a willing, desperate soul is exhibited through the delineation of this mythical figure Sarasvati. In the chapter *Marriage of Equals* Sarasvati taunts Brahma for creating the humans on the earth. For her it has been Brahma's biggest mistake to create humans. Pointing to Brahma Sarasvati comments:

"There will come a time when it will be debated if God created Man or Man created God! Keep working at your theories, but I warn you, there will come a day when you will regret it, Man will think he is God... This noise is less defeating than the dissonance of war and violence. Is it just me or is the human race you created now armed with religion, poisoned by prejudice and absolutely frantic with hatred and fear galloping headlong back to darkness" (Kane 237-238)?

In 'The War of the Sages', Sarasvati is cursed to be a river of blood by sage Vishwamitra in a fit of anger. Sarasvati marks it as a manifestation of the period blood of all women, which is generally in a country like India is taken to be impure, unclean and a taboo. Sarasvati here regards this blood to be fertile, bountiful, natural, life-giving which holds a strong connection with the sustainability of all living beings. She holds that if she is denied to be flown, can call upon annihilation. Cynically she says that humans, whose minds are polluted, are to be purified. For her a woman's blood or a mother's blood is fundamental to life, it is sublime. The attempt to degrade woman and the female ecology by the religious patriarch is severely condemned in this fiction. This situation reminds us the ideology of Vandana Shiva that women and environment are often underestimated. Sarasvati clears that no woman needs to be purified if gets period blood even. She has blessed the blood in her waters, liberates it from the discrimination, shame, stigma to

woman kind: “This blood is as fertile as the soil, as bountiful as the water in the river, as natural as the air we breathe, as life-giving as the sunshine warming this earth” (Kane 260).

In ‘The Two Goddesses’, Sarasvati criticizes and mocks at the very selfish acts of human beings on Nature and women inviting the danger and destruction to both. In Sarasvati’s view, Man is a highly intelligent tyrant, who wants to conquer and rule all-lands, water, the sky, the mind, the beings, the planets and even perhaps the knowledge. Sarasvati enquires whether the so-called man respects his own woman and her feelings and identity while managing to project the mythical goddesses into the human society and whether a man grants his own woman her human dignity or not. Sarasvati mocks at the fact that the goddesses are kept on a pedestal in the hallowed sanctum of temple, but men’s women on earth largely remain shackled or sexualized in their own homes. The convenient definition or depiction of a woman by the patriarchal construct has been condemned, satirized and criticized through this fiction. Sarasvati expresses the anguish that human beings are bent on destroying the world and in this process destroying them too. She is of the view that now man wants to be God, creating his own world of hatred and power, fueled by a certain callous obliviousness.

### **Conclusion:**

Throughout her re-writings, Kane has tried to show the representation of the feminine mythical characters along with natural resources and their abuse, oppression and devaluation under age-old patriarchal norms of the Indian society. The author has urged the readers to take a second look toward the mythical women figures concerned for the protection of the environment, thus raising awareness about ecofeminism. The female protagonists tackle the hardships and adversities of Indian patriarchal society that continues to date. The powerful images of female Goddesses have been humiliated. Patriarchy perpetuates the idea that the innate function of the earth and the women is to serve the masculine power. The fiction ends with a hope that if society abandons patriarchal thinking, environmental degradation and oppression of women will find an end, as these two things provide balance on each and have a close relationship. Kane is successful in showing exploitation of environment and the inherent mental clashes of women through her approach of ecofeminism. Sarasvati mourns that humans on earth does not deserve to be blessed with knowledge as they have used it not to dispel ignorance, but to indulge in mindless violence against nature as well as mankind. ■

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## POEMS

### The Dawn!

Original in Odia - \* **Dr. Phani Mohanty**  
Translated by - Dr. Namita Laxmi Jagaddeb

Long back,  
my engagement has ceased  
with the sleepless seductive night,  
yet, I am clueless,  
for I stumble and fumble at each step,  
while chanting my sacred hymns.

O, from my deserted house,  
take away all you want,  
the whole space ransacking  
with your couple of elegant hands,  
do it as you please,  
with love or envy, I don't mind.

O, Paragon of Beauty,  
take away all you want,  
from my wide open house,  
all my impotence,  
from the portrait of my residual life,  
with no fear, no greed;  
O, please, take back all, you once gave me  
in our intimate moments of togetherness,  
your choicest gifts,  
your mystifying promises,  
the tuneless lullabies of the prodigal mind,  
the wailing of a palmful moonlit night,  
the endless tangles of our quotidian life,  
the slice of a silky sky as tinged with  
a dark red hue,  
the unforgettable images  
of unusual happenings,  
the jingling of the eloquent idol,  
the feigned parlance  
of the gambling playmate,  
or may be, the historic silence

reigning between us-  
take back all, scraping together  
each of the items carefully,  
O, the Queen of the World, O, the  
paragon of Beauty,  
or in whatever name they may  
eulogize you,  
take away all.

Throw a casual glance at me,  
if you please,  
or you may feign to see,  
how in the measureless depth am I caught  
like a mrigal carp in the net  
of the world, wriggling!  
Listen to the roar  
of a broken lyre advancing  
at lightning speed,  
the piteous wailing rising from  
a romantic's fragile heart,  
whose flower bed is scorched,  
a burning soul's writhing pain  
amid the horror of a mysterious dark night  
listen if you please.

The hour has come  
for the long dreadful night to end,  
yet it hesitates at the brink of dawn,  
the last line  
of the last page of the book of my life  
is yet to be written,  
for the right words get stuck on the  
tip of my tongue;  
O, I can hear someone's voice from  
the sky in my ear buzzing out-  
"Sure is the end of sweet love ...  
sure is the end  
of sweet suffering.... Sure" –  
yet, the long dreadful night hesitates  
at the brink of dawn. ■

\* Noted Poet, staying in BBSR, Odisha.

## The Morning Sea

\* Dr. Saroj K. Padhi

The sea is calm this morning  
with brazen clouds unfurling  
hidden hunger for pink flesh  
at the shore, simmering;  
chasing crabs that sink into  
wet sands, with fear freaking;  
all our past sand scribbles  
have long since been erased  
by tides hungry,  
to reappear now  
in hazy layers of overhanging dew  
though the sea always hungers  
for love, new;  
I feel like a haggard fisherman  
with my tattered net  
wandering in wilderness  
with hope,  
old appetite to whet,  
dig honey holes in the sea  
for desires to bury and flee. ■

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## Cuttack : A City that never Leeps...

\* Swapna Behera

On the bank of four rivers  
a century old city  
Mahanadi, Kuakhai, Birupa and Kathajodi  
run through it  
Cuttack, hyper active in all seasons;  
where the coconuts of temples  
and dates of Kazi Bazaar  
caters brotherhood  
Cakes and Halwa  
multiple cuisins on plates

universal brotherhood celebrates  
the Christmas carol or the Azan  
sing the background chorus

Cuttack is a register of the chronology  
foot marks of Jayanta Mohapatra  
and Madhu Babu  
the Balliyatra and the Barabati Fort  
Dussehra or Holi  
Water of Mahanadi; mirror of Cuttack  
testimony on the silver filigree  
gipsy grass here and there  
the city sings the melody  
of Akshaya Mohanty  
Here swirls the ring road  
values reflect and transmit  
the celebration of noisy dreams  
Sankirtans or Dadu's copious smiles  
Ahh, my city  
the one and only  
Cuttack....!! ■

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\* Poet lives in Khandagiri Area, BBSR.

## Feeling like Flying

\* Agnivesh Mahapatra

If you've ever felt  
how it feels to be flying;  
Then you must know,  
that's how I am feeling right now.  
You know it right.

It feels, as if the fingers are breaking  
Like peanut shells,  
and drifting like the skin.  
The arms, like cotton—  
Waiting to be processed—  
Flail all over.  
The body:  
Is a cloud,

With substance without shape  
Flying like a kiss  
Flown aimlessly  
Seeking the best pair of lips.  
Or, floating like a kite, cut, to land  
On the next lane beauty's terrace.  
Or, waving like the lone Eucalyptus  
In the tickling autumn breeze.  
Or, falling—rising, only to fall again,  
Hoping to rise—like the Sensex.

Flying is like being everywhere  
Yet, knowing not wherever you are!  
Flying is flying.  
Whether be it  
By wings or by winds  
By will or be willed  
By effort or by fate  
By dreams or by drugs  
By loving or being loved;  
Flying is the same.  
I know the feeling of flying  
So do you, as you say!  
I am flying  
You're flying.  
You love, are loved;  
I dream, drugged by that. ■

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## I Fly

\* Dr. Ratan Ghosh

Still I fly  
like a hawk  
In the sky of the East Bengal  
to kiss those bones  
left  
Years back...  
engraved un-engraved  
in the bed of blood

I ransack often  
in dream or in daydream  
in walking or in sitting  
in silence or in chaos  
like an unnamed traveller  
the bones of my root  
Wherein I will write  
with the blood of my veins  
only a few lines...  
'Why they were butchered?  
Why they had to flee  
from their homeland?  
Why they were abducted?  
Why they left their heaven?  
They were my humble forefathers  
They were my humble forefathers...' ■

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## A Chameleon - to be or not to be!

\* Revathy. K

A Chameleon - to be or not to be!  
Existence and life on the mode of silence -  
Everyday onus performed drama  
free with eases;  
Unlike the so-called seven sensed sapiens  
Entangled with red tapes,  
Making monkey out of any puppet;  
To carry out every which thing  
to satiate the esteem -  
And draw someone's curtain down  
to occupy the top pitch.

A Chameleon - to be or not to be!  
I and me, my and mine – tags of self,  
carried heavy all over -  
What for? Just the stupefied satiation  
of the ego!

Every simple dot to complexities  
 seems bewildered  
 In each step throughout the voyage;  
 What for? Reasons unknown  
 and redundant.  
 The glow doesn't glitter in effect  
 to the spirit.  
 Thousand and one tints and tinges,  
 rot and rot black and bleak.  
 A Chameleon - to be or not to be!  
 To walk and to run and to fly and to swim –  
 What not?  
 An attire of toil, a cloak of devotion  
 to execute  
 In this larger realm of illusion,  
 Sans any entanglement to breathe –  
 one can be so!  
 The hues are not innumerable  
 to attain the obligation.  
 Daily duties done and daily dusting  
 the crusts of ego  
 An everyday cleansing and eventually  
 to rampage the self!  
 An actor with a cloak removes the attire  
 one fine day!  
 In the verge of doom, depart with no rues  
 and remorse,  
 The attires coloured and uncoloured,  
 go grey to Mother Earth. ■

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## Resurrection

\* Nishat Jabeen

For my every sense and sensibility  
 Your rational reasons  
 and sheer justifications  
 Quite analytical and logical in a long run  
 And my dull vivacity often finds it harsh

For your standard... I'm ditzy and dopey !  
 My wee brain fails many times  
 I do abide by you meant it well  
 My bad ! Truly  
 Bereft of you dear all my motives  
 would go into trash  
 And my fancies would have failed  
 to find their ways  
 You're the one who gave the sky  
 to my broken pinions  
 Let me dissolve my distinct desires  
 They fit finely to be ignored in the dell  
 of delusions  
 Finally, my brittle being has been  
 answered by you  
 The option of my very resurrection ■

## Grandfather's Garden

\*Nivritee Khandelwal

In the heart of quiet afternoons,  
 Where sunlight waltzes with the moon,  
 A sanctuary built with tender care,  
 By my grandfather, always there.  
 He spins tales from ancient lore,  
 Gleaning wisdom from the days of yore.  
 His gentle voice, a guiding light,  
 Beside me through the day and night.  
 Eyes twinkling with stories untold,  
 A smile that warms the heart when cold.  
 Hands that build, mend, and soothe,  
 In his presence, doubts remove.  
 In the garden where laughter blooms,  
 He chases away the gathering glooms.  
 With every story and joyful chuckle,  
 He clears life's more puzzling muddle.  
 Oh, grandfather, with your heart so grand,  
 A steadfast pillar, by which we stand.  
 Your love, a beacon steadfast and bright,

Guides us through to the morning light.  
Nestled in your embrace, we find our  
peace,  
A love that gives us endless release.  
For in your heart, we always see,  
The boundless love that sets us free. ■

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## Wound

Original in Odia - \* **Satyanarjan Praharaj**

Translated by - Agnivesh Mahapatra

Some wounds are very dear  
though not so dear is the person  
who has inflicted them!  
Not very cosy is the embrace  
before the bite  
nor is the gash someplace best avoided.  
Whether someone calls me or not,  
I respond with a yes,  
and scratch it once or twice.  
I make a paste,  
blending some stinging nettle leaves,  
some of her dearest roses  
and a slice of smile  
and a drop of nectar dripped from her  
dimple while smiling and apply  
on the wound  
which heals for the night.  
Sleep doesn't crave for a sigh  
the whole world's past freezes in me.  
When the wound's mouth is clogged  
my condition doesn't worsen  
beyond words  
I look kind, dull, flowery!  
Thousands of wounds bloom on my body  
I turn flawless, generous,  
ancient human!  
Some wounds indeed are very dear!  
So precious that they keep

a moribund dream alive!  
They beat, sharpen and colour it  
teach it malevolence, misfortune,  
hunting, illusions  
and lastly immortality!  
The scar keeps reminding  
none is beyond reproach the doer,  
the punisher even the ghost or demon  
not the valley of flower  
nor the fruit or the reaper! ■

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## Solitude

\* **Himanshu Bhushan Jena**

Solitude is not a state of mere loneliness  
or isolation  
It's an opportunity for realising  
the worth of internalisation  
Solitude is oft something blissful  
in expanding emotions and feelings,  
thoughts and ideas  
It's monumental in fostering  
creative faculties, leaps and bounds  
redirecting the journey of life  
in an elevated fashion  
Solitude moulds life with wings of peace  
and harmony revealing the home  
of heaven in self - expression ■

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## Mirages of Sorrow

\* **Debendra Kumar Bauri**

Exhaustion  
Lying on the bed for rest.  
Grieves  
Failed to find the flow  
Evaporating on the scorching heat

of the sun  
Like a shrinking pool.  
Slowly  
Her heart is turning  
Into a rock.  
The shadow  
In deep repentance  
After failed to recognise  
The deception.

(2)

Mirages  
Running after  
Sexual Pleasure  
are in acute thirst.  
Desert  
Is lapping the backwash  
Of the last rain drop  
Squeezed from the cloud.  
Still  
A thirsting heart  
Pleading for heaven's touch.  
Mirror  
Is now searching for  
Her lost reflection.  
Still  
Night is not over.  
Sorrow  
Of the hooker  
Changed her lap. ■

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## Strange!

\* R.M. Prabhulinga Shastri

“HE”(“IT”) would be forever  
The Stone from WH “OM”,  
The OM does manifest as the Tone,  
Thus, “S” would be as “S”.  
Tone could be itself modified into various  
Forms which would be quite different from

One to another and never be extincted.  
Each form would be perceived to Sense.  
Only form of Sound would come out at first.  
‘Strange’, “S” would be beyond every  
‘sense’.

It is even ‘Strange’ that ‘Strange’ would  
As well not stand for “S” though the Tone  
Does manifest from “S” and in “S” only.  
It is inconceivable “Strange” to “Sense”  
That both “Strange and Sense” would  
Be “ONE” and the “SAME” forever more. ■

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## Return to Vedas

Original in Odia : \*Barada Prasanna Das

Translated by : Sugyan Choudhary

As you know  
the Veda aims at righteousness  
in action and wisdom  
but we forget it  
to follow it in practice  
and boast us as mighty.  
Dear brothers,  
let us follow Veda  
and create human beings  
out of homosapiens.  
The followers of Bible and Koran  
scrupulously adhere to their scriptures.  
But mantras of veda can guide us  
to make our lives great and meaningful.  
It will make us to realize  
about the value of salvation;  
sensation of life.  
Let us follow it  
and create human beings  
out of homosapiens.  
We are all souls;  
we are the eternal.  
Great is our cultural legacy

and great is our history.  
We forget the value  
of our ancient scriptures  
like Veda, the backbone of the society  
forgetting difference between  
sin and sacred deeds.  
Let us follow Veda  
and create human beings  
out of homosapiens.

Let us keep  
the eternal piety alive  
by infinite oblations  
to God of fair  
adhering to the secret of the sin  
and the sublime truth  
by returning to Veda  
and create human beings  
out of homosapiens. ■

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\* Cell No: 9861145687

## The Path of the Pure

\* Sushree Gayatri Nayak

The world has changed enough,  
No longer a place for the gentle,  
Those innocent as lambs,  
Kind as Buddha, wise as Vivekananda,  
Who dream only for the good of others,  
And carry the world's hope like a flame.  
They work like ants, steady and true,  
Distant from deceit and trickery,  
Extending hands even to those who betray,  
Striving to make their world brighter,  
Yet seen as strangers in their own land,  
Misunderstood, alien to the world's way.  
For the world clings to its own rules  
Treachery, pleasure, the measures of life.  
It tries to mold them, make them fit,  
Into a frame that shrinks their light,

Where joy is found only in fleeting things,  
And not in the grace that uplifts the soul.  
Why must he change, I wonder?  
Why must he follow these worldly ways?  
Is it not better to turn to God,  
To seek enlightenment, to lift up others?  
Oh, Yogi!! Stay true to your path,  
The world needs you, more than it knows.  
The whole world is your family;  
Don't bind yourself to one small circle.  
Would Gautama have become Buddha,  
Had he stayed bound to his palace walls?  
Could Naren become Vivekananda,  
While tethered to worldly sorrow?

You are a child of the Divine,  
Born to uplift, to shine,  
To carry the light of knowledge.  
So go, move forward in your way,  
Glow, spread love and might,  
You are the world's true saint, its light. ■

---

\* Tulasipur, Banki, Dist: Cuttack, Odisha.

## Mind

Original in Odia - \* Dr. Bharata Ch. Dash

Translated by - Sudipta Mishra

During some days  
neither I have been reading the poems  
nor going through the poets.  
When I read the poems,  
the spiritual essence of the poets  
enticed my mind.  
I got lost in a different world  
Neither I got back myself  
nor found my favourite poets,  
He is a respectful, engrossed being  
who wanders with the sublime words .  
At one time, the mind was occupied with  
poems

I am not feeling well now,  
Neither I could get my mind  
nor find my loved one for whom  
my mind was excited once.  
That mind is lost somewhere now  
I am now looking for the lost mind  
with a different mind,  
I don't know whether I will succeed  
or fail  
Still I am hopeful for the future  
I will get my spirit back  
By taking that same spirit,  
a lover dreams with the fanciful moments,  
the wordsmiths who create Black Pagoda  
with the dreamy moments,  
for which the mind escapes  
into an unknown realm.  
Now the mind is reflected  
in the dew of morn,  
in the soft rays of the sun!!! ■

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## Devi

**\*Chittaranjan Nayak**

Your prehistoric silence  
Breeds the cacophony of existence  
Forgive me Devi !  
The weapon I had sharpened  
Metamorphosed into a flower  
And kissed the lips of terror .  
  
But where were the lights of love  
That offered the geometry of surrender !  
Still the chirping of dreams  
Was cleaning the air of betrayal  
Alas ! It was darkness everywhere.

Let's Christen the orphan  
That is pinning the image of life  
Inside the age old church

Let's unbutton the morning  
of Bidi smokes  
That is hanging on the busiest temple  
Let's winnow the words  
of blood stained isolation  
From the music of evening's flag March .

Devi is dead  
Screamed the night patrol  
Devi is alive  
Decreed the soul . ■

---

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## Pain

**\* Mir Samsul Haque**

When you're stricken by sorrows  
A big wish list holds no goodies within  
Even if you're dabbing your pale eyes  
You can't stop the falling tears  
A never ending sad spree  
Will slap your life  
From your heavy heart  
spouts spurious thoughts  
An upsetting satire paraphrasing  
your continual fear  
Is that the life ends up in despair?

You're not alone in this universe  
Who's undergoing these periods of pain  
Take this pain as goodness and challenge  
Learn the hard ways to hit it back  
Go on alleviating your hellish anguish  
Forging into the world of blues  
To get the best of things  
in the worst of hours  
Let your struggle be an apt lesson  
of healing for the sorrow-laced souls ■

---

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## Frosty Galvanisation

\* Ganeswara Behera

Really the nature's panorama so exciting,  
Darling!  
Our love a Pandora box of thrilling...  
Pampering the love pamphlets,  
let us stroll  
Let our deciduous aspirations  
melodiously roll  
Frosty canvas may ensnare others  
But our nostalgic emotions  
perkily swagger

You know sweetheart!  
life full of thorny modulations...  
Side by side there is also  
romantic pigmentations  
Don't be embarrassed my stalking talks  
This ethereal lover ready to show  
his 56 inches chest forever

A 'heart to heart' talk 'actually panacea for  
all frosty threads  
Love, sympathy and humanity  
works more than rice and bread  
Though our wrinkled skin slowly responds  
to the jolly scenery  
Our promising throbbings downpour  
celestial greenery

In this complacent morning,  
Let us sing  
Passionate rhyme  
Hanging out together would be  
our enterprising rhythm. ■

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\* Poet lives in Dharmasala, Jajpur, Odisha.

## Not in any Play

\* Gajanan Mishra

No, I am not  
In any play.  
In my presence  
I see everyone  
Busy in actions.  
I feel nothing  
In vain.  
And I am far away  
From ice and fire.  
I am coming to live  
In ice and in fire  
Time and again.  
And I proclaim  
What I am.  
I reveal the truth  
In thoughts  
In words.  
And I withdraw  
Myself from all.  
I am a human,  
And I am alive  
For myself. And  
I believe in love. ■

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## Winter Walks.

\* Namita Nayak

The mist is not yet thick..  
It's just the beginning,  
in the evening,  
I love to take a stroll  
on the terrace...  
the terrace where the sun  
beams warm my pale yellow palms,  
my emaciated arms.  
Now I'm far away from the city

where winter touches  
the leafless bald trees  
on the opposite side of the cafeterias.

Here on the terrace,  
I can see the crimson sun  
sinking behind the hills  
and the wheat fields.  
As the winter night casts its shadows,  
on the walls,  
on the wooden bridge,  
a cold wind passes  
through my spine  
reminding me, it's winter  
again with all its foggy feelings  
in my heart, in my veins.

From the terrace,  
their scrawny faces are indistinct...  
their bare bodies are shivering  
as they are playing cricket  
in the dewy fields.  
The frozen fingers of winter  
are touching their skinny feet.

From the terrace,  
I'm trying to get a glimpse  
of their simple, innocent faces,  
their blood coagulates  
as the winter evening is  
silhouetted against  
the stoic mountains,  
near their humble cottages.

This is just the beginning,  
many more winter days ahead,  
many winter leaves to shrink  
and to fall dead on the moist ground.  
Numberless winter stars  
to fade in the cold, gray, granite sky.  
With the headscarf on my head,

my winter walks in the mornings  
and in the evenings  
will urge me to pen down  
a few winter lyrics  
as the blue winged birds  
will soar above the amber  
yellow mustard fields  
in ecstasy. ■

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\* Poet lives in Cuttack, Odisha.

## Boughain Villea

\* Dr. Kalpana Purohit

Oh you, delights of bashful color,  
Blushing through scorching Summers,  
Blossoming through steel edged Winters.  
The ground where you grow,  
is blessed with a friend.  
So loyal, so strong, so true  
Stalwarts of your kingdom,  
It is not with shame you  
Colors so,  
May be it is some love that  
Makes you glow;  
Many a man disregards you,  
Many more admire you.  
Seasons alter seasons embrace you  
YOU, emerge yet, as though  
Untouched,  
Even when the garden grows old,  
Youth is yours forever  
It seems. ■

---

\* Poet lives at Jodhpur, Rajasthan.

### **Our Guest - Referees**

**Dr. P C Kambodia**, B S R Govt. College, Alwar, Rajasthan

**Dr. Dayanidhi Pradhan**, Principal, Jaleswar Women's Degree College,  
Dist. Balasore, Odisha

**Dr. Arun Kumar Mishra**, Lajpat Rai P G College, Sahibabad, U P

**Dr. Nandini C. Sen**, Bharati College, Delhi University

**Dr. J. Jayakumar**, Govt. Arts College, Salem, Tamil Nadu

**Dr. Bikram Ku. Mohapatra**, Brahma Barada College, Dist. Jajpur, Odisha

**Dr. R.P. Lokhande**, Principal, Mahavir College, Kolhapur, Maharashtra

**Dr. Shobha Sharma**, NBBG Govt. College, Gangtok, Sikkim

**Dr. Sajal Dey**, EFL University, Shilong Campus

**Dr. Namita Laxmi Jagaddeb**, Mahima Degree College, Jharsuguda, Odisha

**Dr. R.C. Sheila Royappa**, Seetalakshmi Achi College for Women, Pallathur,  
Tamil Nadu

**Dr. Dhrubajyoti Das**, Cotton University, Guwahati, Assam

**Dr. Amrendra Sharma (retd)**, C M College, Darbhanga, Bihar

**Dr. Sayeed Abubakar**, Sirajganj Govt. College, Bangladesh

**Dr. Amar Singh**, Govt. P G College, Chhindwara, M P

**Dr. Radhashyam Dey**, Yogoda Satsang Mahavidyalaya, Ranchi, Jharkhand

**Prof. K. Sripad Bhat**, Goa University, Goa

**Dr. Binu K. Devasy**, Govt. Law College, Thrissur, Kerala

**Dr. Syed Wajahat Hussain**, Govt. Degree College, Poonch, J & K

**Dr. Anuradha Chaudhuri**, Lanka Mahavidyalaya, Dist.- Nagaon, Assam

**Dr. M.S. Wankhede**, Dhanwate National College, Nagpur, Maharashtra

**Dr. Rajendra Padhi**, B.B. College, Chandikhole, Dist.- Jajpur, Odisha

**Prof. P. Kannan**, Davangere University, Karnataka

**Dr. Subash Ch. Rout**, Bhubaneswar, Odisha

**Prof. Neeraj Kumar**, Magadha University, Bodh Gaya, Bihar

**Prof. Pinaki Roy**, Raiganj University, Uttar Dinajpur, W. B.



Dt. 12.09.2018

## Peer-reviewed Journals are at par with UGC Approved Journals

In a bid to make it easier for university and college teachers to earn points to enhance their research score for recruitment and promotion, the University Grants Commission has decided to treat all peer-reviewed journals at par with its own list of approved journals.

The recently-notified UGC minimum qualifications regulations make the point amply clear. The methodology for calculating academic/research score offers points for "research papers in peer reviewed or UGC listed journals". For each paper in languages, humanities, arts, social sciences, library, education, physical education, commerce, management and other related disciplines, teacher will earn 10 points.

The regulations say: "Assessment must be based on evidence produced by the teacher such as copy of publications..." This step has been taken to make recruitment and career growth easier for college and university teachers.