

ROCK PEBBLES

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papers. ■

Editor Speaks.....

Among all the awards given for
active contribution for the welfare of
humanity, the Nobel Prize is the highest and
the most enviable award. Anyone who has
made a genuine and meaningful contribution
to humanity is garnered with this meritorious
award. A careful probe into the Nobel
laureates reveal that they are extraordinary
dreamers who dream not for their personal
welfare but for the collective human welfare.
All of them exude profound intelligence,
stunning creativity and astonishing
flexibility in being open to new experiences.
They possess distinguishable traits like
immense perseverance, incredible humility
and an insatiable zeal to solve besetting
problems of humanity and evince a unique
perception and expression of their ideas.
They refuse to be cowed down by failures
and infuse their diverse interests and
knowledge to probe into the pestering
problems of life and uncover viable solutions
for the benefit of humanity. Seldom
perturbed by censure and praise, they cherish
goals, deemed unattainable by the wide
majority of humanity and generally spend
their whole life-time to reach their long-term
goal.

To top it all, they display a high
degree of self-control and commitment in
all their actions. Thus, Nobel laureates are
“creative polymaths” and the vanguards of
humanity. We, on behalf of Rock Pebbles
family, congratulate Laszlo Krasznahorkai
(Hungary) for Nobel Prize in Literature,
2025. ■

- Editor

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Reclaiming Agency: The Empowered Woman in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*

KM Anjali

Prakash Bhadury

A Doll's House (1879) by Henrik Ibsen occupies a pivotal place in the evolution of modern drama. Nora Helmer's journey from dutiful domesticity to conscious self-liberation exemplifies the assertion of individual agency against bourgeois patriarchy. Drawing upon Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* and Gail Finney's "*Ibsen and Feminism*," this study situates Ibsen as both a dramatist of ethics and a social critic, exposing the structural-functional limitations and hypocrisies inherent in bourgeois domestic life. Nora's transformation transcends the personal, embodying a universal ethical challenge: the reclamation of selfhood and the questioning of social norms that restrict moral and intellectual freedom. The play's enduring significance lies in its reconfiguration of the female protagonist from a passive domestic stereotype to an active force capable of asserting the self, transcending narrow bounds and constraints. Through a combination of close textual analysis and historical contextualisation, this paper argues that Ibsen's work not only anticipates the emergence of feminist consciousness in late nineteenth-century Europe but also continues to inspire the search for a liberated society, resonating as a transformative force. Ultimately, the play transforms the image of the woman from a passive ideal to an active agent of change, blending Ibsen's humanist vision with the ensuing feminist concerns in modern times.

Keywords: Feminism, Freedom, Identity, Individual agency, Patriarchy

Introduction: Henrik Ibsen, one of the world's greatest dramatists, is well known for his poems and plays. His deep and philosophical understanding of human relationships has an undeniable impact on the development of literature in the 19th and 20th centuries. Among all the social issues, he is very much concerned about the position of women in society. Nora, the main protagonist of *A Doll's House*, leaves her house at the end of the play in search of her own identity. This mindset makes Nora a powerful woman not only for herself but also for the other females of the society. When this play was published, a tag of feminism was given to Ibsen because the play shows the many traits of feminism, which took place after the publication of this play.

Feminism is a literary theory which talks about social, political, and economic equality that happens between the two sexes. The global idea of feminism refers to the belief that men and women both deserve equality in all fields, as equality in opportunity, equality in treatment, equality in respect and equality in social rights. It talks about issues like reproductive rights, domestic violence, maternity leave, equal pay, sexual harassment, discrimination, sexual violence and patriarchy. It crosses class and boundaries. It is culturally specific and talks about the issues related to the women of that society. It talks about universal themes as rape, incest, and mothering, which are a part of every society. Women also need freedom, equality, and social rights, which make them powerful and equal to men in society.

Simon De Beauvoir is a French writer, feminist, intellectual and social theorist whose "Second Sex" opens with a question: What is a woman? The title Second Sex refers to a female, while the first sex is a male. Men have this ideology that they will always try to oppress women by characterising them as the other. It is always defined in opposition to men. What man is not a woman? If we say a woman is emphatic, a man is courageous, so the opposite of a man is a woman. Courage is a beautiful thing, and the opposite of courage is a characteristic of a female. Beauvoir says that it is important to look at the history, mythology and see how women are represented there. She discusses various mythical characters and says that these myths have imprinted human consciousness. In all these myths, females are not represented as an ideal match for a man; rather, a man is portrayed as essential, absolute and transcendent, whereas females are represented as inessential, incomplete and mutilated.

To make this point, she says that if you look at the works of famous people, for instance Aristotle, he himself said that 'the female is a female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities' (*Generation of Animals* II.3, 737a2729). His argument of women as mutilated men is grounded on his perception of a certain lack of form and feature that is different from maleness, and Beauvoir critiques it to support her view that women are defined as something lacking, deficient or dependent on men in classical philosophy. Similarly, St. Thomas Aquinas viewed women as "an imperfect man" and "an incidental being," since the male alone possesses the active generative principle (*Summa Theologica* I, q. 92, art. 1). History is blamed for representing females in a negative light. Beauvoir poignantly asserts in this context that, "One is not born but rather becomes a woman" (267). Her primary thesis is that men fundamentally oppress women by characterising them on every level as the other. The experiences of females have been neglected by conventional society. She says that our societies are patriarchal, and a woman must break the bonds to be herself as a human being.

Meanwhile, Ibsen, in a document made for *A Doll's House*, declares that "a woman cannot be herself in the society of the present day, which is an exclusively masculine society with laws framed by men and with a judicial system that judges feminine from a masculine point of view" (Meyer 90). Before coming into the light of the feminist movement, started by Virginia Woolf, Simone de Beauvoir, Helen Cixous and others, Ibsen was very concerned about the ill treatment of women in society. In the Norwegian Women's Rights League on 26 May 1898, Ibsen asserts:

Henrik Ibsen himself remarked, “I have been more poet and less social philosopher than people generally seem inclined to believe. [...] I am not even quite clear as to just what this woman’s rights movement really is. To me, it has seemed a problem of mankind in general [...] my task has been the description of humanity” (Innes 26).

Ibsen does not talk about any particular group or class, or gender. He talks about all humanity, so he is called a humanist rather than a feminist. He believes in truth, freedom and self-realisation. Like a socialist, he wants to bring a change in the condition of women because the condition of women was very pathetic at that time in society.

Ibsen observes that women are suffering a lot due to their position in society. So, like a humanist, he is very much concerned about the improvement of women’s position, their rights, and their being neglected in society. So repeating themes in his plays are heredity, an untrue system of marriage, women’s education, motherhood, platonic love and women’s place in family and society. Among all these themes, the most important themes which Ibsen liked most are freedom, individuality, self-realisation and liberation. He sees that these things have been deleted from the fabric of society, especially in the case of women. He becomes a great supporter of women in society. He says that women’s freedom and individuality have been taken away by men. Ibsen does not give his opinion through his characters; he “gives the reader the impression of experiencing a piece of reality” (Wellek6). Ibsen believes that all human beings have equal rights, whether he is a male or female. In this male-dominated society, females also need to gain their freedom and individuality to establish themselves as equals to males.

A Doll’s House is a story about a submissive wife, Nora, whose husband, Torvald, is a dominant kind of personality. He strongly believes in a patriarchal society. But when Nora gains self-realisation, she comes to know about her position in society as well as in her house. She is not ready to accept the norms of a male-dominated society. She breaks all the shackles of male-dominated society and comes out of these shackles to establish herself as a powerful and independent lady. *A Doll’s House* presents a challenge to that society in which people have to suffer due to the pressure of general opinion. This play talks about social problems in general and individuals in particular. Ibsen presents this idea through the character of Nora. She lives in a society in which females are considered victims and society is a victimiser. But Nora challenges this notion of society and breaks this mentality of the people. After self-realisation, she emerges as a new woman.

When the journey of Nora’s self-realisation begins, she observes her previous life before her marriage and after her marriage. She realises that she has lived a passive, meek, dependent life like a doll in beautiful surroundings. This knowledge of self-realisation inspired her to search for her lost and neglected values in masculine society. Hence, she took a severe step of leaving her home and children to establish her own identity that is against conventional and public opinion of masculine society. When the play opens, it seems that Nora lives a peaceful and happy life, and her husband Torvald loves her a lot, and Nora is everything to

her. But as the play progresses, it becomes clear that Torvald loves Nora's artificiality. He is very much concerned about his social position as name, fame and money than Nora. Nora makes many sacrifices for the sake of her husband and her family, but in Torvald's eyes, there is no meaning to her sacrifice. When Torvald was critically ill, she took a step of forgery to save her husband without revealing the act of forgery and took him to Italy under the medical recommendation. She strongly believes that if one day Torvald comes to know about this secret, he will take her side and protect her. But when the time comes, he takes his step back and starts blaming Nora for this unachievable and unacceptable task for a female. At this point, Nora realises that she is just a puppet in her husband's hands.

The play focuses on the position of women in marriage and in society. The play deals with the time when women are not allowed to make any decisions on their own behalf. Everything was decided by the males. Females can give their indirect suggestions in family matters and decisions, or troubles, but the final decision is taken by the males. As Ibsen himself in 'Notes for Modern Tragedy' (1878) emphasises, "a woman cannot be herself in modern society. It is an exclusively male society" (Meyer 1971 b). The things which are imposed on females by the male-dominated society, she considers as her fate. In this kind of society, she remains in a dilemma because there is a conflict between her natural feelings and social beliefs and that leads her toward destruction. A female has to suppress her feelings and desires on every level, whether she is a daughter, wife or mother. All three phases of life can be seen in the life of Nora, where she has to suppress her desires.

As a wife, Nora has to do all those things which are liked by her husband. She likes eating macarons, but she eats them by hiding from Torvald. Torvald scolds Nora for eating macarons, claiming they may spoil her teeth. This incident reveals that his concern lies not in her preferences or happiness, but in preserving her beauty—something he values as part of his own pride and pleasure. Nora, therefore, appears to him as a charming possession, an object of amusement rather than an equal partner. Yet, beneath this façade of obedience and frivolity, Nora conceals a bold and independent spirit that she keeps hidden from both her husband and society. This latent strength gradually guides her towards self-realisation and a sense of duty to herself. Her courageous actions—taking a loan, committing forgery, and striving to repay it—demonstrate remarkable independence in a period when such deeds were strictly forbidden for women. Through these experiences, Nora comes to recognise that the capabilities and responsibilities traditionally reserved for men can equally be undertaken by women. When Krogstad blames Nora for the act of forgery, that was against the law at that time. On this, Nora says to him:

"I don't believe it. Is a daughter not to be allowed to spare her dying father anxiety and care? Is a wife not to be allowed to save her husband's life? I don't know much about law, but I am certain that there must be laws permitting such things as that" (18).

When Nora decides on her own behalf without the knowledge of her husband, it gives her natural pleasure because she feels a kind of freedom. Nora's act of repaying the loan is

daring. Torvald usually accuses Nora of being an irresponsible, spendthrift and immature lady regarding her family responsibilities. But she seems to be a very responsible, mature and money-saving lady. When she repays the large debt in instalments, she sacrifices her own wishes by doing a lot of odd jobs in order to save money. Her working for a copy house sometimes seems to her tiring, but she finds immense pleasure in doing this because it is like being a man for her. In the eyes of Mrs Lynde, Nora is a child regarding the burdens and troubles of life, and she feels that her life has been more difficult than Nora's life. When Nora reveals the truth of taking a loan to Mrs Lynde, she is surprised to know about this because it was a daring and imaginative task for a female at that time. As Nora says to Mrs Lynde: "You look down upon me.... I too have something to be proud and glad of. It was I who saved Torvald's life" (10).

Nora's love for Torvald is true, deep and serious, but Torvald's love for Nora is artificial and oppressive. Before her self-realisation, Nora was not aware of the true nature of her love with Torvald. When Krogstad blackmails her to reveal her crime to Torvald, she is not concerned about herself, but she is very much concerned about Torvald's feelings because she loves him so much that she does not want to hurt him. But Torvald never understands her love due to his male ego. She observes that her marriage with Torvald for eight years has been like prostitution, and she says to Torvald.

"You have never loved me, you just thought it was fun to be in love with me... I have learned now that certain laws are different from what I'd imagined them to be.... But now I intend to learn. I must try to satisfy myself, which is right, society or I" (66).

After knowing her position in society as a daughter, wife and mother, many questions arise in her mind regarding her existence. She says:

"Yes, it is so, Torvald. While I was at home with my father, he used to tell me all his opinions, and I held the same opinions. If I had others say anything about them because he would not have liked it. He used to call me his doll child and play with me as I played with my dolls. Then I came to live in your house" (66).

She says that a house means to her a playroom in which a doll lives for playing. Torvald calls Nora with different names as little skylark, chirping bird and songbird but at the same time, he forgets that birds also need freedom and they can fly in the sky. When Nora realises her freedom, she is not ready to live in this cage much more. Ibsen says that his intention in the play is not to support the females, but rather to explore their freedom and individuality. As Ibsen's biographer Meyer says, "that the primary duty of anyone was to find out who he and she really was and to become that person" (1971:456). Slowly, Nora begins to be more mature in her situation, and a lot of questions arise in her mind regarding her existence. To find the answer, she leaves the house after realising her duties towards herself. She says: "I have other duties equally sacred, my duties towards myself.... I must think things out for myself, and try to get clear about them... I believe that I am first and foremost a human being like you" (68).

From the foregoing analyses, it can be said that a woman is not just a puppet of male's hands, she has her own freedom, point of view and share of respect which is equal to a man. Nora's decision to desert her duties as a wife and mother and find the truth about herself was criticised by conventional society, but by deciding on her self-discovery, Nora emerges as a bold and powerful lady of her time, and she has become a role model for other females for future generations. Nora's closing the door is an indication of a new era for women. As Gail Finney says, "that when she closes the door on her husband and children, she opens the way to the turn-of-the-century women's movement" (91).

Conclusion

The play redefines the dramatic and moral landscape of nineteenth-century realism by granting the protagonist a voice for change. Nora's departure from her domestic confines signifies not abandonment but affirmation—an assertion of individuality against the weight of social prescription. Examined through the critical lens of Beauvoir's notion of woman as "the Other," Nora rises above the existential dilemma and proclaims her selfhood, breaking the shackles of dependence that are viewed as a noble feminine quality. From Meyer's biographical details, it surfaces that Ibsen's concern was never narrowly feminist but profoundly humanistic. He attempted to spread the message of authenticity and integrity for both genders. However, by portraying Nora as a figure of moral courage and intellectual awakening, he positioned the woman as the catalyst for transformation and the embodiment of ethical advancement. Ultimately, *A Doll's House* transcends its historical context to remain an enduring text for the reclamation of agency, where the woman, once a symbol of subjugation and docility, emerges as the reckoning force of change in the male-oriented patriarchal order in modern times. ■

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Literature as Cultural Dialogue: Revisiting Verses, Legends and Folklore on Shree Jagannath of Puri

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In the era of global homogenization, literature as culture dialogue merits attention. Literature in true sense connotes verses, legends, folklores, and the statements that can be used for cultural progress. Literature on Shree Jagannath, the Lord of the universe is based upon cultural dialogues because the people from different cultural groups: the Hindus, the Buddhists, the Jains, the Muslims, and the tribals talk about Him. Shree Jagannath, the presiding Deity of the universe, creates enigma around him which no human can ignore. Literature on Him dwells upon tremendous creative energy of the Lord – the energy that creates, beautifies, nurtures and harmonizes all discordant elements. So, an intensive study of such literature is imperative in a war-torn world. It is replete with symbols: *Sudarshan Chakra* that Shree Jagannath holds stands for progress, peace, prosperity and perfection. The appearance of Trinity - *Jagannath*, *Balabhadra* and *Subhadra* is not full-fledged because no human endeavour can be completely perfect. It is the sense of incompleteness or inconclusiveness that drives the humans to struggle. The objective of this article is to assess literature on Shree Jagannath as cultural dialogue. In fact, the literary creations on Lord Jagannath are rooted in three keywords – aspiration, rejection and surrender. These three terms are significant in context of unity in cultural diversity. In this article the verses of the saint poets, the popular legends on Lord have been analyzed, in order to point out that revisiting literature on Shree Jagannath is sure to open out new vistas for peaceful co-existence in a multicultural world. The saint poets: Bhima Bhoi, Balaram Das, Salabega and Kabir have been chosen to reinforce the idea that they are the torch bearers of cosmic culture – a culture that makes our planet beautiful and bountiful.

Keywords: Saint Poets, Harmony, Struggle, Incompleteness, Surrender

Literature As Cultural Dialogue merits attention of progressive thinkers, philanthropists and harbingers of better civilizations in a war-torn world of ours. The main

objectives of cultural dialogues is to promote mutual understanding, harmonious co-existence in a multi-cultural society. Shree Jagannath of Puri has attracted the attention of pilgrims, poets, philosophers, and above all, the exponents of diverse cultures. Literature written on Him makes a vibrant reading. In this article devotional verses, popular legends, age-old, folklores are selected in order to present the glory of Sree Jagannath culture which is inclusive in character. The Hindus, the Buddhists, the Jains hold the presiding Deity of Puri in high esteem. The devoted Muslim like Salabega is all praises for the Lord; his dedication for the Lord evident in his devotional verses stands unparalleled in the religious history of Odisha. The famous legend of *Dasia Bauri* is popular. He hails from the riff-raff of the society but offers coconut from a distance; miraculously it falls on the hands of Jagannath the enigmatic Lord. *Dasia* the untouchable by the high-caste Brahmin is accepted by Lord of the universe. The message of the legend is clear; Lord does not discriminate on the grounds of caste which is accidental. Thus the verses and legends written on Shree Jagannath reflect that Lord stands for amity, unity, and cultural harmony. Dr. Mayadhar Mansingh, a distinguished litterateur, terms Shree Jagannath culture as “eclectic” culture (Mansingh :264) The term eclectic refers to the choice of the best of styles or approaches. Dr. Mansingh categorically views that Shree Jagannath culture is the synthesis of profound cultures of the world. The uniqueness of culture lies in the sublime ideas of Fatherhood of God, Motherhood of Nature, Brotherhood of men and Neighborhood of pain. Mansingh invites the attention of the readers to the role of compassionate Jagannath as PATITAPABANA, the redeemer of the fallen. (264) He views that Lord Jagannath has “assimilated strange contradictions in a manner that is most amazing in the history of religious thought” in fact the proponents and practitioners of Shree Jagannath culture aspire for perfection: profane and spiritual. The engraving of physical relationship between the couple on the external part of the temple at Puri is suggestive of consummation of ecstatic love in physical union; the worship of the Lord inside the temple points to the realization of spiritual communion with the Lord of the universe. Thus, Shree Jagannath culture harmoniously blends the terrestrial with the celestial.

This paper is divided into four sections: the opening section is the introduction in which the keywords in the title of the topic are spelt out. The objectives of literature as cultural dialogue are spelt out. Shree Jagannath as Lord of the Universe is introduced though a short introduction on Him is impossible. The section II deals with devotional verses and their thought-provoking analyses. In this section the literary grandeur of the poets and glory of the Lord are brought out. It is also shown how there is a perfect marriage between the theme of the verses and its style. The tone of the speaker is brought to light – be it aggrieved or jubilant or excited or anxious. The notion of surrender before the Lord of the universe is delineated. Section III dwells upon popular legends and folklore prevalent in Odisha. These stories highlight the magnificence of Lord Jagannath. These stories not only delight but also instruct. They educate human sensibility; the section IV is the conclusion. It summarizes the earlier sections with original comments on the title of the topic. It is perceived that literature on Shree Jagannath as cultural dialogue deserves appreciation.

II

Of all the verses that have been composed on Lord Jagannath, the short lyric of Kabir, the saint poet arrests the attention of the research scholars and the devotees of Lord Jagannath. Kabir in his prayer to the Lord gives vent to his feelings which are reverential and sublime. The poet looks upon the Lord as the “master dyer”. The dyer is the person who dyes, Kabir feels that his life is colourless without the blessings of the Lord. This poem has been quoted and requoted by the scholars on Shree Jagannath the mysterious lord. The poem reads as follows:

The Lord is a master dyer
It's he who dyed my scarf
He has replaced all the stains
With the shades of love
Far from fading when it's washed
It brightens everyday
He poured this colour in a tub
Whose water brims with feelings
He scrubbed the sorrows and the filth
And dyed the scarf with skill
The Lord who did all this work
My beloved, wise and kind
My body, heart, wealth and life
Are all just for him
Kabir says the great dyer
Looks kindly upon me
Shielded by this cooling scarf
I am so fulfilled

(Quoted by Prof. S.C Panigrahi and Dr. Bibhudha Ranjan in the opening page)

Kabir the seer - poet pictures the Lord as the symbol of boundless love, creativity and compassion. The word “dye” has been used with “dyer”; it means the creation cannot be separated from the creator. If this world is lovely, diverse, puzzling, it is due to Lord the creator. In between the lines emerge the qualities of the Lord. He is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. But for Him this creation will lose all colours – variety, mystery, and beauty. The Lord is powerful because he is the embodiment of love – love that heals, creates, and removes filth. This verse educates that all humans should possess and nurture love in such a manner that life on this earth will be beautiful, colourful and meaningful. Kabir writes the solution to the existential predicament – disease, decay and death. He echoes Einstein's belief that if there is no God we will have to create Him for our own problems. Thus, the Lord of the universe is the source of creative energy. Here the poet echoes the feeling of William Wordsworth “The motion and the spirit that impels through all things

(Tintern Abbey:)"

The rounded eyes of Lord Jagannath remind every devotee to refrain oneself from doing the evil because Lord is the witness to everything. Here, The verse of Ramanujan is worth-quoting:

“When all the world is the eye of the Lord,
on looking everywhere, what can you
cover and conceal?” (131)

Ramanujandepicts the Lord of the universe as omnipresent who restrains the humans from doing the evil. The evil is that which destroys the smooth flow of life. Lord inspires and ennoblesthe thought-process of every mortal to do the right thing in a mysterious way.

Bhima Bhoi is another important poet in the tradition of devotional poetry written in glorification of Lord Jagannath. SitakantMahapatra translates his verses into English from *StutiChintamani*Below is written the description of Shree Jagannath:

He has no hands, no feet
Who indeed can hold him?
Rarely one can see
The original shape of this Brahma.
He has no belly, no waist
Truly with our human intelligence
No one can comprehend him.
In all the three worlds
There is none like him of peaceable nature.
He is indifferent to both praise and blameprofit and loss. (Bhoi: 51)

The material and the visible appearance of Lord Jagannath of Puri gets delineated in colloquial idioms; the verbal melody of these lines is perceived by the readers. The aesthetic of devotional verse is experienced. These stanzas teach that the Lord of the universe is callous to commercial ventures as well as the gossips, rumours, and remarks of the humans who are imperfect human beings. The Lord is beyond comprehension; he can be approached only through the intensity of devotion. He is the incarnation of peace – the peace that can only be experienced; it is beyond reasoning. The remarkable line in the passage that Lord Jagannath who is visible to all his devotes at Puri is the “original shape of *Brahma*”(51). Thus, the two worlds: the visible and the invisible, the concrete and the abstract, the physical and the metaphysical are delineated in suggestive poetic diction. The verse is in dialogic form; the poet addresses Lord, questions Him and glorifies him. Thus this verse of Bhima Bhoi transmits transcendental culture; transcendentalism as a culture is superior to materialism because it is based upon search for peace and harmony rather than madness for accumulation of wealth.

Salabega, an important Odia saint-poetsings as follows :

“Even though I am a Muslim by birth,
you are my Lord and God.”
“O Lord with the blue wheel(chakra),
Please remove my suffering swiftly.”

The songs of Salabega, the Muslim by birth reflect his unflinching devotion to the Lord which goes beyond religious boundary. Balaram Das, a Hindu and a noted Odia poet of 15th century, known as one of the *Pancha Sakha*, merits attention for his deep bhakti towards Lord Jagannath:

“I am your servant, O Jagannath;
shower your mercy upon me.”

Das is a staunch devotee of Lord Jagannath; his verses are similar to those of Salabega. Both the poets have unbounded faith in the Lord. In fact faith in the Lord is beyond reasoning; it is not without reasoning. Thus, the idea of surrender is supra-rational.

A close review of the verses of Lord Jagannath reveals that every human should understand the relation between creature, creation and creator; he or she should perceive harmony in the universe. The way to realization is through unconditional surrender before the Lord. In fact such realisation is the hallmark of universal culture – culture that binds humans, animals and plants of the universe together in order to enforce the idea that this creation is not without purpose. Life on this planet is meaningful, not absurd. Thus Shree Jagannath culture reflects positive mental attitude; there is no room for despondency. If the verses are analysed in the light of “Touchstone” method of Matthew Arnold they will be the finest specimens of poetry which act as cultural dialogue between different groups to promote harmony. In our analysis of three poets of different cultural backgrounds; Kabir from Hindu Vaishnava and Sufi Muslim tradition, Salabega from Muslim religious group and Balaram Das from Hindu tradition a unanimous view emerges – all the three poets glorify Shree Jagannath; they demolish absurdity as existential predicament.

III

The legends and folklore on Lord Jagannath are interesting, brain - stimulating and educative in nature. Dr. Mansinha writes the story behind *Nilamadhava* and analyzes *Sarala Das*’s Odia *Mahabharata* of 15th century and comments:

“The story in the Oriya Mahabharata establishes two facts. First, Jagannatha is no other than Krishna, and, secondly he is the god, both of the Aryans and the non-Aryans.” (271)

Mansinha narrates the story as follows:

“Krishna died of the poisonous effect of the misdirected arrow of a Savara, named Jara. When his dead body was cremated, his heart,

of all organs of his holy body, defied the action of fire. It was therefore thrown into the sea. Penitent Jara followed the holy heart all along the sea-board of the Indian sub-continent and rescued it from the waves on the east coast of Orissa. By a miracle, the divine heart had turned, by that time, into a blue stone. Jara worshipped it with all the devotion; he was capable of and after him his descendants did likewise.” (271-72)

Thus, the author reflects on the close similarities between Shree Krishna and Lord Jagannath and focuses on divine miracle. In the entire passage the word “Blue” acquires special significance. In fact, the word “Blue” is associated with vastness or expansiveness. The reason for worship of Lord Jagannath is to expand one’s own self. Thus, the legend teaches to expand one’s own life. It echoes the statement of Vivekananda that “expansion or dynamism is life”.

In the literary work *Jagannath The Mysterious Lord*, Prof. Kunjabihari Das, submits a critical article. In this article entitled as “Jagannath-A Folklore study” the eminent folklorist narrates the story of Indradyumna, Lalita, Vidyapati, Viswavasv and holds the opinion that Jagannath culture is based upon the blending of two cultures: Brahmanic and Tribal. It is cosmopolitan in nature. Galamadhava is punished for not admitting Truth.

The folklore about Galamadhava is fascinating. Here, interesting characters like “Bhusanda”, the four-handed crow-God, “the tortoise figure”. They reveal the truth about the construction of the temple of Lord Jagannath. The shrine of Lord Jagannath was built at the cost of rigorous labour of hundreds of dedicated labourers. As the tortoise speaks the humans turned into tortoise in performing such a stupendous task.

The legends and folklore on Lord Jagannath reveal that the original shrine of Lord Jagannath (*The Daru Brahma*) was possible due to divine interference. The old man who lifted the log of wood is no other than *Viswakarma* - the divine engineer.

Thus, the study of legends and folklore on Lord Jagannath exhibit passion for selfless service and quest for Truth, which is the quintessence of humanistic culture.

IV

To conclude, literature on Shree Jagannath serves as cultural dialogue; a study of it enables one to perceive cosmic culture which transcends the limitations of any cultural group. Amity, Harmony, Equality and Fraternity which are the watch-words of a progressive world culture are perceived. Lord Jagannath symbolizes unity in the midst of diversity, harmony in disharmony, discovery of meaning in apparently absurd phenomena. Literature on Him serves as the medium of transmission of cultural values like conservation of ecology, compassion for the weak, devotion, that is, purified love for the Creator of the universe, respect for the sentiments of woman, annihilating ego in a gradual process, enlightening the self about the consciousness of soul and super soul and so on. Thus such literature teaches

how to bridge cultural divide, mitigate fanaticism, understand the nuances of diverse cultural traditions and achieve consensus against communal violence. Literature on Shree Jagannath enables a perceptive reader to undertake a journey within self: a journey from ego to realisation of soul – such a journey is the essence of all the progressive cultures of humanity. The conviction of Kofi Annan, the former Secretary General of UNO that diversity is a cultural virtue and “dialogue” can triumph over “discord” is felt when one analyses literatures on Shree Jagannath and tries to live by the principles and ideas that they stand for. ■

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William Shakespeare's English: A Source of Inspiration in the Indian Classrooms.

Akshay Yardi

English in India functions in several distinct ways depending on the social setting. In metropolitan centres, it operates largely as the language of instruction and everyday communication among educated and affluent groups. In contrast, in rural regions and smaller towns, English often fails to evoke interest, and for many, it continues to appear distant and difficult. Because of this gap, the richness and artistic value of English literature remain inaccessible to a large section of the population. One way of bridging this divide is through the works of William Shakespeare. His writings offer an approachable entry into the English language. Shakespeare introduced and popularised a remarkable number of words and idiomatic expressions, and he used English with a freedom that did not confine him to strict grammatical norms. Much of his language becomes clear when read in context. Beyond his profound understanding of human nature, reflected vividly through his characters, he also stands as a major contributor to the development of English. This paper examines Shakespeare's linguistic contribution and argues that approaching his works from a language-centred perspective can generate renewed interest in English among Indian learners. Such an approach may help students realise that English is not an intimidating subject, but one that can be learnt with confidence and enjoyment.

Keywords: Culture, Familiarisation, Modern English, Shakespeare, Vocabulary, English Language Teaching,

Introduction:

Language is a product of the soil in which it is born. It is a by-product of people's culture. English was brought to the Indian soil as a new language during the British colonial occupation. Once a foreign language to several colonies of the British Commonwealth countries, English has grown to be a global language today. Although the British Government introduced English as a medium of instruction in India in 1835 based on the advice and proposal of T. B. Macaulay, it remains alien to specific sections of Indian society. Most rural and non-elites in India are still naïve to English despite their contact with it for over 200 years. An attitude of dislike and aversion has kept several Indians away from English,

although it is one of the languages taught from the secondary school level in several states. There are several barriers that Indians face while learning English. Some of the prominent barriers are:

- i Difficulty in pronunciation due to the non-phonetic nature of Modern English
- ii Difficulty in understanding culture-specific vocabulary and idiomatic expressions
- iii Difficulty in understanding sentence patterns which deviate from those of native Indian languages.
- iv Lack of exposure to spoken and colloquial English in Indian society

These barriers are significant hurdles for an average village-living Indian to learn English efficiently and easily. Moreover, teaching the English language at the primary level starts by introducing the alphabet rather than its sounds first, unlike the process in which one learns the mother tongue. This adds to the difficulty in learning English. These are the reasons teaching English has remained a challenge in India.

Time for a New Approach: Mostly, English is taught through the introduction of the alphabet and grammar. However, it is time for a new approach in Indian classrooms (especially at the school level) where English could be taught through Spoken Communication first, then through cultural familiarisation of vocabulary, idioms, sentence constructions and eventually through the written aspects. The second aspect, i.e., cultural familiarisation of vocabulary, is where William Shakespeare and several other makers of English play a significant role in teaching the English language.

Cultural Familiarisation through Native Vocabulary: A language becomes easy when one understands the practices, contexts and nuances of the culture in which it is born. Therefore, it is necessary to become familiar with the cultural contexts of British society to understand the language. William Shakespeare (1564-1616), who contributed immensely to the English language, is undoubtedly one of the greatest icons of British culture during the sixteenth century. His creative masterpieces, including 37 plays, 154 sonnets and two long narrative poems, mainly showcase many themes, characters, and historical heroes of England and several European nations. In his works, Shakespeare has also used an unconventional English language that was beyond the limitations of the grammar of his time. Shakespeare's creative output was a product of the Renaissance, which had impacted Europe in the sixteenth century. A highly patriotic reign of Queen Elizabeth ensured the production of the best of English poetry and literature in sixteenth-century England. Shakespeare was a contemporary of the university wits who contributed to developing drama and theatres in England.

Shakespeare made the best use of all the available resources for his cultural conditions, and he experimented with the plays he wrote. He chose stories from histories and legends that were popular in his time. Plutarch's *Lives* is one of the most important

sources for the stories he has brought out in the form of theatrical performances. Plenty of Shakespeare's dramas are based on the biographical sketches of the classical Greek, Roman and Italian heroic characters – a clear proof of the influence of the Renaissance upon the British society during his time. Shakespeare wrote sonnets, another form of literature that was originally Italian. He lived when Englishmen were heavily influenced by Latin grammar, Greek and Roman epics, and other forms of literature. Thus, reading Shakespeare can make one acquainted with England's cultural contexts and situations during the sixteenth century. It is the same century in which we see the emergence of early modern English.

Shakespeare's Use of Specialist Language: William Shakespeare was a specialist who used words from various fields of his contemporary times. His plays showcase an extensive range of military terms, legal terms, medical terms and the slang that people of England used at the time. Some of these terms have become obsolete; however, Shakespeare gave these words literary permanence. The invention of words was one of his most incredible talents, but popularising words from colloquial and local dialects significantly contributed to English.

Heloise Senechal¹, a Shakespearean scholar, has pointed out some of the specialist vocabulary popularised by Shakespeare. She has given the meanings in *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* (2008), published by The Royal Shakespeare Company and Macmillan. In *King Lear*, Shakespeare has used some military terms such as 'press-money' (money paid to military recruits when they were conscripted), 'gauntlet' (armoured glove thrown down as a challenge to a duel) and 'brown-bills' (long handled weapons, painted or varnished brown and topped with axe-like blades; or soldiers carrying such weapons). He also used the onomatopoeic expression 'hewgh' to imitate the sound of an arrow as it flies through the air. Senechal has also enumerated some words related to the law and legal practice, popularised by Shakespeare. She records the use of words and their meanings such as 'deed' (act/crime), 'dateless bargain (eternal contract, stamped with an official seal), 'engrossing' (writing in manner appropriate to legal documents), 'recognizances' (legal documents acknowledging debts), 'double vouchers' (practice of two people vouching for a claimant's ownership of a land) and 'conveyances' (deeds relating to the transfer of land and property) among several other legal terms popularised by Shakespeare.

Apart from legal and military jargon, Shakespeare extensively used medical terms in his plays and popularised them in the literary language. Words such as 'wormwood' (to express bitter taste, a sharp-tasting medicinal plant was used to purge the digestive tract of worms) and 'Sweet marjoram' (Edgar invents a password that relates to Lear's headgear and to the plant's alleged medicinal properties in treating brain disorders; it was also used to treat shortness of breath, from which Lear suffers elsewhere in the play). Senechal's exploration of such specialist vocabulary in Shakespeare's plays has helped to understand the intelligence of the playwright and his wisdom in the purposeful employment of such specialist vocabulary. Therefore, we must try a new approach by reintroducing William Shakespeare's works (in parts) in English textbooks right from the school level to familiarise Indian students with the English culture and society.

Versatility in William Shakespeare’s Language: William Shakespeare’s plays are versatile in content, and so is his language. He was a romantic in his spirit when it came to the use of language. By coining and inventing new words and phrases, he reflected the richness of the language spoken in several parts of England. Lorena Macedo² mentions in her article, “Shakespeare was incredibly well-acquainted with the English of the time. So much so that he used upward of 20,000 words in his works and provided the first noted use of 1,700 words in the English language.” (Macedo). No doubt, Shakespeare was an unorthodox user of English. He rejected the rigidity of the grammatical rules and vocabulary of the English language, which was highly influenced by Latin during his time. He rejects Latin in his own fashion in his plays. For him, Greek and Latin were foreign languages that he did not hold much of a fancy for. He even goes to the extent of rejecting the Greek language due to its alienation from English when he makes Cassius say in *Julius Caesar*, “...for mine own part, it was Greek to me...” (*JC* Act I, Sc. II) (Ervine 864). Here, the meaning of the word ‘Greek’ itself has been changed by Shakespeare, because here, by ‘Greek’, he means ‘a foreign and alienating language that is difficult to understand’. On the other hand, he made use of the spoken dialects in his works, thus giving a more authentic touch to the colloquial English of his time. Several words and expressions such as ‘fairyland’, ‘lament’, ‘dishearten’, ‘go-between’ (Mathew 879) and phrases such as ‘a fool’s paradise’, ‘a tower of strength’, ‘elbow-room’, ‘come full circle’, ‘the naked truth’, ‘murder most foul’, ‘play fast and loose’ (Mathew 879-880) and many more invented or first used by him have remained as a permanent in the English vocabulary even to this day. This is why he becomes extremely relevant in English language studies even in the twenty-first century.

Dominance of Meaning over Grammar: Language is a tool of communication. Grammatical rules and vocabulary change with time and space. In practical life situations, the meaning of sentences becomes more important than grammatical rules. Perhaps Shakespeare knew this dynamic nature of language. Therefore, we see several non-grammatical expressions and sentence patterns in his plays. Shakespeare was a player with words and sentences. He changed the very nature of words, such as making a verb out of a noun, an adjective out of a noun and so on. Although these experiments did not adhere to grammatical conventions, due to the immense popularity of his plays and sonnets, his newly coined words, phrases, expressions, and sentences freely floated into the vocabulary of modern English.

We see several examples of Shakespeare using language in a free and unhesitant manner in his plays. The usual sentence structure, S-V-O, was dismantled by Shakespeare in many places. For example: “Full of vexation come I, with complaint against my child...” (*AMND* Act. I, Sc. I) (Ervine 167). Here, the subject-verb agreement is reversed (Instead of “I come full of vexation”), yet the meaning is clear to the reader without any trouble. Similar reversal of the subject-verb pattern is seen in several other dialogues, such as “To do observance to a morn of May, There will I stay for thee.” (*AMND* Act I, Sc. I) (Ervine 169). Here we can also observe how the usual rule of keeping the adverbial at the end is reversed. The word ‘there’ is kept before the S-V combination.

Shakespeare makes the language look easier by skipping the main verb in sentences. Several of his dialogues, in which the action of 'going' is referred to, are told without even using the actual verb, and yet the meaning is crystal clear to the readers. "Sing me now asleep; Then to your offices, and let me rest." (*AMND* Act II, Sc. III) (Ervine 173). In this dialogue, it becomes clear that the character is ordering someone to go to their work; however, it is told without uttering the word 'go'. Similarly, the word 'go' is conveniently let off in the dialogue, "So awake when I am gone; For I must to Oberon." (*AMND* Act II, Sc. III) (Ervine 174) and yet the meaning becomes clear. A few other examples are: "While I in this affair do the employ, I'll to my queen, and beg her Indian boy..." (*AMND* Act III, Sc. II) (Ervine 181)."And come, young Cato; let us to the field." (*JC* Act V, Sc. IV) (Ervine 887). In a specific dialogue such as "What, shall we forth?" (*JC* Act III, Sc. I) (Ervine 874) and "And thither will I straight to visit him" (*JC* Act III, Sc. II), we see that Shakespeare uses the words 'forth' and 'straight' not as prepositions but as a verb (that indicated the action of 'going'). He also used simple pronouns in place of reflexive pronouns that we often use in modern English without disrupting the meaning of the sentence. Instead of 'myself', 'him'/'herself' or 'herself', he uses 'me', 'he' and 'she' in several dialogues. One can observe the following examples where the meaning is conveyed without even the use of the reflexive pronoun: "I am, my lord, as well deriv'd as he" (*AMND* Act I, Sc. I) (Ervine 168). "You do their work, and they shall have good luck: Are you not he?" (*AMND* Act II, Sc. I) (Ervine 171). "My legs can keep no pace with my desires. Here will I rest me till the break of day" (*AMND* Act III, Sc. II) (Ervine 182)

Shakespeare enjoyed the freedom of using the language as he liked. As he avoids verbs, he also avoids prepositions in several of his dialogues, without confusing the reader about the meaning. Despite grammatically incorrect sentence patterns, the reader can make out what exactly the characters say in their dialogues. Shakespeare was well aware of the fact that a language can generate meaning through context and not through grammatical rules. Skipping the preposition 'to' is another common feature in Shakespeare's sentences, which can be observed here: "Why, there was a crown offered him; and being offered him, he put it by with the back of his hand..." (*JC* Act I, Sc. II) (Ervine 863). "Have you the lion's part written? Pray you, if it be, give it me, for I am slow of study..." (*AMND* Act I, Sc. II) (Ervine 170). "His private arbours, and new-planted orchards/ On this side Tiber; he hath left them you." (*JC* Act III, Sc. II). Shakespeare's language is most spontaneous in several places. The way he frames questions looks pretty logical and most natural. His frequent use of 'wherefore' as a question word instead of 'why' is logically appropriate and natural in connection with its answer word 'therefore'. Similarly, a question like "What is 't o'clock?" (*JC* Act II, Sc. II) (Ervine 871) looks too close to the natural answer one gives when time is asked. These intelligible and most natural expressions make Shakespeare a unique contributor to the simplification of English.

Shakespeare's creativity also lies in the way he converts usual nouns into verbs. The classical and extremely surprising usages are seen when he uses the words 'father' and

‘husband’ as verbs rather than nouns. “Think you I am no stronger than my sex, Being so father’d and so husbanded?” (*JC* Act II, Sc. I) (Ervine 869). A reader will be awestruck at these kinds of surprising and unorthodox expressions in his plays at several places. Unorthodox Ways of Usage – a Method to Learn the Language. The non-conventional and unorthodox ways in which William Shakespeare used English may become a source of inspiration for learning and teaching English. Americans deviated from the earlier standard of British English and established a new variant of ‘American English’ that has become a separate variant of English. In the same way, Indians can learn how to actually put language to use in communication, taking inspiration from the bard. Given the fact that English has grown into several varieties, one may not be too bothered by the ‘standard/British’ dialect or grammatical rules in today’s times. Indian English has become an important variety of the world’s varieties of English. Poets and writers such as Nissim Ezekiel and Raja Rao have played with English and established a new variety of English in Indian English literature. Writers like them can become a source of inspiration for learners and teachers of English to use the language in a free-floating way, keeping the ‘meaning’ of the communication as the core value.

Conclusion:

Shakespeare’s linguistic legacy offers a meaningful way to re-energise English learning in India, especially where the language is still viewed as distant or difficult. His writings demonstrate that English is not a rigid system but a flexible medium that grows through creative usage. By coining new words, reshaping grammatical patterns and drawing freely from the spoken dialects of his time, Shakespeare shows learners that communication and meaning matter more than strict adherence to rules. For Indian students, this approach can reduce the psychological burden often associated with English. Studying Shakespeare familiarises them with early modern English culture, introduces them to a wide range of specialist vocabulary, and exposes them to natural, context-driven expressions. Most importantly, it inspires confidence by revealing that even the greatest writer of the language experimented boldly with form and usage. Integrating selected portions of Shakespeare’s works in school-level textbooks can therefore foster a more intuitive and enjoyable learning atmosphere. When learners recognise that English can be shaped, adapted and played with, they are more likely to engage with it without fear. Shakespeare thus remains a valuable ally in transforming English from an intimidating subject into a language of genuine connection and creative expression. ■

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The Psyche under Siege: An Analysis of Psychological Devastation in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula*

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This paper provides a psychological interpretation of Toni Morrison's novels, *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula*. It examines how race, culture, and social structure shape individual identity and self-worth. Examining the profound impact of cultural and structural racism on the mental and emotional development of its characters. It argues that the internalisation of dominant white standards of beauty and worth leads to significant psychological trauma and the fracturing of identity. The analysis centres on two young African-American girls, Pecola Breedlove and Claudia MacTeer, as they navigate a society that consistently devalues their existence. The paper contrasts Claudia's psychological resilience, which is supported by a nurturing, albeit flawed, family, with Pecola's gradual descent into self-hatred. Ultimately, Pecola's tragic desire for "the bluest eyes" is revealed not as a simple wish but as a devastating symptom of her complete psychological breakdown, illustrating how systemic racism and sexism can inflict deep, irreparable mental wounds.

Keywords: Cultural, Identity, Psychological, Structural, Self-hatred

Introduction:

The narrative domain of Toni Morrison consistently delves into the complex interplay of cultural and structural factors that shape individual identity and gender. A culture, as a social system's shared set of cognitive and evaluative beliefs, informs what is and what ought to be. This perspective is complemented by a structural analysis, which posits that an individual's behaviour is equally determined by their position within a given social structure and the situational constraints it imposes. A comprehensive understanding of gender variation and its psychological consequences, therefore, requires a synthesis of both approaches.

This dual framework is powerfully illustrated in Toni Morrison's debut novel, *The Bluest Eye*. The novel introduces two young African-American girls, Pecola Breedlove and Claudia MacTeer, who are navigating a world that actively disregards their existence and undermines their sense of self-worth during the crucial adolescent years of identity formation. The novel serves as a psychological case study, showing how cultural and structural forces can lead to divergent outcomes. While Claudia survives the damaging impacts of this invisibility, largely because her family provides a critical support structure, Pecola, lacking such reassurance, is left vulnerable. She ultimately falls through the cracks created by history, racism, and sexism, leading to a permanent psychological fracture by the novel's end. This theme of psychic deprivation is further explored in Morrison's subsequent work, *Sula*, which expands the psychological analysis to the broader community.

On a deeper psychological level, both novels highlight how dominant culture equates whiteness with beauty and blackness with ugliness. This cultural hierarchy creates a bleak reality for characters like Pecola, who internalise these values, transforming them into profound self-hatred. Unlike her brother, who copes by escaping, Pecola turns her feelings inward, cultivating an overwhelming desire to disappear. This longing manifests as her desperate craving for "the bluest eyes possible," as she believes that possessing a central marker of beauty within the dominant culture will make her life bearable and grant her the love she so desperately desires. Pecola's tragic descent serves as a devastating illustration of how deeply ingrained racism and sexism inflict psychological wounds that fracture a person's sense of self, a theme that resonates across Morrison's work.

On a deeper psychological level, the novel highlights how dominant culture equates whiteness with beauty and blackness with ugliness. This cultural hierarchy creates a bleak reality for characters like Pecola, who internalise these values, transforming them into profound self-hatred. Unlike her brother, who copes by escaping, Pecola turns her feelings inward, cultivating an overwhelming desire to disappear. This longing manifests as her desperate craving for "the bluest eyes possible," as she believes that possessing a central marker of beauty within the dominant culture will make her life bearable and grant her the love she so desperately desires. Pecola's tragic descent serves as a devastating illustration of how deeply ingrained racism and sexism inflict psychological wounds that fracture a person's sense of self.

The psychological framework of the novel extends beyond the protagonists to their parents, particularly Pauline and Cholly Breedlove, whose traumatic pasts shape their own devastating coping mechanisms. Initially, Pauline's relocation to Lorain, Ohio, is marked by a deep sense of social exclusion from her community. In an attempt to bolster her self-esteem and find acceptance, Pauline seeks to emulate the dominant culture's ideals of beauty by purchasing clothes and makeup. However, a broken front tooth becomes a physical manifestation of her failure to achieve this ideal. She abandons this pursuit and instead settles into the role of a perpetual "wronged wife." This victim role provides her with a

psychological structure to justify and organise her emotional life, allowing her to deflect personal responsibility and find a perverse sense of order in her emotional turmoil.

The ultimate act of brutalisation and psychological betrayal for Pecola occurs when her own father, Cholly, rapes her. This abhorrent act can be interpreted as Cholly's "pathetic attempt to return to the heady days of first love when his very presence essentially created another human being" (Heinze 74). For Cholly, who has been psychologically fragmented by his own experiences, this violent act is a tragic, desperate attempt to reclaim a sense of control and creation. For Pecola, however, it is the final and most devastating blow, confirming her worthlessness in her own mind and within her family. Following this horrific event, Pecola's persistent insecurity continues, even as she begins to believe she has acquired her much-desired blue eyes. This belief, rather than bringing her relief, exposes the depth of her psychological fragmentation. Pecola's fear that her eyes "are not the blues" reveals a deeper terror that she will not achieve the love and acceptance she so desperately craves, as her internal reality clashes with the external world's rejection. Her mind, unable to reconcile the two, retreats into a world of her own making.

The adult Claudia MacTeer concludes the novel with profound reflections on Pecola's fate, recognising her as a casualty of her family's malignant failures and a community's indifference. Claudia sees that the town collectively used Pecola as a scapegoat to affirm their own psychological health and sense of superiority. She reflects on how "all of us—all who knew her—felt so wholesome after we cleaned ourselves on her" (Morrison 163). Pecola's pain, guilt, and ugliness were psychological tools that the community used to "hone our egos" and "pad our characters with her frailty," a devastating act of communal psychological violence.

Ultimately, *The Bluest Eye* explores the unforgiving nature of the environments in which its characters are nurtured. The communities and cultures of both Pecola and Claudia are unyielding, uncompromisingly resistant to their healthy maturation. Both girls battle against racism, sexism, and poverty, but Claudia's more supportive environment provides her with a psychological anchor that Pecola lacks. Pecola, like the marigold seeds she plants, is unable to grow in such barren and hostile soil. The novel's concluding quote about being "put outdoors" symbolises the ultimate act of social rejection—a psychological and physical state of being outcast that confirms a person's criminality in the eyes of their community (Morrison 17). Pecola's final state of mind is a direct consequence of this unyielding environment, a testament to the fact that when a culture and a community abandon a child, the psychological repercussions are absolute.

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Since Afro-American features are antithetical to this standardised beauty, black women are projected as ugly and subservient, undeserving of the adulation and love reserved for their white counterparts. Morrison herself states that she wrote the novel to portray the psychological devastation caused by this implanted negative self-image: “The psychological tricks you have to play to get through—and nobody said how it felt to be that... you knew that you were not the person they were looking at. And to know that and to see what you saw in those other people’s eyes was devastating” (Morrison 199). This internalization of a negative self-image leads to a series of psychological deformities. As Denise Heinz argues, “idealized beauty has the power to disenfranchise a child of mother love, to physically splinter an entire race identity, and to imprison all human beings in static and stagnant relationships” (Heinz 15). The victimising power of this decadent aesthetic forces the black woman to approximate the standardised cosmetic beauty of white America, with devastating psychological consequences.

This theme of psychological devastation is also explored in *Sula* (1973), which opens with events of displacement and unspeakable horror. The title character, Sula, functions as a metaphor for the psychic deprivation of her community, embodying the dehumanising and depersonalising experiences inflicted on black people. The destructive roles of familial matriarchs like Eva Peace, who “kills her son, plays god, names people” (Stepto 1994: 16), further demonstrate how a damaged community, stemming from the legacy of chattel bondage, perpetuates its own psychological fragmentation. The lack of a protective maternal

discourse ultimately brings down the whole community, a theme that resonates with Pecola's experience in *The Bluest Eye*.

Ultimately, *The Bluest Eye* explores the unforgiving nature of the environments in which its characters are nurtured. The communities and cultures of both Pecola and Claudia are unyielding, uncompromisingly resistant to their healthy maturation. Both girls battle against racism, sexism, and poverty, but Claudia's more supportive environment provides her with a psychological anchor that Pecola lacks. Pecola, like the marigold seeds she plants, is unable to grow in such barren and hostile soil. The novel's concluding quote about being "put outdoors" symbolises the ultimate act of social rejection—a psychological and physical state of being outcast that confirms a person's criminality in the eyes of their community (Morrison 17). Pecola's final state of mind is a direct consequence of this unyielding environment, a testament to the fact that when a culture and a community abandon a child, the psychological repercussions are absolute.

The community, as depicted in *Sula*, appears to be pursuing an unfulfilled but self-cancelling and self-invalidating standard. Sula's appearance on the scene creates a sense of both hope and guilt within the community. Out of guilt, they declare her a 'Pariah' and, out of hope, they begin to care for one another and their families. They feel rehabilitated like a 'Parvenu', forgetting that their own status is also that of 'Pariah' vis-à-vis the larger society. Sula's presence reminds them of their own identity, the right which has been refused to them. They are still entrapped in their uncertainties, beyond redemption.

They remain other-directed, other-monitored, and other-evaluated. Nel, Shadrack and others realise after Sula's death that their life's philosophy of 'Never' and 'always' was hollow and captive of the rules set by others. Nel had taken to the conventions available to her in the community despite once having asserted: "I'm me. I'm not their daughter. I'm not Nel. I'm. Me." (28). But contradictions were easily accepted by her later: "Now Nel belonged to the town and all of its ways" (120). After Sula's death, Nel awakens to her reality: "All that time, all that time, I thought I was missing Jude" (174).

In contrast to Sula, Nel complies with and conforms completely to social values. It seems that she is bound by a static ego that makes her follow the societal rules and regulations, while Sula is bound by no such ego. Nel's behaviour in the novel reveals that her sense of individuality has been repressed from the very beginning. This is evident from her incapability in acting independently outside a defined territory of norms and codes of conduct. That's why, in terms of individuality, Nel appears to be no better than a cripple who tends to depend upon external sources like her husband and social norms. Nel's is a traditional family dominated by her mother, who controls her attitude. Nel has been bequeathed a split heritage. On the one hand is Nel's grandmother, a prostitute, and on the other hand, her highly puritanical great-grandmother, emulated by her own mother, Helene. But the immediate effect on Nel's behaviour is that of her mother, who rears her on the principles of obedience and politeness. Nel's mother is over-cautious and over-protective towards her

daughter. She is very rigid and proves to be a stern parent: “Under Helene’s hand, the girl became obedient and polite. Any enthusiasm the little Nel showed was calmed by the mother until she drove her daughter’s imagination underground.” Helene dominates every aspect of Nel’s life. As a result, her sense of self does not develop fully, and she grows to be a docile, complacent, and submissive woman without any individuality of her own.

Thus, Nel’s unconventional family environment suppresses whatever creative and natural impulses exist in her. Her voice mingles with that of the other community women. Like these women, Nel’s definition of self becomes based on the community’s moral categories of good and bad women. For her, goodness for a woman is the idealisation of the concept of marriage and motherhood, self-abnegation, and sexual faithfulness to her husband. Nel adopts a middle-class mentality that a family with a husband and children provides stability and security to a woman’s life. Therefore, Nel marries Jude Green.

Nel’s husband becomes the focal point of her life, and she feels that she has no identity or individuality of her own without her husband, Jude. When Jude deserts her, Nel feels herself to be lifeless: “For now her thighs were truly empty and dead too, and it was Sula who had taken the life from them and Jude who smashed her heart and both of them who left her with no thighs and no heart just her brain ravelling away” (111). When Jude leaves her, Nel feels that she’s lost the axis on which her life was based. Byerman rightly says that for Nel: “The loss of Jude is the loss of identity and loss of life” (45).

Thus, Nel sticks wholly to conventional values. She can achieve motherhood and a family; still, she cannot achieve fullness in life. This is so because Nel represses her inner self and cannot be true to her innermost being. On analysing the mental states of Sula and Nel, it can be said that both are psychologically poles apart. In the novel *Sula*, Morrison seems to emphasise a balanced outlook and inner harmony as necessary for survival. Characters who are mentally imbalanced and lack inner peace and order are likely to perish. This fact becomes further evident in the novel when we probe into the mental make-up of two male characters, Shadrack and Plum. Both characters are initially weak-willed. They are not strong enough to encounter the horrors of death and turn neurotic because of their terrifying war experiences. But later on, Plum gets destroyed while Shadrack survives. This is so because Shadrack can achieve inner order, while Plum fails to do so.

Eva’s son, Plum, is a man with weak willpower. The horrifying experience of war leaves him psychologically scarred. Plum does not try to act responsibly so as to establish an order and chart a direction for his fragmented life. Rather, he starts considering himself helpless like a baby and seeks to escape his independence and sense of responsibility through drugs. Plum becomes dependent on others for his existence. He behaves like an infant: “Being helpless and thinking baby thoughts and dreaming baby dreams and messing up his pants again and smiling all the time” (71). He wants to return to the maternal care and attention once again. Eva, Plum’s mother, feels: “he wanted to crawl back in my

womb and well...I ain't got the room no more even if he could do it" (71). Plum is gradually diminishing to a mere shadow. Eva can't bear his self-destructive attitude; therefore, she destroys him.

Shadrack, too, is weak-willed initially as he is left mentally imbalanced by his terrible war experience. He suffers from having "no past, no language, and no tribe, no source..." Ogunyemi explains the mental state of Shadrack, arguing that "Shadrack somehow survives the fire of war but remains a ghost of his former self" (48). In contrast to Plum, the mental state of Shadrack does not remain disordered forever. He begins to wish for a synthesis between his unconscious and conscious selves. Shadrack plunges into his unconscious, faces and analyses all its lighter and darker aspects. For this purpose, he gains strength from his black self, which he confronts by looking at his reflection. It "astonished him" (13) and assures Shadrack of his existence in a strong and stout black body. Therefore, he becomes resolute to own and control his self.

Conclusion:

Toni Morrison's novels *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula* function as profound psychological studies, meticulously detailing the devastating internal effects of racism, sexism, and societal conformity. Through the tragic narratives of Pecola Breedlove and the comparative lives of Nel and Sula, Morrison illustrates how the external pressures of a hostile environment directly contribute to psychological damage. The characters' struggles reveal that an individual's sense of self-worth and identity are inextricably linked to the cultural and structural forces that surround them. In *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola's descent into madness is a result of internalising a racialised beauty standard that equates whiteness with love, transforming her desperate quest for blue eyes into a powerful metaphor for self-hatred. Similarly, Claudia's survival highlights the critical role of a supportive community in protecting psychological health. Extending this theme, *Sula* contrasts Nel's conformity, which leads to a repressed and emotionally dependent existence, with Sula's rebellion. Sula's defiant nature allows her to maintain a psychological wholeness that Nel cannot. Morrison's work consistently argues that psychological well-being is fragile and requires a courageous confrontation with one's own identity in a world designed to dismantle it. The narratives of characters like Plum and Shadrack further reinforce this central theme, leaving readers with a powerful meditation on self-acceptance and the urgent need for a truly protective community.

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Religion and Selfhood in *Othello*: Shakespeare's Exploration of Conversion and Identity.

Mustajeb Khan

Othello is the most discussed character of Shakespearean tragedies. His being a 'Moor' is most neglected in the sense of the religion he belongs to. His exotic otherness and his complex identity fascinate most of the Elizabethan audience. His interpretation is always taken into consideration from his African perspective. The African nations were mostly embracing Islam as their religion during the time, and this has led to a focus on the character of Othello from the Muslim perspective. The jealousy that has been part and parcel of the play is also related to the religion that follows the undercurrent throughout the drama. The ramification of the Christian and Islamic conflict shadowed the socio-political scenario of the time and Shakespeare answered this through the characters of Othello, Iago and rest of the Venetians. Shakespeare's commitment to deal with the interaction between these two religions is reflected through the complexities of faith and identity through the characterisations of Othello.

Keywords: Othello, character, Elizabethan stage, conflict, religious ideologies, faith and identity.

Shakespearean drama is a tapestry of cultural and religious interactions that are of utmost importance and reveal the cultural and religious interactions reflecting the socio-political scenario of Elizabethan England. The time Shakespeare started to jolt down with his writing, the cumbersome period had also faced the expansion of Islamic territory, which was portrayed very cautiously in his plays and also Christopher Marlowe. The period was not only marked by the colonial expansion of European nations in general but England in particular. While studying Shakespeare the critics rarely noticed the geo-political tensions between Christian Europe and Islamic empires, particularly the Ottoman Empire and Queen Elizabeth I. (Brotton, 2018) As the literature of the time reflects a mixture of fascination, misunderstandings and hostility, shaping the representation of Muslim characters and themes related to the broader conflict between Islam and Christianity, the study to look upon it from religious perspective is meagre.

The dramatic corpus of the time offers a convincing site for analysis of this argument but for limiting the study the paper focused on the Shakespearean play 'Othello, The Moor of Venice'. Apart from Marlowe's Tamburlaine Shakespeare's Othello is one of the most prominent figures that represent a Muslim character on the Elizabethan stage. Aina Khan mentioned that from 1579 to 1624, 62 plays with Muslim characters, themes or setting were performed. The Elizabethan audience was fascinated with exotic otherness and the complex identity of the race and religion. The interpretation of the character Othello is surrounded with the Islamic perception. Actually, Othello is represented as noble character who finally fall as a prey to the corrosive forces of jealousy and betrayal. This duality needs to look upon the inherent conflict between personal virtue and the cultural biases which carefully illuminates the tense nature of intersection between the faith and morality.

The themes of Othello have none of the aspects of conflict between Christianity and Islam, which is not simply restricted to the character of Othello but to the backdrop of the socio-political issues of the time. Daniel Vitkus in his article Othello, Islam and the Noble Moor: Spiritual Identity and the Performance of Blackness on Early Modern Stage noted, "Consulting Shakespeare's play, we find that Othello is a Christian, washed by the waters of baptism. There are hints that he is a convert (Iago scoffingly suggests that for the love of Desdemona Othello would 'renounce his baptism [2.3.310]), but this is never stated directly in the play. In any case, the Venetians would not have allowed a Muslim to lead their military forces in defence of Cyprus against an invading Islamic power like that of Ottoman Turks."(218) The conflict present in the integration of Othello into Venetian society needs to read in the context of Christian values. These values are mostly related with the issues of honour of Christian society like Venice and the growing fiddle behaviour and transgression of others into the society as a custom to disintegrate the Christian society. Shakespeare has realised these undercurrents of conflicts and tried to project the struggle of the person wanting to assimilate in society, but facing the alienation that broke out of the cultural and religious dislocation. In fact he has taken a position by building a broad narrative commenting on the religious and dichotomies and cultural intersections of the time.

More importantly Shakespearean drama needs a particular attention on the value of sacrifice which is a powerful symbol throughout his work. These symbolic interpretations are always resonating with the themes of sufferings and redemption which crosses all the religious borders. The notion of sacrifice is emblematic in Christian theology in the form of crucifixion and also prevalent in the Abrahamic theologies. But the sacrifice can be seen through a lens that juxtaposes Christian ideology with Islamic perspective. It urges to re-evaluate the idea of martyrdom and sacrifice in the midst of the faiths that were trying to expand their territory. With this motif the sense of betrayal and judgement in Othello as a play and as a character need to look upon. This invokes the inherent tension between the articulated beliefs and the actions. The sense of betrayal and judgement subsequently performed reflecting the dualities present in the inter-religious encounters.

In fact, the interpretation of Islam explored in Shakespeare's drama highlights important thematic currents formed by cultural collisions, personal identity and religious conflict. The complexities of Muslim character and general dichotomies manifest not only in the character's arc but also in the symbolic intentions of the sacrifice. This reflects a critical understanding of one of the most prominent playwrights of the English language in layers of the Islamic and Christian frames. The postmodern study reveals multidimensional representations within these texts. The contemporary audiences are urged to reflect on the implications of Shakespeare's dramatic interpretations about religious coexistence and conflict. Aina Khan wrote in a feature published on Aljazeera that "A new adaptation of Othello in the UK subtly interrogates the tragic hero's religious identity, presenting to audiences the possibility that the Moor of Venice was a closeted, practising Muslim. Produced by the English Touring Theatre, there is an Arabic recitation in the opening scene and an image of Othello with his hands cupped in what is unmistakably a Muslim prayer." (2018)

According to the director Richard Twyman as quoted by Aina Khan "I was very aware of the racism Othello suffers because of his skin colour, but there was a much more insidious and layered thing that was happening to him as an outsider. The biggest thing is within the language, where Othello is constantly called the Moor. We know historically about the Moorish kingdom of Spain (where Spanish Muslims or Moriscos' were forcibly converted to Christianity in 1492). But I never put it together that Moor might also be referring to Othello's spiritual and cultural identity." (2018) The historical context of Islam during the time of William Shakespeare is marked by a significant socio-political dynamic shaped by centuries of Christian-Muslim interactions. In the late 16th and early 17th century, the Ottoman Empire emerged as a dominant Islamic power in Europe, presenting a military and economic challenge for the Christian nations. It became plausible that Islam was intrinsic to Othello's identity. Jerry Brotton, professor of Renaissance Studies at Queen Mary University of London and author of *This Orient Isle: Elizabethan England and the Islamic World*, stated in his noted book *The Sultan and the Queen: the Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam* that, "A Moor is an inhabitant of Mauritania which is in northwest Africa. It's effectively modern-day Morocco. In this period in the 15th and 16th century, Muslims were referred to as black. There was no word for Muslim. It didn't enter the English language until the second decade of the 17th century. But you have all these synonyms – Turk, Moor, Saracen, Persian, which are an attempt by an English tradition to describe Muslims." (2018)

The play navigates intricately on the themes of otherness, emphasizing Othello's complex interactions with characters such as Desdemona, to whom he marries, and Iago, who plans against him. Othello's marriage to Desdemona serves as a crucial narrative element. It is also symbolizing not only the potential of unity between identities of Christian and Muslim converted as Christian, but also the inherent conflicts that this relationship generates within a society entrenched in colonial ideologies. Othello's love of Desdemona can be interpreted as an act of challenge against the norms of his Venetian society. However, this transgressive union also places Othello in a precarious position, subject to admiration and

contempt. Shakespeare thus sites in a set of conflicting oppositions that frame which is both heroic and tragically.

Iago's manipulations emphasize the precariousness of Othello's heroic status. This status has very pertinently portrayed the perceptions of majoritarian community which is affecting the personal relationships and self-identity. Iago hints on Othello's inherent alteration brought alive the rooted social prejudices about Islam in the Venetian society. This manipulation is based on deep fears around the association of the Muslims who were figured with barbarism and sexual impropriety. Iago's strategy is based on perpetuating these stereotypes. This strategy has effectively projected him as a strange person whose exceptional qualities are finally eclipsed by systemic bias and manipulation that leads to his fall. In this way Othello is positioned, as the tragic figure par excellence. The complex portrait of Islam versus Christianity is projected through the dynamics of relation between Othello's eloquent discourse and Iago's misleading rhetoric. Othello is often involved in grandiloquent soliloquies that reflect his inner turbulence and tragic consciousness, while Iago incorporates the darkest elements of manipulation and jealousy through his acts. This complexity of language accentuates the status of Othello as a noble individual and victim of cultural alienation which is exemplifying anxiety around cultural interactions.

Shakespeare through Othello challenges the notions of monolithic identity inherent in the construction of Muslim character in the context of Western literature. This challenge has provided a multifaceted figure that forces the public to confront their own bias and the precariousness of the lines outlined between heroes and villain. Actually, the treatment Othello not only criticizes the contemporary attitudes towards race and religion, but also contributes to continuous dialogue around the complexities of cultural identity in the Shakespearean drama. Othello's tumultuous relationship with Desdemona serves not only as a vehicle to explore the themes of love and jealousy, but also as a complex reflection of intercultural tensions and misunderstandings widespread during the Elizabethan era. Antoun Issa mentioned that Othello, proving itself an evergreen play on Western-Islamic relations, serves as a timely reminder that behind the key markers of humanity, such as race, religion and nationality, lies a universality of human characteristics shared by all. (2016) Being a Moor, Othello therefore classified in a framework which included the prejudices and stereotypes of Islamic culture. He finds himself taken between his identity as a Muslim - even if a Christianized under his position in the Venetian society - and societal expectations linked to the Desdemona, a venous Venetian.

In the play from the beginning, the status of Othello as a foreigner is underlined through its racial and cultural history. Despite his value and his nobility, which gave him respect for many characters, Othello is nevertheless subject to the prejudices of his peers. A.C. Bradley mentioned that Othello was jealous by temperament but the idea which has some little plausibility, that the play is a primarily a study of noble barbarian, who has become a Christian and has imbibed some of the civilization of his employers, but who

retains beneath the surface the savage passions of his Moorish blood and also the suspiciousness regarding female chastity common among Oriental people and that the last three acts depict the outburst of these original feelings through the thin crust of Venetian culture. (2011,151) Iago, emblematic of the societal hate towards “the other”, exploits these prejudices in the development of his deceptive patterns. The very fact that Othello occupies a position of power - a general in the Venetian army - did not exempt it from the global theme of otherness; his race and religion make him vulnerable to societal distrust and manipulation (Green, 2019).

The marriage between Othello and Desdemona is important for their representation of the trans-cultural union, but they also become a reason for reproduction for misunderstandings and conflicts. Desdemona’s desire to challenge her father and the standards of her society marrying Othello not only speaks of his individual agency, but also of the potential of harmony through cultural borders. However, this harmony is fragile and finally assaulted by external societal pressures and internal insecurity. Othello internalized the doubt concerning his value and position within the Venetian society. This leads him to misinterpret the fidelity of Desdemona and interpreting his affection through the objective of suspicion linked to his racial and cultural history.

The theme of jealousy pushes Othello to tragic conclusions that underline the precarious nature of intercultural relations in the face of societal disdain. The manipulation of Iago exploits this insecurity, promoting the idea that Desdemona’s love depends on the exotic and militarized identity of Othello rather than a real affection. This innuendo reveals a fundamental misunderstanding of the character of Desdemona and the potential for real intercultural dialogue. In this sense, the tragic fall of Othello can be interpreted as a direct consequence of intercultural tensions - where love is undermined by the much-supposed societal structures to support it.

Moreover, the theme of sacrifice runs throughout the tragic trajectory of Othello. As the sacrifice of Christ symbolizes redemption and suffering, so too does Othello. He represents a tragic hero who, through his own insecurity and through societal prejudices, ultimately sacrifices his love for Desdemona. The Elizabethan society had the zeitgeist that there was a severe divide between Islamic identity and Christian values. This has a direct correspondence to the destabilization of Othello’s experience into the motifs of loss and betrayal. The built-in misunderstandings engendered by cultural difference end in tragedy, echoing the description of the misery generated by unrequited faith. This culminates in the love of Othello and Desdemona which encapsulates with the complexities of cultural exchange. The marriage of Desdemona and Othello is culpable of societal misperception and burden of cultural identity. That has brought out the ultimate faults and the prevalent notions of race and religion in the era. But to remain with these perceptions of the societal norms the play has offered a moving critique of the tragic fallout. Othello’s alienation, illuminated by Iago’s insidious plots, confirms once again that the combination of love and cultural identity tends to end in tragic consequences.

Roderigo, the play's first character, who was defined by a Jewish-Christian perspective, represents usual implicit understanding of Islam in Elizabethan England. Othello's status as being outsider is compounded by his race and religion, setting him apart as 'other' to the Venetian ruling class. His subsequent conversion to Christianity and Desdemona's marriage serves to illustrate a multifaceted working out of social and religious identities. Othello's initial welcome into Venetian society may be interpreted as an example of religious tolerance. It ultimately serves to underscore the tentative nature of its status. When their insecurities about their identity grow stronger, especially under the ill intention of Iago, Othello's inner turmoil sets in to the tragic ends. This path points to the fact that, within Shakespeare's work, conversion does not always imply acceptance but points to the vulnerability of an individual's social standing within religious affiliation. This has mirrored the larger social fears regarding hybrid identities of the characters.

Othello's narrative trajectory is soaked in issues of conversion, both spiritual and cultural, as he figures his identity in a larger Christian Venetian world. His identity is a fusion of elements of the "other" and elements of a Christian hero. His marriage to Desdemona can be interpreted as an act of cultural transformation that reflects the interest of Islamic and Christian identities. This union also emphasizes underlying tensions that are associated with religious identity. The final fall of Othello is to be read as a repudiation of his "otherness" and a negative outcome of his efforts at integration within a Christian paradigm, exposing the volatility of religious cohabitation within a war environment (Afsar, 2017).

The complex ways of religious affiliation determine the social status. This has always put a burden on the personal agency. Taking into consideration the scrutiny of the characters that Shakespeare subjected throws light on this ordeal. In an era when social hierarchies tended to be legitimized on religious grounds, the struggles of characters constitute a critique of social structures that impose the divisions on the basis of religion. Shakespeare therefore weaves a dense web of intersecting identities that catch the tensions and nuance involved in the lives of marginalized figures. This portrayal not only addresses contemporary issues of tolerance and acceptance, but it also invites the viewer to ponder long-standing issues of religion, identity, and social belonging. The challenges of conversion and religious identity in Shakespeare's play provide a significant window through which the viewer can consider the complex exchanges between Islam and Christianity throughout the Elizabethan period. Shakespearean characters tend to represent inner contradiction and social tensions arising from the existence together of these two systems of belief. The Muslim characters are presented though in limited number as important points of contact for wider speeches on belief, identity and ethical consequences imagined of conversion.

Conclusion:

Shakespeare's representation of conversion and religious identity demonstrates not just the nuances of Elizabethan Islamophobia and Christianity, but also reflects tensions of living between two opposing belief systems. The character of Othello represents these matters

which serve as a microcosm to grasp larger cultural and religious conflicts. Shakespearean representation of Othello has generated a critical devotion to the narratives that encompass the conversion. Shakespeare's engagement with religious issues, most notably the confrontation of Islam and Christianity, strongly captures the intricacies of religion and identity through characterization and their respective challenges. Such conflict is not merely a theological battle of two confessions, but also acts as a platform upon which the characters attack their self-image, social roles and moral conflicts. ■

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Exploring Eccentricities and Street Saga: A Mosaic Portrait of Characters and Themes in V. S. Naipaul's *Miguel Street*

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Set against the wayward backdrop of postcolonial Trinidad, Naipaul's *Miguel Street* captures and elucidates the quintessence and mundane realities of street life. This book offers a detailed and cohesive commentary on the inhabitants of Miguel Street. Naipaul's characters—each distinct yet interwoven—mirror the multifarious facets of human experience and social commentary. His portrayal of the titular street transcends mere spatial confines, presenting a crystal-clear picture of a dynamic microcosm that reflects the broader socio-political milieu. Naipaul presents an eclectic cast of characters who are distinct in their eccentricities, engaged either in their idle worlds or personal dilemmas. Women are seen striving for their existence and searching for their identity. Naipaul emphasises themes of dislocation, grandiose ambition, the quest for selfhood, cultural clash, struggle, colonial legacies, and societal metamorphosis. This narrative is written as a memory text, as Naipaul records his childhood experiences and illustrates the background from which he emerged and how he forged his distinct identity. This vibrant and multifaceted tableau captures the essence of Trinidadian society. By juxtaposing the eccentricities of his characters, Naipaul's *Miguel Street* serves as a profound commentary on the human condition. Through its innovative narrative structure and rich characterisation, *Miguel Street* emerges not merely as a story of a street but as a vivid and profound mosaic of the myriad forces shaping postcolonial Trinidad.

Keywords: Postcolonial Literature, Cultural Identity, Socio-Economic Struggles, Colonial Legacies.

Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul, born on 17 August 1932 in Chaguanas, Trinidad stands as one of the most influential voices in modern English literature, well-known for his incisive explorations of postcolonial themes, depiction of Hindu characters, identity crises and cultural clashes. Naipaul's father, Seepersad Naipaul, was a journalist and an aspiring writer. Naipaul was greatly influenced by his father. He received his early education in Trinidad, attending Queen's Royal College. Naipaul was an intelligent student and earned a scholarship to study at University College, Oxford, in 1950, where he studied English literature.

Naipaul's career is marked by significant works and accolades. His novels include *The Mystic Masseur* (1957), *A House for Mr Biswas* (1961), *The Suffrage of Elvira* (1962), *The Loss of El Dorado* (1969), *In a Free State* (1971), *Guerrillas* (1975), *A Bend in the River* (1979), *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987), *The Madwoman on the Bridge* (1993), *Half a Life* (2001), *Magic Seeds* (2004), and *The Writer and the World* (2007). Bruce King writes that "Naipaul's novels differ from most European and American fiction in portraying romantic love and sexual freedom as destructive, a dereliction of one's duties. The perspective is Indian, rather than European" (31). Naipaul's works encompass a broad spectrum of themes, from postcolonial issues to personal struggles and societal critiques, reflecting Naipaul's diverse literary interests.

His non-fiction works include *The Overcrowded Barracoon* (1964), *Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey* (1981), *The Return of Eva Perón* (1980), *The Middle Passage: Impressions of Five Societies* (1962), *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (1990), *A Turn in the South* (1989), and *Beyond Belief: Islamic Excursions Among the Converted Peoples* (1998). These works showcase Naipaul's in-depth exploration of cultural and political landscapes across the globe. Additionally, he has written *Letters Between a Father and Son* (2000) and *V.S. Naipaul: A Biography* (1997), further enriching his oeuvre. His diverse body of work captures a wide range of themes and genres, establishing Naipaul as a prominent voice in contemporary literature.

Strangely, Naipaul's career was marked by some controversies. His critical views on postcolonial societies, particularly his disparaging comments about certain cultures and his confrontations with political correctness, sparked considerable debate. His perspective on the Third World and his sharp criticisms of Indian society often attracted criticism for their perceived elitism and insensitivity. Additionally, Naipaul's complex relationship with political correctness and his contentious statements on gender and race further fuelled debate, reflecting a tension between his literary achievements and the contentious nature of his public persona. Despite these controversies, Naipaul's work remains influential, with a legacy defined by its unflinching examination of colonialism, identity, and the human condition. His contributions to literature offer a profound reflection on the complexities of postcolonial existence.

Naipaul's novel *Miguel Street* features seventeen stories. Selwyn Reginald Cudjoe writes, "In *Miguel Street* and his early short stories, we first see Naipaul's tendency to consolidate and reshape his early experiences" (Cudjoe 20). Major characters in these stories include Bogart, Popo, George, Elias, Man-Man, Eddoes, Wordsworth, Nathaniel, Toni, Mrs. Hereira, Uncle Bhakcu, Bolo, Edward, and Hat. All the characters have their unique way of living. The number of female characters in the novel is limited, and those who do appear are often depicted as wives or mothers. These women are generally either subjugated or beaten by their husbands or are dominant within the family, running the household according to their own terms. Gillian Dooley writes about the characters of this novel:

Several characters are introduced, their pastimes and occupations sketched, their attitudes evoked, and the ethical framework of their world implied, all while in the history of Bogart's arrivals and departures is related. (14)

All the stories of this novel have been depicted by an unnamed narrator. He recollects his pasts and writes these stories on the basis of his memory. He plays an important role, "The narrator is an important element in the structure of the novel. He is a young boy part of the street life yet new enough to it and young enough to be curious about it, clever and observant though to make a pattern of what he sees" (Cudjoe 20).

The first story of the novel is about a character named Bogart, who reminds one of Humphrey Bogart, the famous actor. He is a tailor but does not engage in tailoring work. His signboard merely serves as a showpiece. Bogart is a reclusive man who disappears from the scene only to return as a completely changed individual—particularly in his habits, attitude, and accent. He takes to drinking and is arrested by the police on charges of felony.

The second story features a character named Popo, who is similarly peculiar. He is a carpenter by profession but does not engage in any woodworking in his workshop. When asked about his work, he replies, "I making the thing without a name" (9). Although Popo does not drink, he takes a glass of rum every morning and acts as if he were a drunkard. He has his own philosophy of life, believing that work is a woman's domain, not a man's. He often says, "Women are made for work, not men; women and them like work, men not made for work" (10). Popo's wife works as a cook, and he, too, eventually disappears from his house, returning as a changed person. He begins to work diligently in his workshop, even painting it. Popo is later arrested for stealing and remodeling items but emerges from jail as a reformed gentleman who works honestly.

The third story is about Elias and his father, George. Elias is the cleanest boy in the whole street. He maintains proper hygiene. He brushes his teeth twice and cleans his home daily before going to school. He is serious about his studies. He wants to be a doctor. George calls the narrator horse-faced and narrator boy complains about it to Elias, but Elias replies very calmly, "Boy, my father is a funny man. But you must forgive him. What he say don't matter. He old. He have life hard. He not educated like we here"(17) Due to Elias' good nature, Hat praises him,"The boy Elias have too much good mind"(16). Though his aspiration is to be a doctor but he fails three times in sanitary inspector's exam. He goes at British Guana and Barbados at Hat's advice but failed. He has to be a cart-driver. Kamal Mehta remarks about the characters of this novel:

Miguel Street metaphorically stands for Trinidad—the multi-racial and the multi-cultural society composed of the Negroes, Chinese, English, and Spanish, all of whom are expatriates. Their beliefs, habits, and attitudes characterize the impact of colonialism on them. (280)

George is Elias' father. He has some peculiar habits. He keeps cursing himself and muttering something all the time. He was not interested in the outside world due to which people call him mad, "George was never really in touch with what was going on around him all the time"(15) His house is a broken-down wooden building, "It was a broken-down wooden building, painted pink on the outside, and the galvanized-iron roof was brown from rust.[...]There was a dirty bad in one corner and in another there was a table and a stool. That was all. No curtains, no pictures on the wall"(15). George keeps sitting on the step of his house and his wife keeps working. She is always busy in cow pen and other domestic works. Bruce King writes about women characters of this novel, "Naipaul has portrayed a few women characters in *Miguel Street* but almost all of these women are either dominant over their husbands or are strong enough to bear things happily" (King 31).

George beats his wife, his son and daughter. He ties Elias with a rope and beats him but Elias never minds his beating and he again mixes up with his father. When George's wife dies, Miguel Street has the saddest, shabbiest and the loneliest funeral. People don't sympathise at the death of his wife. They think that George beating has taken her life. Edward says,"The woman dead from blows. I telling you"(17). But after his wife's death, he feels so lonely, wails badly and behaves strangely. He remains sad over her loss.

Man-Man is a strikingly unique character in the fifth story of *Miguel Street*. Described as not bad-looking with a medium stature, he stands out in the community due to his peculiar behaviour and eccentricities. The townspeople regard him as mad, and his actions reinforce this perception. Man-Man is known for his habit of standing in various elections and personally affixing posters on walls. His posters feature only the word 'Vote' and a picture of himself. Despite this seemingly futile endeavour, he manages to secure three votes in one election, leaving him puzzled about the identity of the other two voters.

Man-Man possesses an English accent, which he exaggerates by shutting his eyes while speaking, aiming to project an image of a sophisticated Englishman. His behaviour escalates when he disrupts the customers at a local café by shouting at them, leading to his expulsion by the proprietor. In another bizarre episode, he claims to have seen God after taking a bath. This revelation propels him into a new role as a preacher. Every Saturday night, he preaches at the corner of Miguel Street, brandishing a Bible and declaring, "I have been talking to God these few days, and what he tell me about you people was not really nice to hear" (36).

According to Man-Man, God has shown him horrific visions of people consuming each other,"Husband eating wife and wife eating husband, father eating son and mother eating daughter, brother eating sister and sister eating brother" (36). These visions prompt Man-Man to proclaim himself as the new Messiah and announce that he will be crucified soon. In a dramatic turn, he arranges for himself to be tied to a cross at Blue Basin, instructing the people to "Stone, stone, STONE me, Brethren! I forgive you" (40). However, when the

stones begin to hurt, he becomes frantic, demanding to be released and denouncing the ordeal as “stupidness” (40).

Man-Man’s life is further characterised by his peculiar relationship with his dog, with whom he shares a deep bond. The dog’s death, after being hit by a car, has a profound effect on Man-Man, causing him to become even more unhinged. He starts talking to himself and continues his preaching, now dressed in a long white robe with a growing beard. His previously strong connection with the dog had been a source of emotional stability, and its loss leaves him drastically changed. Man-Man’s strange actions and proclamations, combined with his delusions of grandeur, culminate in his eventual arrest and observation by the authorities. His story is a vivid portrayal of an individual grappling with internal turmoil and societal alienation, revealing the complexities of his character through his dramatic and ultimately tragic attempts to find meaning and validation.

B. Wordsworth is a poet who roams the streets selling his poetry. He lived in a hut in Albergo Street. The narrator, a young boy, is greatly impressed by both the poetry and personality of B. Wordsworth. The poet claims that he writes only one line per month, stating, “The past is deep.” He explains, “I hope to distil the experience of a whole month into that single line of poetry. So, in twenty-two years, I shall have written a poem that will sing to all humanity” (40). His wit is evident in these remarks.

One day, B. Wordsworth visits the narrator’s home, asking for a meal and a cigarette, and does not leave until he receives both. He appears one afternoon after the narrator has returned from school, dressed in home clothes. Described as “a small man... tidily dressed... wearing a hat, a white shirt, and black trousers” (40), he expresses interest in observing the bees in the narrator’s yard, which is adorned with four small palm trees. The narrator’s mother permits this observation, and B. Wordsworth’s polite and humble manner is notable, “He spoke very slowly and very correctly, as though every word was costing him money” (40). He and the narrator watch the bees for about an hour. B. Wordsworth mentions his fondness for bees, scorpions, centipedes, and even Congress. He also reveals his full name as Black Wordsworth, claiming to be the brother of White Wordsworth. He attempts to sell his poem to the poet for four cents, but when the narrator’s mother declines, he laments, “It is the poet’s tragedy” (42).

A week later, B. Wordsworth invites the narrator to eat ripe mangoes at his hut on Alberto Street. The narrator enjoys six sweet, juicy mangoes, staining his shirt with juice. Upon learning of this, his mother beats him severely, causing his nose to bleed. He then warns his mother not to return home and instead goes for a walk with B. Wordsworth. During their walk, he discusses the constellation of Orion the Hunter. When a policeman shines a light on them and inquires about their presence, B. Wordsworth replies, “I have been asking myself the same question for forty years” (43).

B. Wordsworth recounts a touching love story from his past. He once met a girl poet, and their mutual love led to marriage. The girl cherished the garden of their hut, which

was filled with grass, flowers, and trees. However, after the girl's death and the loss of their unborn child, B. Wordsworth never touched the garden again, allowing it to grow wild. The narrator accompanies the poet to the Botanical Garden and the Rock Gardens of Chancellor Hills for a long walk and enjoys ice cream. When asked how he makes a living, B. Wordsworth explains that he sings calypsos during the calypso season. He then shares a story with the narrator but asks not to be visited after hearing it. The story is heart-breaking when B. Wordsworth reveals, "Good, well, listen. The story I told you about the boy poet and the girl poet, do you remember that? That wasn't true. It was something I just made up. All this talk about poetry and the greatest poem in the world, that wasn't true either. Isn't that the funniest thing you have heard?" (47). One year later, as the narrator walks along Alberto Street, he notices a large two-storey building where B. Wordsworth's hut once stood. All the mango palms and coconut trees have been replaced by brick and concrete, giving the impression that B. Wordsworth had never lived there.

Big Foot is a formidable and enigmatic character. Described as a tall and sturdy man, he contrasts sharply with George, a tiny, pulpy figure with a grey moustache and a prominent belly. Despite his intimidating appearance, Big Foot's fearsome reputation is not merely a product of his size or complexion. Instead, his aura of danger stems from his silent, sulky demeanour. As the narrator notes, "Big Foot does live in my street, you hear. I know him good good and if anyone of all you touch me, I go tell Big Foot" (49). This reputation makes him a figure of unease among the residents of Miguel Street.

Big Foot's various roles throughout the story add layers to his character. He once worked as a diesel bus driver, a position that allowed him to exert some form of control. Later, he became a postman but was notorious for misplacing people's letters, a job that further amplified his negative reputation. Despite his propensity for inciting conflict, he himself was rarely involved in any actual fights. His sheer size and threatening presence were usually enough to deter others, and as a result, he spent little time in jail—rarely more than three months at a stretch. Big Foot's menacing silence and occasional bursts of violent potential render him a figure both intriguing and unsettling. His presence looms large over Miguel Street, not because he is the biggest or darkest person there, but because his silent, brooding nature suggests a latent danger that keeps everyone on edge. His tendency to start fights but avoid serious consequences enhances his mystique, as does his ambiguous role in various incidents.

Hatis characterised by his zest for life and his peculiar, albeit repetitive, lifestyle. As noted by the author, "I never knew a man who enjoyed life as much as Hat did" (160). Despite his monotonous routine, Hat finds joy in his daily activities and often adds an intriguing twist to ordinary stories. His enjoyment is evident in the way he narrates events and interacts with others. Hat is known for his lecherous behaviour and tendency to create mysteries out of trivial matters. He claims that his nephews, Boyee and Errol, are actually his illegitimate sons, though even he is uncertain about the truth of this assertion. These boys come to live with him after the deaths of their parents, "Their mother, who lived up in the bush near Sangre Grande, died after her husband died and the boys came to live with

Hat” (157). Despite their initial resentment and indifference towards Hat, they accept his eccentricities with a degree of tolerance.

Hat’s character is further illustrated through his various interests and habits. He has a passion for cricket and frequently makes impossible bets, resulting in considerable financial losses. He also keeps a collection of pet macaws, parrots, and dogs, which occasionally make his house a chaotic environment, “Sometimes Hat’s house became a dangerous place with all these birds around” (160). His dog, an Alsatian, is notable for its sense of humour, contrasting with the mean mongrels owned by other residents like George and Toni.

Big Foot, on the other hand, is a figure of fear in Miguel Street, primarily due to his imposing presence and brooding silence. He is described as a large, black man with a sulky demeanor, and even the dogs in the area react with hostility at his approach. His past occupations—first as a diesel bus driver and later as a postman—are marked by his unorthodox and unsettling behaviour, such as ordering passengers to disembark and bathe before continuing their journey or misplacing letters. His menacing aura is palpable, and during a cinema outing with Hat and others, he brandishes a knife, silencing the group with fear.

The story of Big Foot’s background reveals further layers to his character. It is said that he was subjected to physical abuse from his father, a policeman, who used to beat him three times a day, “When I get big and have children, I go beat them, beat them” (49). This abusive upbringing, coupled with a notorious incident in 1937 when Big Foot’s father was killed by a rioting crowd, shapes Big Foot’s current persona. After trying his hand at various trades, including carpentry and masonry, Big Foot eventually quits due to dissatisfaction with the work.

The character of **Morgan**, introduced as the first artist the narrator meets, contrasts sharply with Hat and Big Foot. Morgan is deeply engrossed in his passion for fireworks and beauty, often engaging in high-flown theories about the “Cosmic Dance” or “Dance of Life.” His eccentricity extends to his treatment of his family, particularly during his fits of rage, which make him a formidable presence in the household. Despite his artistic inclinations, his abusive tendencies cast a shadow over his creative pursuits.

Bhakcu emerges as a character embodying mechanical genius but also an enigmatic presence in his interactions with Morgan and his family. The narrative depicts Bhakcu as a person of considerable physical presence, contrasted sharply with the frail Morgan, who is described as having “the smallest hands and the thinnest wrists” in Miguel Street. This physical contrast underscores the power dynamics in their confrontations. Morgan frequently incites Bhakcu’s ire, resulting in nightly altercations. He challenges Bhakcu with vulgar taunts and threats. However, Bhakcu’s response is characteristically unperturbed. He remains engrossed in reading the *Ramayana*, his response marked by a “doleful singing voice,” illustrating his detachment and unyielding calm amidst conflict.

The personal dynamics extend to the women in their lives. Mrs. Bhakcu, described as physically small but verbally assertive, frequently clashes with Mrs. Morgan, who is portrayed as a formidable figure. This conflict is further exemplified by Mrs. Morgan’s

taunts about Bhakcu's lack of practical productivity and Mrs. Bhakcu's retorts threatening physical violence. This interplay of physical and verbal conflicts highlights the broader theme of gender and power struggles within the community.

Morgan himself is depicted as a peculiar character, more akin to a bird than a man, with his "long neck" and "bright and restless" eyes. His demeanor and interactions with his family—marked by both humor and cruelty—reflect his erratic personality. He is known for his jokes about his numerous children and his dubious claims about his marital prowess. His humor and the way he ridicules his own situation provide a stark contrast to his often brutish behavior towards his wife.

The novel also touches upon Laura, a woman who has had eight children with seven different men. Laura's life is depicted with a blend of humor and pathos. Her cheerful demeanor despite the burdens of motherhood and her colorful, if abrasive, language reflects her resilience. Laura's interactions with her children are marked by a mix of affection and harshness, with her sharp tongue often employed in disciplining them. Despite the challenging circumstances, she manages to sustain a lively presence in the community.

Laura's relationship with Nathaniel, a new man in her life, adds another layer to the story. Nathaniel's coarse behaviour and pretensions are contrasted with Laura's dominant personality. Bruce King argues, "It is the women who are strong" (31). Their tumultuous relationship, marked by public fights and Nathaniel's eventual departure, underscores Laura's resilience and independence. Ultimately, the story of Laura's life reaches a tragic denouement with the drowning of her daughter Lorna. The community's response and Laura's reaction reveal a profound shift from her previous vivacity to a somber acceptance of fate. This event brings a poignant end to Laura's colorful and tumultuous life, reflecting the broader themes of struggle and resignation prevalent in the lives of the characters in Miguel Street.

The arrival of Miss Hilton's funeral was marked by its swiftness and secrecy. Around nine o'clock one morning, a hearse and a motor-car arrived outside her house. The occupants, a middle-aged man and woman dressed in black, were evidently grieving, though the woman's tears were controlled and dignified. The man conferred briefly with the pallbearers, and by midday, the only trace of Miss Hilton's presence was the bonfire in her yard where mattresses, pillows, and other linens were consumed. The grey wooden house was soon left with open windows and a "FOR SALE" sign nailed to the mango tree. Hamid Farahmandian writes in his paper, "*Miguel Street: Deep Tragedy in the Heart of Overstated Humour*":

The author has done his best to display how a group in a small society like Miguel Street especially with its bizarre neighbours can live. It expresses a deep agony and tragedy in the face of humor that this novel trail with itself. The problems are such far big that does not let the reader to consider it as a comic or funny story. Uneducated individuals, cruel parents, indifferent neighbours, notorious husbands for wives, treacherous wives for husbands, etc. are the problems that proof the previous sentence. (7)

Miss Hilton, a reclusive figure, had always kept to herself. Her front gate was perpetually padlocked, and no one in the street had ever seen her or anyone else entering or leaving her home. Consequently, her passing elicited little emotional response from the neighbours. The house, surrounded by a high galvanised-iron fence that barred access to its mangoes, was memorable only for its dull grey appearance and the green of the mango tree.

The new occupants were the subject of immediate suspicion. Their arrival sparked a preemptive dislike among the locals. The presence of a man who frequently complained to the police about their cricket games heightened their apprehension. His complaints about noise, whether from cricket or otherwise, made him an unpopular figure. When the new couple arrived, they were quickly noted for their foreign appearance and peculiar lifestyle. The woman, strikingly well-dressed and somewhat out of place, seemed to struggle with the everyday challenges of the street, such as acquiring scarce groceries. Her husband, in stark contrast, was a dishevelled figure with an unpleasant demeanour and an apparent addiction to alcohol.

The man's alcoholism was a cause for concern and disdain. He was frequently seen inebriated and often engaged in loud and aggressive outbursts. His interactions with his wife were marked by violence, with the woman occasionally fleeing the house in desperation. Despite the community's disapproval and the woman's frequent visits to seek help, she consistently returned to her husband, asserting her affection for him.

The story of Mrs. Hereira's plight reveals a complex portrait of domestic strife. Her affection for Toni, despite his evident faults, and her reluctance to leave him, highlight a profound sense of attachment. The eventual revelation that Mrs. Hereira was once married to a wealthy and respected doctor, Henry Hubert Christiani, who was now estranged from her, adds another layer of intrigue to her relationship with Toni. Ultimately, Mrs. Hereira's attempts to leave Toni culminated in a dramatic confrontation. She returned to her former husband, despite her previous disdain for him, illustrating the powerful hold that Toni's chaotic presence had over her. Toni, meanwhile, became increasingly disconnected from reality, his life descending into a tragic mix of drunkenness and delusion.

In the end, the house was sold to a new family, and Toni's visits became infrequent. His ultimate fate, glimpsed years later as a lorry driver, symbolised the unrelenting struggle and eventual dissolution of his troubled existence. The story of Miss Hilton's house and its inhabitants remains a poignant reminder of the complexities of human relationships and the often-hidden struggles that underpin them.

Thus, in *Miguel Street*, V. S. Naipaul crafts a vivid tableau of life through a diverse cast of characters. The characters are emblematic of the multifaceted community on Miguel Street, reflecting a blend of waywardness, idleness, humour, and human complexity. Bogart and Popo seem to be doing nothing. Both are so idle that their wives prefer not to stay with them. B. Wordsworth, with his poetic aspirations and philosophical musings, symbolises the struggle between artistic ambition and practical reality. Mrs. Morgan, dedicated to her family amidst economic hardship, represents the strength and sacrifices of women in a

patriarchal society. Hat, with his dairy cows, and Edward, absorbed in his painting, portray the diverse pursuits of individuals seeking meaning and success in their own ways. Uncle Bhakcu, obsessed with wrecking vehicles, and his wife, who grapples with the domestic challenges, depict the intricacies of personal obsession and economic survival. George weaves together a narrative rich in social commentary and human experience. Through these characters, Naipaul meticulously depicts a world of dreams, disappointments and depressions. In this way, *Miguel Street* becomes a microcosm of Trinidadian life, narrating the complexities of human relations and struggle for existence through the diverse people belonging to different communities. Kamal Mehta also postulates about this novel:

The stories of *Miguel Street* are simple and homogenous in nature. All the characters together form a single community though they belong to various ethnic, racial, and colour groups. They share among themselves, the aspirations, disappointments, and the struggle with their fate. They don't have hostility to others and are accommodating and tolerant. Their innocence earns our sympathy. (280) ■

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Gender-Based Violence in Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*: Examining the Experiences of Virmati and her Mother during Partition

Nisha Singh

The paper analyzes Manju Kapur's novel *Difficult Daughters* through the lens of gender-based violence (GBV). It explores the experiences of the protagonist, Virmati, and her mother regarding gender-based violence (GBV) during India's harrowing Partition in 1947. The narrative is a poignant depiction of the profound grief and pain experienced by women ensnared in the turmoil of this historical event.

The narrative examines several forms of gender-based violence encountered by women through the interconnected histories of Virmati and her mother, encompassing forced displacement, sexual assault, social ostracism, and patriarchal oppression. Virmati's aspiration for independence and advanced education is often obstructed by societal norms and familial limitations that confine her. Likewise, her mother's account illustrates the generational cycle of gender-based violence, as she is compelled to make dire choices to secure her own and her family's existence.

Kapur's exceptional narrative illustrates how the volatility of Partition exacerbated women's susceptibility, subjecting them to heightened threats of violence and maltreatment. The work serves as a powerful testament to the resilience and autonomy of women who endured these dire circumstances, constrained by the pervasive patriarchal rules in both their private and public spheres.

Difficult Daughters greatly enhances the canon of postcolonial feminist literature by exploring the intersections of gender, violence, and historical trauma through the prism of Partition.

Keywords: Manju Kapur, *Difficult Daughters*, Partition, Gender-Based Violence, Patriarchy, Resilience, Postcolonial Feminism

This article analyzes the depiction of gender-based violence (GBV) in Manju Kapur's novel *Difficult Daughters* (1998), concentrating on the experiences of the protagonist Virmati and her mother Kasturi during the turbulent era of India's Partition. The study contends that Kapur's narrative reveals the intersection of patriarchal norms and historical trauma, resulting in many forms of violence against women during this era. The research illustrates how both institutional and domestic violence influenced women's lives over generations, while also emphasizing their acts of resistance and survival. This research enhances our comprehension of literature as a vital tool for recording and addressing collective trauma by scrutinizing these representations within their historical context.

Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* offers a compelling storyline that coincides with one of the most harrowing epochs in South Asian history - the Partition of India. Published in 1998, the novel offers a profound analysis of the manifestation of gender-based violence during this era of political turmoil, particularly via the experiences of its female protagonists. This article examines the characteristics of Virmati and her mother Kasturi, assessing how their experiences exemplify broader patterns of violence against women during the Partition era.

The novel examines gender-based violence across numerous dimensions, from institutional to household, illustrating how patriarchal power systems foster circumstances for diverse manifestations of violence against women. This paper conducts a meticulous textual analysis to explore how Kapur's storytelling strategies elucidate these experiences and underscore the methods by which women maneuvered and opposed oppressive organizations.

This analysis utilizes feminist literary criticism and trauma theory to investigate the depiction of gender-based violence in the novel. Urvashi Butalia's study on women's experiences during Partition is particularly significant, since it offers essential historical context for comprehending the gendered dynamics of violence during this era. The study utilizes Judith Butler's theories of gender performativity and violence to examine the functioning of patriarchal power structures within the story.

The study utilizes meticulous textual analysis of certain excerpts from *Difficult Daughters*, scrutinizing both overt and covert depictions of violence. This work is situated within historical research on women's experiences during Partition, linking fictional depiction with recorded factual events.

Kapur's narrative intricately illustrates how institutional frameworks sustained violence against women during the Partition era. The educational system manifests as a multifaceted arena of both emancipation and subjugation. While it provides Virmati with possibilities for academic development, it also serves as a mechanism for regulating women's bodies, habits, and ambitions.

In Manju Kapur's evocative novel *Difficult Daughters*, the dynamics of monitoring and control infiltrate the educational institutions that influence the protagonist's path. Female

students endure incessant inspection, as physical oversight by wardens and personnel fosters an environment of continuous watch. The novel depicts the stringent regulation of women's movement on campus, restricting their spatial autonomy and perpetuating gender inequalities. Time constraints and curfews disproportionately affect female students, representing society's effort to regulate women's autonomy through temporal limitations. Kapur adeptly illustrates how personal connections and social interactions are subject to institutional oversight, with administrators acting as arbiters of morality and appropriateness. The imposition of dress norms that expressly regulate women's bodies serves as a concrete expression of patriarchal dominance, governing not only appearance but also embodied identity. The necessity for women to secure permission prior to exiting campus underscores their position as eternal wards rather than autonomous individuals. Kapur illustrates that educational institutions, ostensibly sites of emancipation via knowledge, frequently operate as extensions of societal mechanisms that restrict female autonomy and perpetuate traditional gender norms through these interconnected surveillance systems.

In Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*, the protagonist Virmati's educational experience vividly highlights the widespread gender-based academic inequality encountered by women in pre-independence India. Notwithstanding her intellectual prowess, Virmati faces systemic obstacles intended to restrict women's scholastic progress. The tale illustrates how some subjects and academic disciplines were successfully barred to women, considered inappropriate for their "feminine constitution." Throughout her scholastic journey, Virmati endures persistent examination and challenges to her intellectual capabilities solely due to her gender, compelling her to continuously validate her academic merit in ways her male peers do not encounter. Despite attaining academic excellence, her achievements are sometimes understated or ascribed to fortune rather than talent. The most restricting factor is the incessant pressure Virmati endures to uphold "feminine propriety" while seeking education, attempting to reconcile traditional gender expectations with her intellectual aspirations. The narrative effectively illustrates how this double standard engendered an untenable predicament for educated women, who were anticipated to possess sufficient intellectual capability to merit education, yet were discouraged from exhibiting intellectual assertiveness that could undermine established gender hierarchies, thereby reflecting the intricate mechanisms through which patriarchal systems sought to constrain women's intellectual liberation.

In the story, societal conditioning manifests as a potent influence on the formation of women's identities and decisions. The story illustrates how educational institutions, while providing intellectual opportunities, concurrently perpetuate traditional gender roles through meticulously designed curricula that prioritize "feminine" themes. Young women such as Virmati endure relentless pressure to uphold "respectability," a construct exploited to regulate female conduct and ambitions. The educational experience is intentionally structured to combine domestic skills with academics, equipping women for their "true calling" as wives and mothers. Throughout the novel, characters consistently confront the

idea that education ought to be subordinate to marriage, regarded just as an acceptable diversion until they achieve their major communal role. Religious and cultural constraints exacerbate these limitations, fostering an atmosphere where deviation from designated responsibilities incurs significant social penalties. Kapur adeptly demonstrates how these control mechanisms are internalized, leading women to regulate themselves and others, so sustaining cycles of conformity despite an increasing awareness of alternatives. The protagonist's conflict with these influences underscores the ubiquity of social conditioning and the terrible repercussions of defying entrenched standards in colonial India, where personal freedom is intricately linked to complex concepts of duty and belonging.

In the story, domestic violence emerges as a complex system of oppression that confines women inside patriarchal constraints. The tale illustrates how violence extends beyond physical abuse to include psychological, economic, and reproductive domination. Female characters endure spatial confinement, limited movement, and manipulation due to cultural and religious expectations that perpetuate their subjugation. Virmati's educational experience exemplifies this clearly—her college activities are surveilled, her academic accomplishments are devalued due to gender biases, and her association with the Professor invites institutional oversight that jeopardizes her independence. Simultaneously, Kasturi suffers reproductive violence through successive pregnancies, despite her declining health, illustrating how women's bodies are subjected to control. The economic reliance fostered by the denial of financial independence establishes an additional layer of entrapment, while psychological abuse—exemplified by guilt manipulation, character defamation, and emotional coercion—culminates this control mechanism. Kapur's portrayal is particularly potent as it illustrates that domestic violence functions through interrelated mechanisms, wherein physical, psychological, economic, and reproductive control collaborate to uphold patriarchal power structures that constrain women's agency within domestic environments.

The novel illustrates the intricate intergenerational dynamics between mothers and daughters, highlighting a complicated cycle of hereditary pain and control. The work adeptly depicts the transference of psychological trauma between generations, wherein mothers inadvertently impose upon their daughters the identical patterns of tyranny they endured. This transfer occurs through the reproduction of control systems, where daughters, despite their resistance, frequently perpetuate the identical institutions they aimed to escape. The internalization of psychological and emotional violence becomes ingrained in feminine identity, establishing an invisible prison that restricts each generation of women. The story poignantly depicts the tension between tradition and personal autonomy, as each generation of women grapples with reconciling traditional expectations and individual ambitions for self-determination. Kapur illustrates through characters such as Virmati and her daughter Ida that defiance against maternal authority frequently culminates in novel types of confinement, engendering a paradoxical cycle wherein the pursuit of freedom yields various manifestations of restriction. This intergenerational narrative illustrates how women's

identities are influenced by both resistance to and unconscious acceptance of inherited traditions, emphasizing the challenge of disrupting cycles embedded in familial and cultural existence.

A notable feature of the novel is its exploration of the intergenerational transmission of violence. The dynamic between Virmati and Kasturi exemplifies the intergenerational transmission of trauma and violence, establishing habits that influence both mother and daughter. The text illustrates how each generation of women confronts analogous forms of oppression, though in varying situations.

The tale illustrates multiple manifestations of violence against women while simultaneously emphasizing their resilience and survival tactics. Virmati's quest for knowledge, in the face of criticism, exemplifies a resistance to patriarchal dominance. Kasturi's nuanced acts of disobedience in the home realm illustrate how women navigated limited circumstances to show their agency.

The novel's setting during Partition offers essential historical background for comprehending the intersection between political violence and gender-based violence. The turmoil and dislocation of Partition engendered circumstances that significantly escalated violence against women, both in public and private spheres. Kapur's account illustrates how this historical juncture intensified pre-existing patterns of gender-based violence while simultaneously engendering novel kinds of vulnerability for women.

Kapur utilizes diverse storytelling approaches to portray gender-based violence successfully. The employment of many perspectives and temporal transitions elucidates the mechanisms of violence across various situations and generations. The author's meticulous attention to detail in depicting both physical and psychological forms of violence enhances the entire knowledge of how gender-based violence appeared during this period.

This examination of *Difficult Daughters* illustrates how literature may adeptly encapsulate and critique the intricate dynamics of gender-based violence amid historical epochs of trauma. Kapur's story, through the stories of Virmati and Kasturi, offers significant insights into the manifestations of violence against women during Partition, while also emphasizing women's strength and resistance.

The study enhances our comprehension of how literary depictions facilitate the processing of past trauma and elucidate persistent challenges related to gender-based violence. Analyzing these representations within their historical context provides profound insights into the particular experiences of women during Partition and the overarching patterns of gender-based violence that persistently impact women's lives. ■

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**“ROCK PEBBLES
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Environment and Indian English Novel: A Critical Study with Reference to Amitav Ghosh's Novels

Jyoti Agarwal

The intricate interdependence of life on Earth and its environs highlights the critical role that natural items play in ensuring the existence of living organisms. Trees are the most important of them all since they provide a wide range of species with the food, shelter, oxygen, and raw materials they require to live and grow. However, people have regularly abused nature due to our self-interest and constant pursuit of scientific and technological advancement, which has resulted in major environmental issues that endanger the continuation of life on Earth. In response to these expanding concerns, writings on environmental issues have proliferated, offering insightful viewpoints and increasing awareness. Eco-criticism, which studies the relationship between literature and the natural environment, has grown in popularity as a field of study. The paper examines how environmental concerns are portrayed in Amitav Ghosh's Novels and examine how these literary works both reflect and comment on the era's environmental consciousness. The study will shed light on how Amitav Ghosh's Novels contribute to the larger conversation on environmental sustainability and the pressing need for ecological balance by analyzing the stories and characters in these novels.

Keywords: fiction, environment, climate, nature, ecology

The environment, in all its social and natural aspects, has been a major theme in Indian English writing. India is a great area to research environmental concerns because of its diverse cultural and social backdrop and landscapes. The intricate relationship between humans and their surroundings is examined, covering subjects such postcolonial identity, urbanization, ecological degradation, and colonial exploitation. It's not limited to how the actual environment is shown. Environmental issues have long been explored in Indian English writing throughout a wide range of genres, including essays, short stories, drama, poetry, and novels. Each genre has a unique viewpoint on the environment, highlighting the different ways that environmental concerns and the natural world are entwined with Indian philosophy

and culture. Anuradha Ghodke and Dr. Vinay Bhogle comment: “Literature and nature has close connection between each other. This relationship reflects with many poem and other literary genres.” (Ghodke and Bhogle, 769)

Social and political issues frequently connect with environmental themes in Indian English drama. In plays like *Bravely Fought the Queen* and *Final Solutions*, renowned writer Mahesh Dattani addresses urbanisation and its environmental implications. His plays typically depict the demise of historic areas and the emergence of modern, urban environments that are typically harmful to the environment. The destruction of natural ecosystems and people’s alienation from nature serve as powerful metaphors for larger social changes and conflicts.

Drawing inspiration from the diverse terrain of the nation, Indian English poetry has always extolled nature. A. K. Ramanujan and Jayanta Mahapatra are two poets who have used environmental imagery to examine culture and personal identity. Ramanujan’s poetry, which focusses on themes of continuity and change, typically reflects the intricate relationships between humans and their surroundings. Poetry by Mahapatra, as those in *The False Start* (1980), beautifully depicts the Orissan landscapes, fusing contemplations on history and the human condition with the beauty of nature. This heritage is carried on by the poetry of modern poets like Ranjit Hoskote, who tackles concerns like ecological degradation and climate change.

Indian English short stories showcase the country’s many landscapes while examining environmental topics and the relationship between humans and nature. In addition to addressing problems like pollution, water scarcity, wildlife protection, and climate change, they also support sustainable living and diverse cultural viewpoints. Certain narratives use mythical and folkloric aspects to promote activism and environmental issues. “The Blue Umbrella” honors nature, while *The Adivasi Will Not Dance* highlights the deadly effects of civilization. Ruskin Bond’s *The Night Train at Deoli* contrasts pastoral simplicity with contemporary transience.

Essay writers from India provide critical perspectives on environmental issues, often drawing on their own experiences and cultural backgrounds. Vandana Shiva’s seminal 1988 book *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Development* questions Western development paradigms and advocates for sustainable practices grounded in accepted ecological science. Amitav Ghosh’s 2016 book *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* challenges the literary community’s response to the problem of climate change, arguing that it hasn’t gone far enough in addressing it.

In all of these genres, Indian English writing skilfully captures the profound connections that exist between individuals and their environments. In addition to praising India’s natural beauty, it offers a powerful critique of ecological exploitation and a call to action for sustainability and conservation. Indian writers make significant contributions to a broader comprehension of the global environmental issues of our day and the pressing

need to establish a more peaceful coexistence with the natural world through their literary works. Dr. Rakesh Patel illustrates:

Literature has undergone a massive change with the course of the time. It holds the mirror up to nature. Environmental crisis is one of the major hazards encountered by the world today. Literature now addresses the current ecological crisis prevalent all around the globe. Ecocriticism has emerged as a new branch of study which observes the interrelationship between literature and environment. (Patel 1)

A. K. Ramanujan discusses Amitav Ghosh's epic novel *The Glass Palace* in *Amitav Ghosh's The Glass Palace: Ecology and Imperialism*, highlighting the book's historical and environmental breadth. He contends that through rich ecological descriptions, Ghosh's story crosses generations and countries to expose the human and environmental costs of imperialism. In *Narrating the Ecological: Amitav Ghosh's The Shadow Lines*, G. N. Devy examines how Ghosh uses storytelling to address historical events and environmental concerns. He points out that Ghosh's book highlights the effects of borders and wars on the environment by fusing political and personal histories with ecological concerns. M. Prasad's *Ecological Narratives in Amitav Ghosh's River of Smoke* (2013) depicts the effects of the opium trade on the environment. He contends that Ghosh's book, which presents a historical account entwined with environmental issues, emphasizes the ecological cost of the opium trade. Meenakshi Mukherjee in her article *Ecology and Environmental Concern in Amitav Ghosh's The Hungry Tide* (2014) highlights Ghosh's skill at fusing stories about people and the environment in the Sundarbans. She observes that Ghosh skillfully captures the fragile Sundarbans ecology, emphasizing how nature and human fate are inextricably linked in the face of climate change. In their paper *The Era of Environmental Derangement: Witnessing Climate Crisis in Amitav Ghosh's Gun Island* (2021), Nupur Pancholi and Sanjit Kumar Mishra observe that Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island* illustrates how human-centric culture and the concept of the "good life" drive environmental degradation and climate change while advancing limitless desires. It lists the terrible effects of shifting climate patterns and deteriorating ecosystems, as well as the combined effects these factors have on both the human race and non-human world.

The study uses thematic analysis and a comprehensive methodology to explore environmental themes in Ghosh's novels. It includes a review of relevant literary criticism and postcolonial perspectives, close readings of each novel for recurring motifs, and analysis of Ghosh's portrayal of landscapes and human-nature relationships within postcolonial contexts. This paper aims to examine the representation of environmental issues in Indian English literature analytically to identify and examine the ways in which Amitav Ghosh's novels reflect the environmental concerns and consciousness to highlight the role that Amitav Ghosh's novels play in raising environmental awareness and fostering a deeper understanding of the urgent need for sustainable living practices

Indian English fiction incorporates environmental themes extensively into the plot and character development, illustrating the complex interrelationship that exists between people and their natural environment. Salman Rushdie's 1981 novel *Midnight's Children* critiques the ecological destruction that coincides with India's post-independence political turmoil through vivid environmental imagery. Rushdie's story emphasizes how social unrest and environmental deterioration frequently mirror each other, with both persons and environments changing.

Anita Desai's novel *The town by the Sea* (1982) very delicately captures the socioeconomic and environmental struggles that a coastal town faces. He draws attention to the way Desai skillfully juxtaposes the grim reality of pollution and resource depletion with the beauty of the natural world. Desai's careful effort shows how environmental and human health are intertwined.

A Fine Balance by Rohinton Mistry also discusses environmental issues, albeit in a more subdued manner. The narrative, which takes place in India during the Emergency era, highlights the disparity between urban and rural areas and the harm that increasing urbanisation causes to both the environment and human communities.

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* is commended for its realistic depiction of Kerala's lush landscape. Roy creates a nuanced interaction between the natural world and her characters' lives by emphasising themes of loss and deterioration through environmental imagery. The story uses the dissolution of cultures and the deterioration of traditional ways of life as a metaphor for industrial pollution and its impacts on the environment, including the river.

In addition to these well-known works, Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) shows how environmental deterioration and socioeconomic inequity coexist in the foothills of the Himalayas. Desai's story examines how colonialism affected people and environments, showing how environmental exploitation feeds into social and economic inequality.

Indian English novelists have woven a complex tapestry of environmental themes through these works, capturing the urgency and complexity of ecological challenges in modern society. Their stories serve as potent critiques of human behavior and its far-reaching effects on the environment in addition to highlighting the beauty and fragility of the natural world. Anuradha Ghodke and Dr. Vinay Bhogle well interpret:

Eco fiction is a branch of literature which study the nature and nature oriented or environment oriented which is nonhuman things works of the fiction. It represents encompasses the human impact on nature. The eco fiction which mainly deals with animal, nature, birds' metamorphoses and pastoral. It directly concerns with the environmental issues in literature. Ecocriticism is mainly

deals with representation of nature and environmental related things in literature. It combines the interconnection between human and nature represented in literature. (Ghodke and Bhogle 768)

The celebrated environmental novelist Amitav Ghosh competently combines fascinating storytelling with ecological themes. He examines the effects of environmental deterioration, human displacement, and climate change in his paintings. Ghosh emphasizes the relationship between human life and environment through his vivid storytelling and thoughtful analysis of ecological challenges. He is a key figure in eco-literature since his books make readers consider the pressing need for sustainable behaviors and a greater respect for the environment.

Deforestation is a major environmental subject in Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Glass Palace*. The book describes how British colonial interests drove the forestry industry's ruthless operations in Burma. Once brimming with life, the verdant teak forests are gradually destroyed. When Ghosh writes: "The air was filled with the sound of sawing and the sharp crack of axes biting into wood," (112) it beautifully captures this tragedy. The unrelenting destruction of forests highlights the negative effects of colonialism on the environment by uprooting indigenous communities and wildlife in addition to upsetting the ecological equilibrium.

The novel also discusses how conflict affects the environment. When the Japanese conquer Burma during World War II, a great deal of the country's infrastructure and scenery are destroyed. According to Ghosh: "The retreating British forces blew up oil wells and destroyed the forests to deny resources to the advancing Japanese." (321) This act of scorched-earth warfare emphasizes the idea that environmental devastation results from geopolitical tactics and human struggle.

Ghosh discusses how animal and human life are intertwined in these changed environments. A recurrent theme is the predicament of elephants, which are essential to Burma's timber economy. As the book so tragically puts it: "Elephants, the most intelligent of creatures, were reduced to mere tools in the hands of their masters," (187) these gorgeous creatures are both venerated and abused. This demonstrates the nuanced interactions that exist between people and animals in dynamic environmental settings.

Ghosh emphasizes the connection between political unrest, human behavior, and the natural world through the subtle integration of themes of environmental degradation and transformation in *The Shadow Lines*. The transformation of metropolitan areas as a result of political turmoil is one of the major environmental themes in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*. There is a sense of loss in the depiction of the riots in Dhaka and Calcutta, not only of human life but also of the urban landscape. With striking clarity, Ghosh depicts the devastation, writing: "There was glass all over the street ... the pavement was littered with stones, bricks, broken bottles." (227) This imagery highlights the harm done to the

environment and body by acts of communal violence, turning once-vibrant urban areas into abandoned and desolate places.

The representation of water bodies as links and limits is another environmental feature. In the book, rivers and oceans stand in for the elasticity of political and cultural boundaries. According to Ghosh: “The waters of the Padma flowed past, shimmering in the sun, indifferent to the borders it crossed.” (192) This draws attention to how the natural world disregards boundaries erected by humans, contrasting the arbitrary nature of political boundaries with the stability of environmental elements.

Throughout *River of Smoke*, Ghosh deftly makes the connection between human economic endeavors and their effects on the environment, highlighting the significant and frequently disastrous effects of trade and colonization on natural areas. His in-depth explanations and historical background provide a nuanced viewpoint on the relationship between the environment and human endeavor. Indeed, the widespread poppy planting for the opium traffic is a major environmental concern. The enormous fields of poppies in India are described by Ghosh as follows: “Every acre of fertile land in the region had been turned over to poppy cultivation” (89). In addition to damaging local ecosystems and depleting the soil, monoculture farming represents the exploitation of natural resources for colonial gain.

The novel’s research and gathering of plants, especially as seen through Fitcher Penrose’s perspective, is another important theme. The love the age had with exotic flora is shown by Penrose’s efforts to find and catalog uncommon species. Ghosh explains: “Strict descriptions of plants he encountered were filled Penrose’s journals.” (173) This emphasizes how colonial botany excursions affected the environment, frequently resulting in the eradication of native plants and the modification of ecosystems.

The story also discusses the state of the ecology in Canton, the epicenter of the opium traffic. Trade ships are shown as swarming the city’s harbor, which is dirty and full of garbage: “The waters were thick with the refuse of countless ships and warehouses.” (342) This picture emphasizes how trade has an adverse effect on the environment and how human activity has deteriorated natural streams.

Amitav Ghosh explores environmental topics in great detail in *The Hungry Tide*, concentrating on the Sundarbans, a distinct and delicate ecosystem. The novel highlights the nuanced relationship between the natural world and human narratives by weaving them together. The battle for survival in the Sundarbans, a region home to a variety of animals, including the endangered Bengal tiger, is a central issue in environmental studies. The habitat is continuously altered by tides. In the opinion of Amitav Ghosh: “The tide country’s very existence is an illusion, constantly remade by the river’s whims.” (41) As This highlights the environment’s dynamic and unstable qualities and highlights how closely life in the Sundarbans is correlated with the cycles of the natural world.

The effects of development and human settlement on this fragile ecology are another issue. The conflict between local community needs and conservation efforts is depicted in the novel. Ghosh of the process by which settlers clear mangroves for cultivation and he explains: “They burned the mangroves and drained the land...each year the waters took back more of what the people had wrested from them.” (122) This draws attention to the way that human activity has deteriorated the environment and the ongoing conflict between human ambition and the natural world.

Through the figure of Piya, a marine biologist researching the Irrawaddy dolphins, the story also tackles the issue of environmental conservation. “In these waters, the dolphins were the key to understanding the health of the ecosystem” (203) highlights the significance of protecting biodiversity and her scientific pursuits. The interdependence of species and the larger effects of environmental health are highlighted by Piya’s study. Ghosh skillfully captures the Sundarbans as a location of both beauty and peril in *The Hungry Tide*, highlighting the precarious balance that exists between human life and the natural environment. His compelling story highlights how crucial it is to live sustainably and with respect for the environment.

Amitav Ghosh examines environmental concerns in *Gun Island* by focusing on migration, climate change, and the interdependence of the natural and human worlds. The novel explores how shifting environmental conditions affect global ecosystems and human mobility. The impact of climate change on the natural world is one of the main themes. Ghosh highlights the seriousness of the climate catastrophe while describing the shifting landscapes and harsh weather occurrences. He notes: “The cyclone had left behind a trail of devastation...houses flattened, trees uprooted,” (72) for example. This illustration highlights how climate change is causing natural catastrophes to occur more frequently and with greater intensity.

The dislocation of people and wildlife as a result of environmental changes is another important issue. Ghosh investigates the ways in which habitat loss and increasing sea levels compel migration. He elaborates: “Several villages had already been swallowed by the river’s encroachment.” (148) This emphasizes the suffering of refugees from climate change and the significant effects that environmental deterioration has on societies.

The idea of the interdependence of the natural and human worlds is also explored in the book. Ghosh depicts the precarious equilibrium of ecosystems through the character of Piya, a marine biologist: “Every creature in the Sundarbans was part of a web of life...one thread broken, and the whole could unravel.” (211) This highlights the complex relationships that exist between species and the significance of biodiversity protection.

Moreover, Ghosh demonstrates how old tales mirror modern environmental concerns by fusing mythology and history. He states: “The legend of Bonduki Sadagar seemed to resonate with today’s crises...a warning from the past.” (305) This link between myth and reality emphasizes how important environmental awareness has always been. Ghosh tells a

gripping story in *Gun Island* that emphasizes the pressing need to address environmental issues and emphasizes how all life is intertwined and that we all have a shared obligation to safeguard the environment.

The Glass Palace, *The Shadow Lines*, *River of Smoke*, *The Hungry Tide*, and *Gun Island* are just a few of Amitav Ghosh's works that provide deep insights into the nuanced interactions between humans and the natural world. Ghosh emphasizes in these pieces the widespread effects of industrialization, colonialism, and climate change on ecosystems and natural landscapes. The destruction of Burma's teak forests and the conversion of Malaya's terrain for rubber plantations, as depicted in *The Glass Palace*, demonstrate the negative environmental effects of colonial exploitation. *The Shadow Lines* examines how political upheaval modifies urban settings and the symbolic value of natural boundaries.

Ghosh explores the effects of the opium trade on the environment in *River of Smoke*, showing how botanical expeditions and monoculture farming upset regional ecosystems. *The Hungry Tide* highlights the precarious balance between environmental preservation and human survival by eloquently illustrating the Sundarbans' sensitive ecosystem. Last but not least, *Gun Island* emphasizes the pressing issue of climate change by showing how environmental deterioration and extreme weather force people and wildlife to migrate.

Together, Ghosh's books promote a better comprehension of environmental stewardship and the interdependence of all living things. Ghosh urges for sustainable and responsible relationships with the natural world while simultaneously criticizing past and present environmental exploitation through the combination of historical context, ecological concerns, and human narratives. His writings are a powerful reminder of our collective need to preserve the environment, which makes him a key player in the field of eco-literature in Indian English novels. ■

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Narrative Reformation :

An Analysis of Kavitha Kane's *Lanka's Princess*.

Logapriya, T.

J. Dharageswari

Indian folklore and mythical history have significantly contributed to the development of literature in India. The writers from the past delved deeper into identifying the reasons closer to the expected or rather existing reality; which became the major source of acceptance of mythical characters and mystical ramifications. Revisiting the mythically designed characters and stories offer the writers with ideas and concepts which could be re-structured based on the existent theories. Kavitha Kane, contemporary Indian writer focuses on retelling the traditional tales not to just recreate or reignite the dead female characters, rather she makes them relive again, and the struggles undergone by them are examined from the insightful perspective. This paper deals with Kane's *Lanka's Princess* to understand the possible reasons for having revisited mythical history to recreate the character of Surpanakha.

Keywords: Mythology, Tradition, Malignant, Victim and Recreation

Kavitha Kane- Life and Works

Kavitha Kane an Indian born writer spent her days completely in Delhi, Patna and Pune. She had been a voracious reader since childhood, and the hobby of reading was ignited in her by her father, who had more than ten thousand books in his repository. She completed her post graduation in Mass communication and English Literature from Pune university. She later worked in various media houses and later became a full-time author. Her works are mainly based on female mythical characters from the Epics, who had been recreated by her in the present. The collection includes *The Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen* (2013), *Sita's Sister* (2014), *Menaka's Choice* (2015), *Lanka's Princess* (2016), *The Fisher Queen's Dynasty* (2017), *Ahalya's Awakening* (2019), *Saraswati's Gift* (2021), and *Tara's Truce* (2023).

Introduction

Kavitha Kane is best known for retelling the traditional tales. The tales have made significant impact on the Indian people since time immemorial, and are from the epics

Mahabaratha and Ramayana. The characters and the stories narrated through the epics are part of culture and tradition pertaining to Hinduism; a religion with foremost share in the Indian soil. The depiction of characters, Gods and narratives have bound the people together both religiously and spiritually. Ramayana, with its godly characters, massiveness in its depiction and spiritually inclined beliefs have had tremendous trajectory of influence on the people from past until present. On one hand the characters like Ram, Lakhsman, and Sita, Hanuman are considered reincarnations of deities, and on the other, there are characters like Ravana and his sister Suparnakha who gained the titles of being villainous throughout and it is the tussle of the good and the bad; the positive and the negative represented through such characters.

The characters or the tales are mythical and also mysterious. Myths in a way offer the platform to reflect the contemporary world through imaginations, Subbulakshmi in her thesis states, “Myths have been utilized as a huge apparatus to uncover some vital discussions of contemporary India. Issues of the contemporary world, discover their equals in the fantasies and tales of the past, giving new implications and experiences building up the topic.” (2) Kane’s fiction oriented on the most important and malignant character brings to the forefront, the undeniable truth that any individual is forced to become a certain kind due to circumstantial gravity and vulnerability. Surpanakha, a simple villain, with vengeful nature, is also a victim since childhood, which in particular is a psychological reason identified in the contemporary world to be the reason behind individual’s transition. Surpanakha is portrayed with a difference by Kane. She is shown as a tragic woman with complex and maligned nature.

A Brief Summary

Lanka’s Princess’ revolves around the life of the protagonist Surpanakha, who is the younger sister of famous and influential Ravana, Vibhishna and Kumbhakarna. She is named Meenakshi after birth, but her birth is not celebrated even by her mother Kaikesi. She indeed wanted a son, which reflects the gender inequality of contemporary society. Despite being born in an influential royal lineage, she could not gain significance as her brothers, thus, the pessimism birthed inside of her. Her mother constantly neglected and hated her and even elder brothers treated her with coldness. The cold and dejected behaviour developed within her made her to be christened Surpanakha, which literally meant person with sharp nails.

Her love life and marriage with Vidyujjihva is shattered by her brother Ravana. She remains normal for a very short period, the desire for power and colonizing kingdoms, Ravana, attacks Vidyujjihva’s kingdom. The absence of mere contemplation, before attacking the brother-in-law, pushes Surpanakha vouch revenge over his brother. She considers him to be the direct killer of her husband. She burns with vengeful desire of ruining Ravana completely. Her exile into Dandaka forest is to plot against Ravana, she believes, his arrogance, desire and power were directly responsible for destroying her life.

Her encounter with Rama and Lakshmana in the forest provides her with utmost reason to plot against her brother. Her moves are calculative. She falls for Rama initially and then Lakshmana, but the mock and rejection from their end aggravate her further. Lakshmana mutilates her nose and ears, which routes her back to Ravana, with the reason to take revenge and destroy him completely by directly bringing Rama and Lakshmana in the plot. She is aware of Ravana's weakness for beautiful women. Her description of Sita instigates in him the desire to attain her. He falls prey in her plot, to avenge for sister's honour, he decides to abduct Sita, thus vengeful tale kickstarts. She is happy seeing the destruction of Lanka, her brothers and war of Rama and Ravana. Her manipulation leads to the catastrophic circumstances, by which she attains her long-awaited revenge.

Review of Literature

Kumar, Arun in his article "Reimagining Mythology in Contemporary Literature: A Study of Kavitha Kane's work" posits, the novelist delves deeper into the mythologies and brings to the brim the inner thoughts and emotions of the characters. The in-depth analysis provides a special attention to those portrayals beyond the traditional depiction. She brings relatability through her works is what the researcher opines, "She meticulously researches the cultural and historical context of the myths she retells, ensuring that her narratives are rooted in authenticity. This attention to detail enhances the reader's immersion into the ancient world and makes the characters more relatable." (652)

In the work "Women Identity and Self-Assertion: Study of Kavita Kane's Mythological Novels" the researchers opine the women characters portrayed in the selective works are not the victims of patriarchal society. They did not cater to the desires of men completely and also opposed them optimistically, "The victory of the main female characters, Ahalya and Satyavati in the novel provides an optimistic and logical message to the people around the world that their life is in their hand and if they have the intention and guts to protest the impediments enclosing their path then they can extricate themselves." (5754)

"A study of perspective writing with reference to Kavita Kane's Sita's sister" an article published in 2020 studies the work under different perspective. A narrative of different kind, which is tweaked and twisted by the author to materialize the supremacy of the character she believed stood strong against the cruelty of time and tide, "Sita's sister gives the due respect to a woman who stood tall at a time when giant characters fell. Her perseverance, passion and liberal mind make her great while turmoil, suspicions and weariness make her human. The author lives the life of a practical and passionate woman through the character's voice." (4900)

Vindictiveness to Victimization

Suparnakha's character appears in Ramayana. She is portrayed as a catalyst for the war in the epic. She becomes the main reason for vengeful history associated with the story. She is portrayed as a villainous entity totally exuding her villainous venom over those who

do not oblige with her desires. There is no significant portrayal of hatred from either the mother or the brothers, in the actual narration of Ramayana. She grew into a sharp-witted and vengeful persona, true to her nature the circumstances around altered her nature to a larger extent. As her fate had decided she became a victim after her marriage as well. Her brothers who are considered stronger than her had significant impact on her. She had been pampered and her brother Ravana showers love on her as well, which is evident from the fact that the moment she complains with the mutilated state to Ravana he decides to fight for her.

Kane in her revision offers a different perspective to the character. She is considered more complex and a victim in re-interpretations. She is victim of the fate, devoid of love and affection from people of her own family result in consequent chain of events that lead to her vengeful story of definite significance.

The narrative voice brings major difference in the two works. The original portrayal of Surpanakha is considered to be chaotic; she is the agent of chaos and malice. She is not an ordinary woman or a praiseworthy princess but a demon exuding wickedness. The war of dharma is consequence of her act. The moment she comes in contact with Rama, she is flattered by him and his majestic looks, she is determined to present herself as a damsel against her real demonic outlook, but Rama rejects her, and so does Lakshmana. The mutilating act of Lakshmana leads to revenge against the entire clan. It sets forth the war of good against evil and lords against demons. Valmiki's Ramayana which is considered to be the pioneering text for later creations, captures the story 'dharma' and 'adharma' gloriously.

Suparnakha is an ugly, evil and demonic figure Rakshashi in the original creation. She is not a victim of fate or circumstances, rather she is born evil and has all the triggering reasons within to emulate with the aura of Ravana. She triggers the inner desire of Ravana; the weakness for beautiful women and lust. She is herself abandoned intrinsically and immoral internally; and falls for Rama lustfully. She disguises to present herself beautiful before Rama; the feeling of lust is sudden which eventually transforms into jealousy towards Sita. Sita is the reason for Rama to reject her, and this truth annoys her.

She is used as a channel to reveal the truth that 'Karma' and 'dharma' are two inseparable concepts. Her vengeance on one hand, Lakshmana's mutilating action on the other bring fateful events thereafter. Rama who is considered an incarnation of perfection does not leave any page unturned while disgracing Surpanakha. He respects and adores women in general and his wife in particular but his actions and commands make him guilty towards her, thus he also undergoes the consequences of 'dharma', while describing the underrated nature of major characters Aditi Dirghangi is of the view that,

The character of Surpanakha has been condemned on the grounds of body, colour, choice and gender. On one hand Rama is shown as a chivalrous protector of women, yet on the other when he is seen commanding Lakshmana to mutilate Surpanakha for transgressing the gender boundaries, there are hardly any dissenting voice. (9)

She is sharp-witted and psychologically ardent in analysing people. She is acquainted with her brother Ravana's psyche and nature, this helps her in becoming the catalyst instigating inner desires of Ravana towards Sita and awakening the vile demon within him. She is grotesque in appearance, with portly stomach, harsh voice, and sharp nails for which she was christened Surpanakha. Adding to her grotesqueness was the mutilation undergone by her. The deformed physical appearance adds on to her demonic nature. She acts decisively, which results in transgressions against righteous people. She is not wise to understand her immoral deformity.

In contrast to the character of Surpanakha portrayed in the epic Ramayana, one could find a completely different picture describing her personality in contrast to the understanding through previous mythical works. Here Kane in *Lanka's Princess (2017)* transports her personality from being vengeful unto a victim's position, "This novel narrates the plight of Surpanakha, from a young girl ridiculed and neglected for her looks, to her strong and independent choices in adult life refuting the stranglehold that her brothers had on her life, for which she is ultimately punished by a highly judgemental society that never forgives such transgressions. The novel is a gynocentric retelling of the Ramayana with Surpanakha as the protagonist narrating her neglected story." (9)

Kane's portrayal of Surpanakha as the protagonist of Lanka's princess represents a liberated woman. She does not comply with traditional and submissive woman, rather is modern in her thinking and transcends the limitations of the society, "Though Kavita Kane's *Lanka's Princess* is set in the Treta Yuga, the character of Surpanakha has more similarities with an accomplished and liberated 21st century woman than any of her contemporaries. (9) She fails to receive the love and tenderness from her mother and brother, which renders her emotionally feeble, despite subduing environment around, she grows into a strong woman. She does not possess the devilish or demonic attributes of Ramayana's Surpanakha, but is often found to be victim of conventional chauvinistic society.

Victimization of Surpanakha begins with her birth, as it shows how gender-biased the members of her family were, including her mother. Despite being a woman, her mother is an embodiment of gender inequality, "This girl-child has cheated me of my plans" (LP 2). Her condescending behaviour towards the sons reflect she disdained the birth of a girl child. She body-shames her for the looks and demeanour, and literally calls her ugly, "She hardly looks beautiful or like me. In fact she is quite ugly!" (LP 2) Such harsh treatment from a mother is quite unexpected, and it leaves a dent within her forever.

Similar to her mother, the brothers also abused her. She grew up in a family devoid of love, unity and compassion, and for her parents, sons meant the world. She was always humiliated and treated dismayingly. The killing of her favorite pet by Ravana as it had eaten the herbal plants reflects the hatred he inherited within. It inadvertently meant neither sister, nor her pet held any significance. One could relate to the murder of Surpanakha's husband too, as he was nothing more than like that small pet animal which he had killed in

the past. She is often rebuked, demoralised and ridiculed. Surpanakha's birth is considered unnecessary, and her growth is accompanied with rebukes and later life filled with pain. She is made feeble both mentally and physically. Her family neglects her completely fails to fulfil her desires, even after her marriage, she is not allowed to spend the life happily. After a brief moment of happiness, she was pushed into bereavement by her own brother, "Her anger was directed at a family, which destroyed her identity, questioned her choices, ignored her values, and killed the love of her life in the guise of the safety of Lanka. The grief of being widowed by her own brothers was all-consuming and she imposed an exile on her own self in the Dandaka forest, far away from Lanka."

Surpanakha's exile into forest with her son represents her exile from life. She exiles herself of normalcy. Even at the forest she is shown to be ill-treated by Rama and Lakshmana, she is shamed for having lustful desires for men, and mutilated emotionally. She is born normal but is made abnormal by the society; including her own family members. Women being suppressed socially had been an issue since time immemorial. The examination of her life by Kane is to throw lights on the forgotten and unattended phase of Surpanakha. She is considered feeble, undesirable and ridiculous by everyone around her. The vengeful nature of Surpanakha is resultant of her painful life. Her decision to revenge her brother and the two men Rama and Lakshmana further create the plot for the was in the future. Her life makes her shrewd to link the malignant people into an untoward relationship, which marks an end of happiness of those who had ruined her life.

Surpanakha, is portrayed to be strong, self-reliant and courageous. She is made malignant by the society which includes even her own family members. She is considered unwanted but she makes herself the most important person amidst all by her presence. She does not confine herself within the circle of gender role. Her feminism is replaced by chauvinism and she succeeds as a woman in the patriarchal society.

Conclusion

A woman is not born a weakling, the society makes her one, Surpanakha's character represents this truth vividly. Kavitha Kane had given life to the forgotten and dead woman through imaginary work. She had tried to enlighten upon the factors responsible behind emotional breakdown of a woman. She is not justifying the act of Surpanakha, but brings out the possible reasons that could transform any individual into malicious person. Surpanakha's portrayal by Kane makes the readers think, if she had antithetical treatment since childhood, had she been under the positive and motivating ambience, the Ramayana war would never have occurred. Gender discrimination and social injustice paved the path for her destructive life. Surpanakha is portrayed as a woman, a human by Kane, the human side of hers could have been beautiful if people around her had accepted her, but the rejection due to every possible untoward reason made her what the people perceived her as, 'the demoness'. Ramayana offered us with a woman, a demon who invited destruction; but Kane has given the readers a woman, a human being, by unmasking her; in her true self. Woman is powerful

enough to change the fate of an entire nation, and Surpanakha is a pioneering example of the same. 'Dharma' always is victorious over 'adharma' and life of Surpanakha reflects the truth, she is indeed victorious, she is able to destroy and take revenge making her one of the strongest and self-made-woman depicted in Indian traditional and mythological narratives. She proved herself to everybody, gender discrimination and suppression in a society could never deter the intention and ambition of a woman. ■

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Negotiating the Posthuman: Ecological Instability and Human Vulnerability in Jeff VanderMeer's *Annihilation*.

Karishma Daimari

In *Annihilation*, Jeff VanderMeer takes readers to the peculiar world of Area X, where the natural environment behaves strangely, autonomously, and often without human intervention. Here, ecological instability is a force against which human beings are powerless, complicit in unsettling their belief that they are in control of their environment. Flora and fauna and the non-human components of this world undergo transient mutation, refuting the anthropocentric view of organisms by signalling their agency and autonomy from human knowledge and control. In foregrounding these aspects, Jeff VanderMeer prompts reconsideration of the human experience from an anthropocentric perspective and its relation to the strangeness of this environment. This paper utilizes Posthumanist theory to examine the human and non-human boundary to demonstrate that humans are an inhibitor within a dynamic ecological network rather than a dominating figure. Through ecocritical lens, it will further analyze the role of Area X as a site of ecological crises, impacting human characters as communally, physiologically, psychologically and ontologically. The novel makes it clear that survival in such a condition necessitates adaptability, humbleness, an understanding that human beings are dependent upon non-human living institutions. By taking this position, the novel refutes the notions of human excellence featured in various humanistic agendas, projecting the human being as 'The Human' and insists that the human need to have an ethical responsibility to their surrounding ecosystem, and this ecosystem is one they cannot completely comprehend and let stand dominate. VanderMeer's novel takes a less optimistic viewpoint on ecological instability and urges us to pay attention to non-human agency and the broader natural world.

Keywords: Posthumanism, Ecocriticism, Human and Non-human, Ecological crisis

Introduction

Annihilation by Jeff VanderMeer is the first novel, published in 2014, from his Southern Reach Trilogy that places readers in Area X's environmentally hazardous territory, a mutative sprawling landscape isolated by geographical means. Chiefly, the novel concerns

with the radical subversion of anthropocentric logics which bind resilience of survival and domination of natural environs to being done only by humans. Through the landscape of Area X, VanderMeer authored a highly indeterminate and transformative ecology centered around the non-human agency. Nature in *Annihilation* is described as an unpredictable force critical as it acts with its own alternative agency and transforms endlessly. Area X is the indeterminate environment, a liminal habitat wherespatially and ontologically, the line between the human and the non-human collapses. This fundamentally undermines the stable nature of human and environment interaction, and it goes so far beyond a rational human ability to understand the environment that human read and interpret the unknown zone relying on their anthropocentric modes at the beginning. Through Posthumanist and ecocritical lenses, the present paper investigates the unsettling human environments and bodies from *Annihilation*. Posthumanism is a theoretical concept that decenters the human and emphasizes the interrelated power dynamics between human, non-human, and environment. Simultaneously, ecocriticism is the literary examination of how humans depict the environment and environmental crises within a liberal framework. This paper argues that VanderMeer undermines the myth of human experience by illustrating that surviving in complex humanity requires humility, flexibility, and interdependence.

Nevertheless, Posthumanism, expounded by Braidotti Rosi and others, challenges humanistic traditions of assigning human agency and subjectivity at the centre of the realm of meaning and power. Braidotti presents the modern figure of the subject as ‘non-unitary’, always already fragmented, co-constituted in multidirectional semi capitalistic dynamics with the other species, technologies, and material ecologies. The concept of ‘zoe’, or ‘animal’ life, a life reduced to the form of its bare biological and material existence, blocks the ground for the subaltern, posing the nonhuman entities as active in their potentiality rather than passive in becoming. Thus, it requires a decentering of the human in the face of the new materialist configurations of the networked assemblages. Furthermore, Ecocriticism continues for reading, writing of the literary works environmental contents, foregrounding the way various texts articulate a wide range of human interactions with nature, which recognizes and resists the marginalization of non-human entities. It suggests alternative ways of reading that challenge certain human-centered cultural narratives which deny agency or growth to non-human entities, or that portray nature merely as passive and lifeless matter. Ecocriticism thus aims at understanding the ethical matters generated by the biological and environmental crisis and emphasizes a story that engenders eco-responsibility as well as ecotechnological evolution. In fact, Storytelling is important in terms of raising public awareness of it and integrating humanistic methodologies.

For these reasons, *Annihilation*, when analysed together by posthumanism and ecocriticism, appears to be a conscious literary exercise of questioning the stability of human exceptionalism. It provides nuanced ways of investigating the novel’s notion of Area X as an unstable, evolving ecology and the consequent desire to reconsider the human capability for vulnerability and power. In such a fluid environment, distinctions between the human

and non-human become blurred, and every attempt to systemize them is doomed to failure or violence. VanderMeer forces readers away from the current epistemologies, inscribed by human control and embedded in an understanding of human as relational, ethical, and existential. VanderMeer's *Annihilation* is the first in the posthuman cycle, and this paper believes that it befits a posthuman reconfiguration of existence demolition of the great chain of being.

The Posthuman landscape of Area X and its Ecological disruption

Area X in *Annihilation* is an ecosystem dynamic and evolving beyond human comprehension or control. It is not a mere backdrop; rather, it's in itself a self-contained creature growing in ways determined by some unknown and inexplicable ecological drive that humans simply cannot control. VanderMeer defines it as 'environment... capable of evolving on its own terms, indifferent... to human needs', highlighting its otherness, rooted in its unwillingness to fit into the human classification (VanderMeer 54). It is a space where the laws of nature do not follow human reasoning or experience. Trees exude luminous sap, fungi show signs of self-consciousness, and animals mutate into synthesis impossible for any human biological classification. It shocks the very foundation of the human paradigm, where the human is still on the top and privileged to interpret the knowledge and understanding of non-human life, which actively evolves and lives in its mind in the alien area. Therefore, Area X is an active and conscious character.

VanderMeer's vision shares theoretical affinities with Rosi Braidotti's concept of 'zoe', a kind of life energy that is common to all species and matter, challenging the idea of the human as the exclusive source of vitality. Area X is zoe in permanent configuration, a posthuman realm in which binarism unity of organic and inorganic existence, knowledge and non-knowledge collapse in unstable configurations. In encountering the unpredictable ecosystem, VanderMeer's characters come to terms with the collapse of human knowledge and control over the biotic world. The narrative is framed within Timothy Morton's concept of 'the ecological thought', which denies human exceptionalness and admits to the interconnectedness of all life forms. By representing a world following its own laws and processes, *Annihilation* invites readers to take up a regenerated ecological obligation based on human indigenism, heightened ethics of human inhabiting, and an ethically honest respect for the natural world.

Human Vulnerability and Transformation

In Jeff VanderMeer's *Annihilation*, the inhabitants of Area X serve as symbols of fragile existence of humanity in a realm indifferent to our rational understanding. While the changes in the Biologist's body are both deeply personal and physical, ultimately rupturing her sense of self, they provoke the observation that the human being is not a border but an event in an ecologically articulated process involving many elements. While she herself says that she has been 'mutated almost beyond recognition' (VanderMeer 89), she speaks to a shift in being that is effectively a crisis of representation, as identity is entangled with the

non-human, blurring once more the limits between the observer and the observed. VanderMeer uses this transformation not as a mere narrative but as a reflection on the fragility of human authority and the inherent vulnerability of existing within a living world that transcends understanding. As the biologist's body deteriorates, it mirrors the collapse of anthropocentric hierarchies, showing that qualities like rationality, intellect and consciousness collapse from a living environment that evolves and adapts independently. By unsettling both physical and ontological boundaries, *Annihilation* reinterprets vulnerability as active agents within a constantly evolving ecological system. The biologist's transformation reflects not just a crisis of identity but the revelation that all living beings that are continuously shaped and inseparable from the ecological system that sustain them.

VanderMeer constructs the novel's narrative mirroring the feel of instability and dislocation. He uses fragmented journal entries, blackouts in memory, and conflicting perception to replicate the cognitive shattering caused by Area X's psychic disbandment that sees humanity's conventional understanding dissolving around them. The fracturing of communication and temporality signals a moment of epistemic disorder, where the empirical findings chip away at an objective truth in favour of a plural practice of observation. VanderMeer, then, sides with Sherryl Vint's contention that in speculative fiction mutable bodies upend the liberal humanist subject by showing how identity is situational, open to connection and materially embedded (Vint 134). Indeed, we can see this embodied in the biologist's psychological and physical disintegration as a partial realization of this theoretical perspective, her transformation illustrating the imperative to rethink human cognition in terms of interconnection and blurred boundaries. Drawing on Rosi Braidotti's 'posthuman' vision and Donna Haraway's idea of 'becoming-with', this paper argues that survival in an unstable ecology means not ruling through domination but cycling via adaptation and acknowledging the coextensive vulnerability among bodies in our ecological kinship. In this context, *Annihilation* illustrates Stacy Alaimo calls 'trans-corporeality' a concept where human bodies are always exchanging energies and matters with the natural world. The narrative's engagement with physical transformation and the disintegration of epistemic certainty frames vulnerability as a core aspect of life in a posthuman world, promoting connection, fluidity, and ethical responsiveness in the agency of ecological system.

The Human and Non-Human Boundary

Jeff VanderMeer's *Annihilation* re-draws the line between human being and the natural world. Rather than humanity's dominance or separation from nature, the story positions human individuals within the ecological landscape. VanderMeer represents an existence defined by spatial and temporal decay and a life of death where the boundary between human and non-human remains always unclear. This vision aligns with Rosi Braidotti's notion of the posthuman subject, who moves 'beyond the humanism of subjectivity... into a complex network', recognizing the intertwined interdependence of many species (Braidotti 102). Area X becomes the site of this transformation, exposing how human identity and agency are shaped. Indeed, as Donna Haraway contends, the relevance

of 'kin making' across species lines implies recursive linking as an ethical imperative (Haraway 63). VanderMeer's narrative answers this call by showing that survival requires neither mastering nor conquering but an undisciplined openness to the speech and action of non-human. In the end, *Annihilation* advocates for an ethics rooted in humility, care, and coexistence. It dismisses the exploitative conception of nature and promotes a broad sense of planetary system in which the environment of human existence is based on interdependent components. It echoes the posthuman and ecological paradigm of cooperation, interdependence, and respect for all life forms within the shared biosphere.

Rethinking Ecology: Ethics, Responsibility, and Interconnection

By portraying Area X as an independent and continually adjusting environment, *Annihilation* undermines anthropocentric patterns of ethics and responsibility. Even VanderMeer shows the reader that humanity must identify different ways to interact with non-human life that identify their autonomy and dynamism. By rejecting the standard perspective based on anthropocentrism, the author makes people think about how human culture, conduct, and system of thought interact with life, and recognized the autonomy and tenacity of another species of nature. The shifting inclination between Area X and the biologist reflected a step-by-step culture towards the ethics of continence based on mindfulness, adaptation, and respect. The decentring of power relations from dominance to dependency imitates ecocritical versions claiming that literature can help arouse ecological consciousness. Buildings, as Cheryle issue and Harold Fromm summarize, allow text translation to question, interfere, and upset the conviction that underpins the implication that all the value base is humans. This novel inspired by VanderMeer is also a part of a broader dialogue about the Anthropocene and the effects of the advanced manifestations of the human world. This experience is built on both the alarm and humility, notifying one about their vitality on the planet, testing that strong subsistence demands of recognizing that human life needs a slight count, that they need to be tender, aware and incoherent with other forms of satisfaction.

Conclusion

Annihilation by Jeff VanderMeer offers critical posthuman and ecocritical affect studies into the phenomenon of ecological instability and human fragility. The novel presents Area X as a transformative and self-sufficient force, distended epistemologically and ethically by anthropocentrism, thus stressing the fragility of human control and the sensitive balance among all life on Earth. Human characters' bodies enact vulnerability, as do their minds, rendering themes of humility, readiness, and ethically engaging non-human models of humanitarianism. *Annihilation* undermines human centrality and redetermines the humankind and non-human being in a way that contributes to the new ecological ethics of co-existing and respect for non-human being. The work argues seriously for a narrative that sensitizes humanity to a position within a complex ecology and reads it into human decency and ethical ethics in the Anthropocene. ■

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Socio-Economic Determinism and Peasant Life in Mullikarjun Patil's *Under the Mango Tree*

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This article deals with Mallikarjun Patil's English novel *Under the Mango Tree* (2017), Sapna, Bangalore. The novel is a recent one from Sapna Ink, the largest book publishers from Bangalore. Patil's Kannada version of this novel called *Raita Kallappa* (2007) (earlier version as *Raita Kallappana Aatmahatye*) as was made into a film called *Negilyoyi* in 2012. Its dramatic versions are various and they are staged at times and again. That Kannada version was a text book for graduate studies of Karnatak University. *Under the Mango Tree* deals with a sincere farmer Kallappa Danganavar who is victimized by his market economy, and partly by his own ignorance and rusticity. Ch. A. Rajendra Prasad states that the novel deals with the family story of a small landholder. The novel deals with the Indian peasant-farmer and how he is unable to cope with globalization as we see it today.

Keywords: farmer, village life, market economy, agriculture policy, injustice, suicide/fatalism

India happens to be an agriculture country, even today. Agriculture or farming is the practice of cultivating soil, sowing/planting and harvesting and marketing crops. It includes livestock, too. It involves several problems. The topic is related to industrial agriculture, economic surplus, sustainability etc. "Indian agriculture is a global powerhouse, making India the world's largest producer of milk, pulses, spices, rice, sugarcane, cotton and fruits" (Wikipedia). The key characteristics are global leadership, economic importance, employment and food security. Geographic and climatic feature include diverse agri-climatic zones and farming systems. Challenges and opportunities are such as post-harvest loss, sustainability, water management, Govt. initiatives and growth areas.

The present study of Patil's novel *Under the Mango Tree* is analyzed in view of some of these factors. First of all the title happens to remind the reader Thomas Hardy's novel *Under the Greenwood Tree*, which Prof. Patil saw in his 2001 visit to Oxford for higher study and academic engagement. It seems the author writes his novel in Hardysque/Wessex fiction.

In fact, Patil did his Ph.D. on Thomas Hardy. He has even authored two books on Hardy's fiction and poetry. The novel has a foreword by a great Kannada writer BuddannaHingamire and New Zealand's scholar J.W. McMillan. The latter observes,

It was my privilege to live in Belgaum District of Karnataka, where the fictitious little town in this story, Chakrapur is situated, for about 20 years, from 1953 to 1974. I know that India has changed in the 25 years since then, although many of the things described here were true then. (McMillan ix)

Under the Mango Tree has eight chapters. Chapter one 'Farmer Kallappa' begins with the locale, the fictitious village of Chakrapur in Belgaum district. The locale is a hilly place with a river and a Mallayya Temple above the hill. The stream is a lifeline for the inhabitants. Kallappa Danganar lived in a patch of land nearby. He was, the author says, 'an illiterate farmer' as most of the rural farmers are in India. Yet he had his own crude ethics, believing that 'man must live,' and 'everything that rises must converge.' The latter seems to be Flannery O' Conner's title for her collection of short stories published in 1965.

It is Chakrapur rural ambience. There is a temple for Mallayya (resembling Mt Shrishail and its Shaiva-God Mallikarjun. The author's name is also Mallikarjun. The author of this paper knows that the author of the novel made a walking pilgrimage to Shrishail when he was in Plus-2 education). It is a form of Shiva. The rural people are religious. They have a Mallayya tradition to speak of. Patil's pilgrimaging to Mt Shrishail reminds us Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. "The pilgrims would sing hymns; they would talk of god's resplendent avatars and fall into intense reverie" (*Under*3). Parise (pilgrims going to Mt Shrishail) and Muslim Karimkhan's story serves the purpose of interfaith community. The author provides inputs like *Saaba* (infidel) becoming a *Samba* (saint) in Hindu environs. Karim's shrine is laid at Mallayya's stream. We see Kallappa collecting jamun (berry) fruits from a tree there for his children. His confrontation with fests provides a comic relief.

We see that Kallappa does not live either in a city or a village, but in a farm. If his farm is one km away from Mallayya Temple, the village of Chakrapur lies two kms under on Belgaum-Miraj highway. Then Kallappa dislikes English education, computer and mobile. This is his critique of modern civilization.

Kallappa blames British rule for India's backwardness, and he himself inherits that backwardness ironically. The sense of irony pervades the book. "Caste divides Chakrapur people. One could see poverty everywhere" (*Under*7). There is a fictitious town called Pampapattan. See the following hearty description: "Kallappa's farmhouse was amidst this spectacle. His small house looked like a speck upon the earth. It was as lonely as the hills." (*Under*8) Kallappa's mother Bandavva, wife Shobha, and two children Priyanka and Shashi – all seem to be a happy lot. The first chapter ends with an Anglo-Indian song 'It's good to be at home with you / As evening shadows fall'. (McMillan)

The following is Kallappa's daily work:

It was morning of a new day. At nine o'clock in the morning the two older children – Priyanka and Shashi – went to the town school two kms away. Mother Shobha got up early to prepare her children for school. Bandavva helped her in the kitchen. Kallappa got up early as usual. He cleaned the stable where his two bullocks, two cows and a buffalo sheltered. He also had some goats, though many upper caste people did not keep them. He would do this kind of work before eight in the morning. (Under15)

Kallappa is a hearty farmer. The author describes:

The farmer is the tiller of the land. He is the true owner of it. He is the earth's true son. The farmer farms his land for all people. He supplies them with food. Therefore Indians say 'Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan'. He works in sun, rain and wind. Oxen are his companions. Peasants are his friends. He sweats and enjoys the fruit of it. When he sees the sun he prays:

Whom should I remember;
But Mother earth (Under17)

Prof. Patil, himself from farming background, describes Kallappa as working with his people and animals harmoniously. There are hints at farmer's crisis:

Good crops fulfill farmer's needs. They can make him prosperous and happy. Some philosophers think that the farmer is lazy or he is unambitious. The farmer knows that happiness begins when ambition ceases. When crops yield well, he feels fulfilled. For his desires are limited. (Under22)

Farmers take loans to settle their dues with seed, shops and dalals or they have bad habits. They are victimised by money-lenders, at times or by dalals.

The third chapter 'Liabilities' deals with how Kallappa had loans from MessersJangamashettiKaratattis. The issue hinges upon certain fraud of Rs. 20,000/-in the lending deal.Kallappa's family is upset. The next issue with Indian village is social segregation asPatil describes:

Chakrapur was a little town with the traditional look of a big village. Like all other Indian villages it had a segregated social life. Every street or area had its own kind of people representing more castes and crafts. In one area lived the Patils, the majority community as they belonged to the feudal ruling class. In one area lived the Shettis (Chettis) or business people. The Lingayat priests lived in yet another street and they were cleverer than the Panchamasalis and Shettis. Brahmins lived in yet another street and they were most unhappy, for the government had impoverished them in the name of equality and social justice. Education was their asset; and knowledge their domain. The potters, oil-mongers,

traders, smithies – all lived in their own streets. The so called SCs and STs lived in areas outside the village. (*Under*28)

The third scene relates to Kallappa's encounter with Messers Karalattis about loan issue. The event turns from bad to worse. So Kallappa decided to sell part of his farm to pay the loan off.

Patil's description of cattle fair at Gokak is realistic and homely. Kallappa and Parappa, the two bosom farmers take their animals both to sell, as they sense famine in the district. The cattle fair is a historical one with a temple for the city, modern amenities, district administration's project to enlighten farmers. There is Govt's good gestures for farmers' welfare.

Indian agro-economy about harvesting is implicit in Patil's description about farming at the beginning of Chapter 5. He writes, 'Kallappa has to harvest his crops carefully. He has to gather his corn and preserve it for future' (*Under*62). Accordingly Chakrapur farmers thrived well that year. This chapter is the climactic chapter in the narrative. It describes Kallappa's social relations contrasting to his own rustic habits, his people yonder in town, village politics, his family matters that include his daughter's careerism.

'Harvest' is the most revealing chapter about village affairs. J.W. McMillan's view that '*Under the Mango Tree* is true to life' comes alive here.

Patil, the author presents a hearty picture of Priyanka's marriage alliance with a graduate from Bagalkot.

The next chapter 'Village Fair' is equally communicative of rural life as we see it in George Eliot's *Mill and the Floss*. The chapter describes a village fair that people witnessed at least fifty years ago. Patil wrote this novel 25 years ago, commenting upon the bygone way of life, more so, in the countryside. The descriptions of fair, Yallamma as a cult goddess (speaking of Shaktas), and people's blind beliefs are genuine.

The last chapter of the novel 'Kallappa's Last Sigh' is climactic. The novelist describes the unfortunate famine in Chakrapur for years. This devastated Chakrapur and its folks. Kallappa was also a victim. He made loans again, this time for his mother's medical treatment and also for his son's higher education. Kallappa, ignorant and emotional as he happens to be, gave away his cattle as famine hit the land. Then the loans bothered him beyond measure. The threat of auctioning too made him downhearted. So he committed suicide. John Donne's quoted words 'Suicide is not so naturally a sin / that it may never be otherwise' is the ending lines. It is apt, too. Patil's novel *Under the Mango Tree* is a pathetic, yet a moving life-story of the Indian farmer. Many Indian academic professors and writers like Ch Rajendra Prasad have appreciated the novel. He writes,

In a way, Patil's *Under the Mango Tree* is a saga of the Indian peasant. Thus, at times, the life journey of Kallappa reminds the classics like Premchand's *Godan*

and Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* and the predicament of the protagonists thereof Hori Mahatto and Nathan respectively. Similar to these two works, Patil's novel attempts to engage itself in the combine of existentialist, realist and naturalist anguish which enhances its seriousness and attempts to add a universalist dimension.(Prasad, unpub article)

Thus, Mallikarjun Patil's *Under the Mango Tree* is a poignant farm novel depicting the struggles, dignity and downfall of the Indian farmer Kallappa Danganavar. Set in the rural landscape of Chakrapur, it realistically portrays agrarian life, caste divisions and the socio-economic pressures of globalization. Patil, drawing from his own farming background and literary influences like Thomas Hardy, combines realism with compassion to explore the moral and material decay of rural India. Through vivid depictions of festivals, fairs and farming routines, the novel mirrors the peasant's bond with nature and his silent suffering under debt and drought. Kallappa's tragic suicide symbolizes the plight of countless farmers facing systemic neglect. The novel stands as a social document and literary testament to rural resilience and despair. Its thematic affinity with Premchand's *Godan* and Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* situates it within the great tradition of Indian rural fiction. Overall, Patil's work humanizes the farmer's crisis, blending realism, empathy and universal human concern. ■

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The Presence of Mythological Elements in Girish Karnad's Play *Yayati*

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M. Krishnaraj

This research work has been undertaken with the intention of investigating the myth that can be found in Karnad's *Yayati*. When considered in the context of Indian culture, it sheds insight on the beliefs, rites and rituals, customs, and traditions that are associated with the culture. Every culture, community, and nation has its own unique mythology, which is something that is unique to that person. The Indian people's culture is not complete without the incorporation of Indian mythology among its elements.

Keywords : Mythology, cultural practices, ceremonial acts, and customary beliefs

The Use of Myth In Indian English Drama

A "myth" was originally a story or tradition that had been passed down through generations and would often feature a deity or hero from a religion that had ideas about the universe and its workings, as well as its customs and cosmogony. From one generation to the next, tales were passed down. There are few universally acknowledged elements of myth, despite the fact that critics and dictionaries dispute greatly on its existence. Myths are old stories about supernatural characters, usually gods or demi-gods. A simple explanation would be that it reflects people's ideas about where a certain racial group came from. The deeds of holy and heroic individuals are usually associated with this concept.

Derivation from the ancient Greek word "mythos," the English word "myth" has a long and storied history. It has gone through numerous stages and been faced with numerous different interpretations and explanations throughout its history. Myths can have characters that are gods, mankind, or terrifying entities that possess both of these features. It is conceivable for these characters to be. However, even in myths that are purely concerned with immortals, the narrative material, the depiction of struggle and suffering, and the resolution or revelation are all ways in which human concerns are reflected. The link between religious ideas, ritual practice, and myth, according to some scholars, is very important. Their claims lead one to believe that religious practice and ceremonial observance are

cornerstones of myth. Myth is present in many literary genres, including but not limited to poetry, philosophy, ethics, and theology. Other literary creations also contain myth. Contrarily, they are not illustrative of traditional fairy tales. There are two possible ways to classify myth: “literary myth,” which includes tales of Greek and Roman heroes and gods, and “true myth,” sometimes called a sacred story. You could hear one of these terms used interchangeably with the other.

Myths relate to society, rituals, nature, and the origin stories of the world. These four areas provide a foundation for further classification of myths. One of the most important myths is the cultural myth, according to conventional wisdom. Cultural heroes, whose stories are so intrinsic to human culture, have their lives and deeds chronicled here. They play a vital role in these narratives. Thus, it is an inevitable result of their job that what they do influences people’s emotions and ideas right away. Ceremonial myths and rituals, nature myths and the origins of natural occurrences, and creation myths and the beginning of the universe (including the story of how insects, animals, and people came into existence) are all interconnected sorts of myths. You can’t separate any of these falsehoods from one another. Political myths, philosophical myths, and various varieties of political myths are all part of the mythological supplement that also contains social myths. This supplement for myths includes social myths. Some urban legends centre on legendary figures that have the power to change the course of history, inspire awe in the hearts and minds of others, and do great good for humanity. It is believed that these people can influence the way other people think. They were associated with holiness and power as a result of this. They were very powerful as a result. They are master manipulators when it comes to winning over the affections of their loved ones. Even though they lived in the past, their status as legendary characters does not change the fact that they are historical persons. Notable figures such as Gandhi, Buddha, Christ, and Teresa are among those who make up this group. It is certain that the importance of myth in literary works is immense. The outcome is that the audience finds the topic matter and approach more engaging. Mythology is mostly responsible for the eternal significance that literature across all languages now possesses. This interpretation will stand. The theatre receives its greater sense of significance from the mythology. The cultural heritage, political system, social principles, religious ethos, and Hindu philosophy of India have all been effectively conveyed to Westerners via Indian English theatre. Everything was finished. The stories and narratives told in the theatrical productions of Indian English drama may have been brought to life, which could explain the success that has been achieved.

Girish Karnad’s Life Story and its Progression

Girish Karnad was born into a Saraswat community that is half Marathi and half Kannada. He spent his childhood in Matheran, close to Bombay, on May 19, 1938. As a young man, Girish Karnad was educated in Karnataka. It was in 1958 that he received his diploma from Karnataka University, Dharwad. He went to Mumbai to get a degree. After winning the illustrious Rhodes scholarship, he continued his education in England. From

1960 to 1963, he attended Oxford. He went on to get a Bhabha Fellowship, which allowed him to study overseas from 1970 to 1972. He travelled to the United States in 1987 to spend time as a Fulbright Scholar in Residence at the University of Chicago's Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations.

Girish Karnad's Literary Works

- Ø *Yayati (1961), Tughlaq (1964), Hayavadana(1971), Angumalige(1977), HittinaHunja(1980),Naga-Mandala(1988), Tale-Danda(1990), Agni MattuMale (1995), he wrote all his eight plays in Kannada.*
- Ø *There are five plays by Karnad that have been translated into English: Tughlaq, Hayavadana, Naga-Mandala, TaleDanda, and The Fire and the Rain. Even though the national language of India is Hindi, Karnad's plays have been translated into all of the main Indian languages.*

Girish Karnad :As a Playwright

His plays have brought Karnad fame. The development of Indian English Drama owes a great deal to his plays. He has infused his plays with folk theatre traditions, mythological importance, and historical context. Dramatist Girish Karnad is one example of someone who tries to save cultural heritage. His moniker as the "Renaissance man" is well-deserved. The themes of his plays are the psychological struggles that modern Indian men and women face as a result of their diverse socioeconomic contexts, even though they seem to be about mythology or history. Karnad wrote his debut drama, *Yayati*, in 1961. The titular figure hails from the epic Mahabharata. The central idea of the play is accountability. The mythical figure is a vehicle for Karnad to convey the pointlessness of sensual delight.

The Use of Myth in Yayati

Not only is the use of myth in Girish Karnad limited to the functions of ritual or structural device, but it also includes other applications. This is being done with the intention of examining the modern consequences that are associated with a conventional circumstance. "Dialectical interaction between tradition and modernity" is a topic that is currently receiving a lot of attention in contemporary Indian society, and Karnad is an attempt to construct and establish such a relationship. The myths are not utilised in their entirety by Karnad, contrary to what is commonly believed. Those aspects of folklore and traditions that he believes to be beneficial are the ones that he chooses to acquire knowledge of. He takes use of his imagination in order to be able to design the plot in such a way that it is compatible with these stories.

A well-known piece of Kannada literature, *Yayati* is often regarded as the best drama written by a Kannada author. It is also widely regarded as the best play written in Kannada. Poet, actor, director, translator, and writer are just some of the other things he does in addition to being a poet. The prestigious Jnyanapith Award was bestowed upon him in the year 1998, which was a good year for him. His contribution to writing is one of a kind

because he revolutionised the theatrical arts and skills. For this reason, his contribution to writing is unique.

With the help of Indian myths, we are able to get insight into the way in which Indians conduct their lives, as well as their perspectives on the world, their religious rituals, and their beliefs. The idea that the domain of his tales and folklore is so vast that it calls for a separate study in the form of an academic treatise is so amazing that it is beyond anything that can be comprehended. A comparison can be made between Indian mythology and folklore and an ocean due to the fact that it encompasses thousands of different languages, cultures, tribes, villages, and customs. It was in 1961 when the first drama that Girish Karnad had ever produced, titled *Yayati*, was made accessible to the public. Even though he was only twenty-two years old at the time, Karnad was able to perform his own rendition of the drama *Yayati*. Through the production of this play, Karnad was able to establish his reputation as a dramatist in Kannada literature and launch his successful career in the Indian theatre. It was also the beginning of his illustrious career, which began at that time. There have been a significant number of Indian languages that have been translated into *Yayati*, and the dance has continued to be performed extensively all over the country. The story of *Yayati* was initially derived from the Mahabharata, namely from the chapter known as “Adiparva.” One of the most important aspects of *Yayati*’s personality is drawn from the story that was originally told. In the drama, *Yayati*, a legendary emperor from India, and Pooru, a character from Indian mythology, serve as the central characters. When it comes to the characters of Chित्रलेखा and Swarnalata, Karnad is the one who is responsible for their creation. *Yayati* is the most important character in the drama. Mythology and folktales serve as the basis for *Yayati*, which was written with the intention of focusing on the contemporary social, emotional, political, and psychological difficulties that are addressed by modern man. *Yayati* was written with the objective of focussing on these issues.

The narrative of Karnad *Yayati* begins with Swarnalatha expressing her anger to Devayani regarding Sharmishtha on the first page. As soon as Sharmishtha arrives, the story takes a different path than it had been heading. They remember how they got to be the queen of the Bharath dynasty after making their way through the realm and eventually being the first queen. The storyline makes it abundantly clear that *Yayati* was a part of the Bharath family tree during her lifetime. At one time, he went to the forest for the purpose of hunting, and on his way back from the forest, he heard the cry of a little girl who was yelling for assistance while her face was covered in mud. He rushed back to the woodland to help the girl. During the course of one day, it just so happened that Devayani, the daughter of Shukracharya, the guru of demons, and Sharmishtha, the daughter of Vrishparva, the Demon King, went swimming together. As the deity of wind, Indra, took the form of wind and altered their garments, they were transformed. In response to this, Sharmishtha adopted the blouse that Devayani had presented to her as a response. The scenario became more and more chaotic as a direct result of Devayani’s explosive fury, which was not contained. By emphasising that she should not have been dressed in the

attire of an Aryan, she rebuked her for her behaviour. This is the point at which Sharmishta became enraged, and the dispute progressed to the point when it reached its most extreme degree of abuse.

The phrases “You poor people” were among the vile ones that she used to scold her during the conversation. The only thing that is required of you is to put on an article of clothing that is known as Aryan” (Karnad 20). Sharmishta caused her to be drawn to a well in the vicinity, and then, in a fit of wrath, she violently pushed her into the well. It was Yayati who came to her rescue. They saved her. She was completely enthralled by the fact that he made this approach. The marriage to him was one of her objectives. Due to the weight of history and custom, the practice of marriage between a Kshatriya and a Brahmin was considered to be a socially unacceptable conduct. One of the challenges that they faced in their efforts to form a marriage bond was this hurdle. When it came to her choices, this was the only one she had. As a result of her restlessness and anger, she was raging. As a result of receiving complaints regarding this unpleasant incident, the monarch’s father, Shukracharya, brought it to the attention of the monarch. He was adamant about his plan to depart the country in the event that Devayani was not found to be satisfied with the situation. The agreement between Devayani and Sharmishta provided that in the event that Sharmishta got married, she would be compelled to work as her maid. In addition to being the necessity, this was also the penalty. She agreed with her suggestion and granted her approval.

The fact that Sharmishta is serving as her slave is demonstrated. A surge of feelings carried *Yayati* away to discover the miserable circumstances of Sharmishta, who was in fact a princess. She was swept away by the wave of emotions. In spite of the fact that *Yayati*’s father-in-law had cautioned him against ever letting Sharmishta sleep in his bed, *Yayati* went ahead and secretly wed Sharmishta. At the moment that Shukracharya became aware of this, he uttered his curse on *Yayati*, which resulted in him deteriorating into an elderly man when he was still in the prime of his life. Furthermore, Shukracharya was so divine that he declared that the only way for him to restore his youth was to give his old age to another person and steal their youth away from him. This was the only way for him to reclaim his youth.

In spite of the fact that she has had a great lot of joy throughout her life, *Yayati* continues to be irritable and dissatisfied. *Yayati* is the one who takes the young man of Pooru, who is his youngest son and who arrived in the palace as a result of Chitrlekha’s marriage. After the death of Chitrlekha, who had taken a vial of poison because *Yayati* refused to return her young husband and he was not ready to accept her, *Yayati* came to the realisation that he does not understand the situation that a newly married lady finds herself in or the challenges that she faces. On the other hand, immediately following Chitrlekha’s passing, she came to this consciousness. As a consequence of this action, *Yayati* grew irritated and distant from the situation.

Chitralkh suffers from a profound sense of disillusionment and a loss of faith in life as a direct consequence of the actions that he takes. The following words are evidence that he is suffering and bearing a weight for Pooru's youth. It is apparent that he is carrying a burden for Pooru's youth. Discover the youth that you previously possessed. I have reached the point where it is time for me to turn my decline into a fresh start (Karnad 69). At the end of the story, *Yayati* makes the decision to forego all of the pleasures that the world has to offer and instead enters the woods in order to perform a form of penance. Puru asks, "What does all of this mean, O God?" as the last query in his series of inquiries. To what extent does that indicate something? (Karnad 69)

In point of fact, the mythological story of *Yayati* comes to a close with Puru, the devoted son, surrendering to the curse that his father had set on him. Nevertheless, the author is a good craftsman, and he or she improves the dramatic effect by inventing a wonderful character named Chitralkha. Chitralkha is a significant character. Due to the fact that Karnad has portrayed her in such a realistic manner, it is presumed that her role in the play is something that is reasonably anticipated.

Conclusion

Through the myth, Karnad has explored contemporary issues like patriarchy, man-woman relationships, gender, caste, and alienation, as well as various human impulses like love, hate, anger, sex, sacrifice, and so on. "The father is left to face the consequences for shirking responsibility for his own actions" is the message that is conveyed before the play ends. This is why the play *Yayati* teaches a moral lesson. Genuinely, people should own up to their mistakes. Every day should be full with hope, and no matter what comes our way, we should be ready to overcome it. ■

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Oral Tradition and Folklore in Mamang Dai's *The Sky Queen and Once Upon A Moontime*

Lovely Kumari

Shagufta Naj

Mamang Dai is one of the most prolific writers of North East Indian writing in English. She is a native of Arunachal Pradesh which is famous for its serenity, traditions, ethnicity, greenery, beautiful flora and fauna. Mamang Dai responsibly collects the folktales which particularly reflect the spirit of the place. The tradition of storytelling is as old as human creation along with the universe. Every ethnic race and community has its own set of folktales and stories related to their tradition as well as creation of the Universe. This paper explores the rich tapestry of folklore from Arunachal Pradesh as depicted in Mamang Dai's works, "The Sky Queen" and "Once upon a Moontime." Through these narratives, Dai revives ancient tales that reflect the cultural and spiritual heritage of the region. "The Sky Queen" narrates the legend of Nyanyi Myete, a celestial queen who brings a message of harmony with nature. Once upon a Moontime is a collection of four enchanting tales that delve into the creation myths and the natural world, featuring characters from celestial bodies to tiny ants. This paper examines how Dai's storytelling preserves these traditional narratives, offering insights into the indigenous worldview and the importance of oral traditions in maintaining cultural identity. By analyzing these works, the study highlights the significance of folklore in understanding and preserving the lost legacy of Arunachal Pradesh.

Keywords: Oral traditions, Folklore, Indigenous, Culture, Identity, Myth

Introduction

"A people without stories is a people without memory"

Oral narratives serve as a primary means of transmitting cultural values, traditions, beliefs, history, and social norms across generations. Before written language was widespread oral narratives were the libraries and history books of societies. Oral traditions, including songs, myths, and legends, are intrinsically linked to language. Preserving these traditions helps to maintain linguistic diversity. Stories often contain elements that define a community

and its unique identity, connecting the present with the past and fostering a sense of belonging. The oral traditions of storytelling in India personify its vast linguistic diversity, weaving together a rich and multifaceted cultural dynasty. In India each region has cultivated its own distinctive storytelling traditions, frequently articulated in local languages, thereby fostering the growth and popularization of a diverse corpus of oral literature. From the ancient Sanskrit epics and Puranas to the folktales of diverse communities, these narratives have served as crucial vehicles for preserving cultural identities and transmitting collective wisdom across generations. There are various forms of Oral narratives like Kathakali (A classical dance-drama form originated in Kerala and is famous for its grandeur of costumes, makeup, and expression. A coalescence of dance, music and acting to tell stories particularly from Hindu Mythology), *Jataka Tales* (An amalgamation of stories from the previous lives of Lord Buddha. They are popular across India and are used to teach values like kindness, wisdom and compassion), *Ram Leela* (A dramatic re-enactment of Ramayana performed during Dussehra that brings together people from all walks of life), and last but not the least are Folktales and Mythology (They are told in various languages and dialects. These stories often carry moral lessons and represent the local customs, beliefs, dialects and history of the region). “A folktale is a poetic text that carries some of its cultural contexts within it; it is also a travelling metaphor that finds a new meaning with each new telling.” (Ramanujan ix). We all are well aware of the fact that Literature reflects culture, and folklore is an integral part of it. Anyone who wants to study the culture of any society needs to study not only its written classics but also its oral traditions, of which folklore is an important part. Folklore enables us to understand how a culture has either thrived or declined over time. In literature, folklore encompasses a collection of fictional stories about people and animals, along with songs, jokes, tales, cultural myths, and even proverbs:”Folklore is thus the product of culture, a component part of culture. Folklore finds its expression through culture; it is born in culture’s womb. And because of this, the study of a culture cannot be fruitful and perfect without the study of its folklore” (Brajananda 10).

Folklore in Northeast India

In recent decades, the literary traditions of Northeast India have increasingly reflected the region’s natural beauty and grandeur, with numerous writers and poets earning recognition and critical acclaim. This region consists of eight states—Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, and Sikkim known as seven sisters. “This region is a misshapen strip of land, linked to the rest of the country by a narrow corridor just twenty kilometres wide at its slimmest which is referred to as the Chicken’s neck” (Hazarika). It is a confluence of diverse tribes and ethnic groups, each with its own unique traditions, culture, religion, language, and dialects. It is a home to rare species of flora and fauna and thus enjoys a rich biodiversity. Hills, mountains, rivers, valleys, people, myths, legends, rituals and rites make its ecology distinct and diverse.”The region is a melting pot where the brown and yellow races meet, where the tradition and culture of different tribes and ethnic groups mingle, and where there is a rich store house of different

language and dialects of these multi-ethnic people.” (Giri 64). “There are tribes still following traditional ‘animistic’ faiths those are ‘woven around forest ecology’ and profess ‘co-existence with the natural world” (Dai, The xi). This region not only in its biodiversity but also abounds in folklore passed down by their ancestors from generation to generation in the form of oral narratives. To keep these narratives alive the writers from these regions like Mamang Dai, Easterine Kire, Temsula Ao, and Janice Patriat have done the arduous task by penning them down in the form of fiction, poetry, short stories, and prose writings. Beyond their aesthetic appeal, these works foreground the intimate relationship between landscape, legends and their lived experience focusing folklore as a vital source of cultural memory, identity and indigenous worldviews. A. Taylor an eminent American folklorist says: “Folklore is the material that is handed on by tradition, either by word of mouth or by custom and practice. It may be folk songs, folktales, riddles, proverbs or other material preserved in words” (216). One of these literary artists is a Padmashri awardee and former civil servant, Mamang Dai. She belongs from the landscape of beautiful greenery, flora and fauna named Arunachal Pradesh which is located in the eastern part of India. She is famous for her creative and non-fictional writing and writes about history, tradition, culture and folklore of Arunachal Pradesh. Dai has authored two non-fictional works like Arunachal Pradesh: The Hidden Land (2003), and Mountain Harvest: The Food of Arunachal Pradesh (2004). Her creative writings include the novels entitled *The Legends of Pensam* (2006), *Stupid Cupid* (2008), *The Black Hill* (2014). She has also penned down three books of folktales entitled *Sky Queen* (2005), *Once upon a Moon time* (2005), *Hambreelsai’s Loom* (2014).

Oral Traditions and the Folklore of the Adis

Arunachal Pradesh the largest among the Northeastern states, is “a land of austere grandeur and loveliness covering 83,743 sq. km that straddles the eastern Himalaya like an intervening belt of green shadowed in perpetual rain and mist” (Dai, Arunachal 13). The importance of oral literature in Arunachal Pradesh society cannot be overstated. Oral narratives, myths, legends, and folk songs embody the collective wisdom, values and history of the people of Arunachal Pradesh which have been passed down through generations. For Adi people oral tradition plays a very crucial role that has nurtured them through centuries for living their lives. All of their beliefs, rituals and customary practice come to them through oral tradition. The classical literary tradition of the Adi people is rooted in epic narratives preserved through oral transmission, conveyed in ritual language by the Miri, a shamanic authority whose knowledge encompasses multiple dimensions of evolutionary history. Collectively, this body of literature is called *Aabang*, which denotes both the narrative itself and the performative act of storytelling directed toward an audience. These stories include the stories of fire, flood, lost civilisations or any common themes like the birth of the universe, earth, sky, or creation of man. There are many *Aabangs* and an *Aabang* can have several parts. Within this tradition, the Miri occupy differentiated but complementary social roles essential to the continuity of oral heritage: while some serve as ritual specialists who mediate between the human and spiritual realms, others act as rhapsodists whose primary function

is the performative recitation and transmission of epic narratives to the community. These oral traditions not only link individuals to their cultural heritage but also play a crucial role in shaping their identity and fostering community cohesion. In an interview with Jaydeep Sarangi Dai herself says; “Well, the oral tradition is a way of life that nurtured us through the centuries. All our beliefs, rituals and customary practice have come to us via the oral tradition. (sarangi 2)”. When Sarangi asks her whether she as a writer is influenced by oral narratives or not then she answers; “Certainly, I am influenced by the oral narratives. Knowing the stories gives me a sense of identity. It inspires my writing – after all it is a world of myth, memory, and imagination. Oral narratives are generally perceived as a simple recounting of tales for a young audience but I think their significance lies in the symbols embedded in the stories about the sanctity of life, about what makes us human. My response to myth/stories is akin to a quest. It is a world view I am still exploring” (Sarangi 4). Dai being an Adi very beautifully uses her experience to showcase her tribal life and culture through legends, myths, and oral histories. In an interview when she is asked if she has tried to record a disappearing tradition of Adis through her writings she confirms: “In a way, yes. Ours is an oral tradition you know, I was trying to meet people and collect and record these oral narratives... the small histories which were getting lost and when you talk to people even small things can trigger these memories off ... I conceived of Pensam as a kind of secret garden... where one can do whatever one wants ... The people were very responsive ... They were happy that the Adi word had received wider recognition” (Jeyan).

Shaped by its idiosyncratic and entrancing panorama, the Northeast region has brought about a literary tradition in which nature emerges not as a passive backdrop but as an active agent in the constitution of human experience by shaping their cultural memory, social identity. Nature as living soul is the prime focus in the folktales of Arunachal Pradesh. As Wordsworth in his poem “The Tables Turned”, pens down “One impulse from a vernal wood/May teach you more of man, /Of moral evil and of good. / Than all the sages can,” (Wordsworth 1798) likewise Dai through her folktales shows us that Nature not only acts as the pronouncer of moral judgement but also works as a spiritual instructor guiding human beings about the good and evil. Sudita Phukan in a scholarly article also notes “The folktales reflect that there is a close association of Nature with the Adis” (Phukan 69). Dai diligently preserves folktales that vividly capture the essence of her land because she is well aware of the fact that “the land is all they have and need, for they are spiritually related to it” (Rexlin and Latha 602). In these indigenous and regional literatures particularly within the context of Aabang of the Adi people these narratives serve as a repository of indigenous ecological knowledge encoding mutual relationship between human communities and their environments. Aabang, through its epic narratives and ritual performances vocalize a worldview in which ecological balance, spiritual mediation, and social continuity are intertwined. The role of the Miri—both as ritual specialists who communicate with the spirit world and as rhapsodists who preserve narrative forms—underscores the ways in which oral traditions sustain ecological wisdom by embedding environmental ethics within

collective memory. In this sense, *Aabang* contributes not only to the preservation of cultural identity but also to broader discourses within the environmental humanities, demonstrating how indigenous narrative traditions function as vital epistemologies for understanding and negotiating human–nature interrelations. Story-telling has always been linked with the origins of human existence and the creation of the universe. Each ethnic group and community enjoy its own collection of folktales and myths about the creation of the world, human existence, the creation of nature and so on often glorifying these tribes. The beliefs about the creation of the world and the significance of the nature exist in a society throughout the ages. These beliefs are represented in the form of folktales and folk songs mostly in oral versions. These traditional folktales and beliefs play a pivotal role in shaping the ideology of these societies. Dai thus tries to re-create and re-invent a world of folktales, which carry the lost glory of her place and people as she points out; “Before everything there was the land of Kojum-Koja, a sacred place beyond moon and stars. This was the first civilization from where man began his journey through the different heavens to descend into the world carrying stories of happiness and hope” (Escaping 90).

Myth and Memory in Mamang Dai’s *The Sky Queen* and *Once Upon AMoontime*”

Mamang Dai preserves the oral tales of Adi society by shaping them into her two children’s books, *The Sky Queen* and *Once Upon a Moontime*, drawn from the enchanting storytelling traditions of Arunachal Pradesh. Arunachal Pradesh literally means “the land of the dawn-lit mountains”. It is also popularly known as “land of the rising sun”. It is the homeland of twenty-six tribes with over one hundred and ten sub-clans each with a different language or dialect. (The Legends, Author’s note). Among many tribes the Adis are the major group of tribes inhabiting in West Siang District of the Province. Myths and stories influence the lives of people there. Their social beliefs and cultural practices are mostly based on these myths and stories. Mamang Dai primarily focuses on mythological and legendary themes, often revisiting the origins of creation in her works. She very intricately paints the canvas which portray the deep bond between humans and the nature. By revisiting and reinterpreting traditional narratives and blending them with the contemporary elements she enriches her readers with a sense of wonder and amazement. “*The Sky Queen* is the nature-orientation of tribal folklores dealing with the subject matter of the beginning, middle and end of civilization.” (Satapathy & Nayak 3). In this regard there are two folklores, in this book: a folkloric account of “Biri Bote... the mighty monarch of Sili Sidong, the Water Kingdom” (Dai, *The Sky* 9) projected as the destroyer and second of that “Nyani Myete,” (Dai, *The Sky* 19) projected as the preserver. One very remarkable thing that we find in this book is this that there is no establishment of Trinity of creation, preservation and destruction in rigid sense although there is a reference to the beginning of life” “At the dawn of life when there was nothing but endless blue, there sprang a civilization known as Kojum-Koja” (Dai, *The Sky* 1). *The Sky Queen* explores the story of Nyanyi Myete, “the beautiful lady who floated in one day from the deep endless skies” (Dai, *The Sky* 30). She was the celestial aunt of the Kojum-Koja, whose kingdom was destroyed in the great flood. Kojum-

Koja was a civilization where people used to live happily and celebrated many festivals together. But before each festival, they went for hunting and fishing. 'Pi-me' was one such festival during which everyone went fishing and caught a massive fish-like creature. The elders identified it as Biri Angur Potung, the son of Biri Bote, the powerful ruler of Sili Sidong, the Water Kingdom. However, the young Kojum-Koja disregarded the elders' warning and ate the creature, causing everyone to fall ill. Koru Ponsung, the Bat, witnessed everything that occurred during the festival and reported the tragic death of their son to the Queen of Biri Bote. Due to the tragic death of his son Biri Bote became angry and declared war against Kojum-Koja. The battle went on for many days, with the Kingdom of Water conquering Kojum-Koja through storms, rain, water, and floods. As a result, the entire civilization of Kojum-Koja disappeared under water. After the destruction, only Nyanyi Myete remained alive to spread the lost glory of Kojum-Koja, their songs and dances. She didn't show any partiality to anyone and was kind to all starting from birds, animals, insects to human beings. She was a ray of hope in that disaster. "She made people sing and dance and have a good time" (Dai, *The Sky* 30). The Adis thus remember her as a beautiful lady who floated from the sky and celebrate Nyani Myete every year. On the other hand, *Once Upon AMoontime* is a collection of four alluring stories namely "How the World was Made", "The Story of the River", "Why the Dove Weeps" and "The Sun and the Moon". "How the World was Made" tells the story of the creation of the earth. There were two brothers named LopongRimbuche and Chom Dande who lived in the sky with water surrounding them from every direction. They created human beings on earth and cast a lotus flower to cover the water. They invoked winds from four directions; "the east wind blew yellow dust, the south wind carried red dust, the north wind brought black dust and the west wind blew the dust round and round and mixed it up together until the earth was formed" (Dai, *Once Upon* 3). After that the two brothers shaped the land into hills and valleys, painting them with different colours. "The Story of the River" is a beautiful story about the creation of the river Lohit (in Arunachal) or the Brahmaputra (in Assam). These was only water present everywhere, due to it the god Techimdung, who lived below the "bluest of blue waters" (Dai, *Once Upon* 4) thought of creating earth. Each and everyonewas very excited and that is why everyone like ants, Sun, wind, Drakob and Daiyunga offered help in this work. The ants carried small handfuls of earth from beneath the water to the surface. The sun assisted in drying the earth, while the wind spread it across the surface. The ants also cooperated in placing four pillars at each corner of the earth for support. They also brought seeds of flowers and trees. A high mountain named the Land of the Sun or Ring Lembun was made by Drakob and Daiyunga. Down this mountain happily flowed The Lohit River but was stopped by many little hills. So, Crab made a way through the hills by cutting a channel. In another area, Lohit was transformed into a vast lake, where a worm helped by digging a small channel to allow the water to flow. A Wild Cat expanded the channel after drinking its water. The river followed the Wild Cat wherever it went till it reached the plains of Assam. From that time, it is believed Lohit carries peace and prosperity to human beings, animals, birds, insects, trees, flowers and seeds. In "Why the Dove Weeps," the Dove served as the

caretaker of Donyi, the Sun's son. One day Dove strapped the baby with an eppon when Sun set out to work. When the baby began crying, the Dove sang a lullaby to soothe him, but it was in vain. So, the Dove took him to his mother and handed him over. Unfortunately, the eppon fell off, and the Dove flew back to retrieve it. As she tried to carry the strap, her wings became heavy, and she was unable to fly back to Donyi's abode. As a result, she stayed on Earth forever, and starts crying everyday when the sun rises in the east, sets in the west and during midday, remembering her past life. The "eppon became a creeper called 'rippum' and this is the creeper that the Adis still use even today to carry a baby after it is born." ((Dai, Once Upon 17). The last story "The Sun and the Moon" talks about the creation of sun and moon. Originally, there were two suns, and their parents were Epanja and Lanbbai. The younger sun, being cruel, began to scorch the Earth, causing destruction and making all creatures suffer a lot. Anya, the great god of the Mishmis along with some gifts sent a messenger to the elder sun to inform him of the younger sun's harmful actions. In return, the elder sun gifted the messenger a silkworm for humans to weave clothes, a white jewel for a necklace, and his presence in stone to provide fire. In his anger, the elder sun threw his younger brother into a pool of mud, where the younger sun became pale, and the marks of the mud is still visible. Since then, the younger sun no longer appears in the sky while the elder sun is present, and only emerges after the elder sun leaves.

Conclusion

Mamang Dai's *The Sky Queen* and *Once upon a Moontime* elucidate the perennial significance of oral tradition both as a literary resource and a cultural archive. By retelling the story of indigenous myths, folktales and legends, Dai not only acts as a reservoir of her community but also bring together the spoken and written narratives allowing them to reach the masses. In this regard Dai's both works showcase the intercession between continuity and adaption. *The Sky Queen* retells the story of destruction and harmony. It teaches us that when everything is lost then also there is a ray of hope like Nyanyi Myete who brings harmony in the world and teaches people the moral values of life like love and empathy. While *Once upon a Moontime* Dai, talks about the creation myth of World, River and some other folktales of Arunachal Pradesh. Thus, these two texts showcase that oral tradition is not a static inheritance but a lively practice that shapes indigenous identity and cultural memory. Through her works Dai not only preserves indigenous knowledge system, but also make them relevant in modern literary expression. ■

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Trauma, Power, and the Panoptic Gaze: A Foucauldian Reading of Elie Wiesel's *Night*

Sanjukta Samal

Soumya Sangita Sahoo

Elie Wiesel's *Night* stands as one of the most profound literary testimonies of Holocaust trauma, capturing the annihilation of identity and the fragmentation of human consciousness under the Nazi regime. This paper explores Wiesel's memoir through the dual lenses of Trauma Theory and Michel Foucault's concepts of Power and the Panopticon, examining how systems of surveillance and control perpetuate psychological devastation. Drawing on Foucault's notion that modern power operates through constant observation and the internalization of discipline, the study interprets the concentration camp as a panoptic structure, where visibility becomes a mechanism of domination and self-regulation. Simultaneously, Trauma Theory elucidates how Wiesel's fragmented narrative form, silences, and repetitions embody the aftereffects of unspeakable suffering. The paper argues that trauma and power are not discrete phenomena but interlinked forces that shape subjectivity under totalitarianism. Yet, amidst pervasive control, Wiesel's act of remembering and writing functions as a form of resistance, a reclamation of voice against the erasures of history. By integrating Foucauldian discourse with trauma studies, this paper situates *Night* as both a text of suffering and survival, illustrating the complex interplay between power, memory, and the enduring human impulse to bear witness.

Keywords: Holocaust, Trauma Theory, Power, Panopticon, Memory, Resistance.

1. Introduction

Elie Wiesel's *Night* remains one of the most haunting literary testaments to the Holocaust, a text that transcends historical documentation to become an ethical and philosophical inquiry into the nature of suffering, memory, and survival. Written in the aftermath of one of humanity's most catastrophic events, *Night* exposes the collapse of faith, morality, and human dignity under conditions of totalitarian domination. Through Wiesel's fragmented narration and restrained prose, the reader confronts not only the physical atrocities of the concentration camps but also the profound psychological ruptures that

persist in the wake of such historical trauma. The memoir thus becomes both a record of collective devastation and a personal struggle to reclaim meaning in a world rendered void of it.

The Holocaust as an event resists comprehension; its sheer magnitude destabilizes traditional frameworks of representation. Yet, literature becomes a space where this incomprehensibility may be approached rather than fully articulated. Wiesel's text operates in that space of approximation, where language falters yet insists on speaking. Within this paradox, the memoir can be productively examined through Trauma Theory, which investigates the aftereffects of extreme suffering, fragmentation of memory, and the challenges of representing pain that exceeds linguistic limits. The narrative structure of *Night*—disjointed, elliptical, and haunted by silence—mirrors the psychic disorientation of trauma itself. Through this lens, Wiesel's act of writing becomes both a symptom and a form of recovery, an attempt to reclaim coherence from the ruins of lived horror.

However, the Holocaust was not only a site of traumatic memory but also one of systematic surveillance and institutionalized power. The concentration camp epitomized what Michel Foucault conceptualized as the Panopticon, a spatial and psychological architecture of control where individuals internalize the gaze of authority and regulate their own behavior accordingly. In *Discipline and Punish* (1977), Foucault theorized power as diffuse, omnipresent, and productive rather than merely repressive. Applying this framework to Wiesel's memoir reveals how the Nazi regime's control extended beyond physical coercion to the very formation of subjectivity. In the camps, prisoners became both objects and instruments of power, disciplined through observation, fear, and guilt. Thus, the Foucauldian concept of panopticism provides a structural reading of how totalitarian systems maintain order by transforming surveillance into a mechanism of self-discipline.

This paper, therefore, seeks to explore the intersections of Trauma Theory and Foucault's Power Discourse which illuminate the dual dimensions of Wiesel's *Night*: the psychic wounds inflicted upon the individual and the political machinery that orchestrated such dehumanization. Trauma exposes the internal scars left by domination, while Foucault's theory reveals the external networks that produce and sustain it. The interplay of these frameworks underscores that power operates not only through visible acts of violence but also through the subtler conditioning of perception, emotion, and memory. Yet, amidst the all-encompassing reach of control, Wiesel's testimony emerges as an act of resistance, an assertion of voice and agency in defiance of silence.

2. Understanding Trauma Theory

Trauma Theory emerged primarily from psychoanalysis and Holocaust studies, seeking to explain how overwhelming experiences shatter normal modes of cognition, memory, and narration. As Cathy Caruth defines it, trauma is “not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature, the way it was precisely not known in the first instance, returns to

haunt the survivor later on” (Unclaimed Experience 4). In other words, trauma is not just an event; it is an ongoing structure of experience characterized by repetition, intrusion, and delayed understanding. Trauma survivors, therefore, live in a temporal disjunction, the past is never truly past but continually invades the present. This belatedness explains why Wiesel’s *Night*, though written years after the events, reads as an immediate, unmediated cry. The text’s fragmented form—its abrupt shifts, silences, and repetitions—mirrors the disjointed nature of traumatic memory.

Dominick LaCapra expands on this by distinguishing between “acting out” and “working through” trauma. Acting out refers to the compulsive repetition of the traumatic event, while working through involves the attempt to process and integrate the experience into a coherent narrative. In *Night*, we see both tendencies at play: the repetitive invocation of memory (“Never shall I forget that night...”) enacts the haunting persistence of trauma, while the very act of writing signals the beginning of working through. Furthermore, trauma affects language and testimony. As Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub argue in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing*, the survivor speaks from a space where speech and silence coexist; testimony is both necessary and impossible. Wiesel’s writing demonstrates this tension. His minimalist prose, devoid of ornamentation, reflects both the inadequacy of language to capture horror and the moral obligation to speak.

Trauma also manifests through embodiment and numbness. Judith Herman in *Trauma and Recovery* notes that survivors often experience detachment from their bodies and emotions. Wiesel’s observation that “I was nothing but a body. Perhaps even less: a famished stomach” (Night 52) epitomizes this dissociation. The self is reduced to physical survival; the mind and moral identity retreat under extreme power. Thus, Trauma Theory helps us understand *Night* not simply as a historical narrative but as a psychic document, an attempt to articulate the inarticulable, to bear witness to the unspeakable through the fragmented language of memory.

3. Foucauldian Concepts of Power and the Panopticon

Michel Foucault’s philosophy offers a radical rethinking of power, not as a possession or force exercised by a few, but as a diffused network operating throughout social institutions. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977), Foucault describes modern power as disciplinary, functioning through surveillance, normalization, and the regulation of bodies rather than overt violence. His famous analysis of Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon illustrates this transformation. The Panopticon, a circular prison design where inmates are visible to an unseen guard, becomes for Foucault the architectural figure of modern control. “The Panopticon is a machine for dissociating the see/being seen dyad: in the peripheric ring, one is totally seen, without ever seeing” (Foucault 202). This one-way gaze internalizes discipline; the prisoner, never knowing when he is watched, becomes his own overseer. The power thus shifts from external coercion to internalized self-surveillance. Foucault calls this mechanism “the internalization of the gaze”—a process that produces docile bodies

and obedient subjects. Power, therefore, is productive rather than merely repressive; it produces knowledge, identity, and social order. As he writes, “Power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth” (Foucault 194).

In *Night*, the concentration camp epitomizes the Foucauldian Panopticon. The inmates live under constant visibility, watched by guards, kapos, and the omnipresent threat of selection. The camp’s architecture (watchtowers, barbed wires, inspection routines) and its routines (roll calls, punishments, hierarchies) ensure that surveillance becomes inescapable. Even sleep, hunger, and prayer are monitored. Over time, the prisoners internalize this surveillance, disciplining themselves through fear and silence. Moreover, Foucault’s notion of biopower, the regulation of populations and the management of life and death, finds its extreme form in the Holocaust. The Nazi regime decided who would live or die, reduced individuals to statistics, and exercised control over reproduction, health, and death. The camp system functioned as a laboratory of biopolitical experimentation where human beings became mere biological data.

Wiesel’s narrative shows how this power annihilates individuality: “I became A-7713. From then on, I had no other name” (Night 42). The tattoo on his arm is both a mark of surveillance and a Foucauldian inscription of power upon the body. The self is transformed into an object of administrative control—visible, classifiable, and disposable. Thus, Foucault’s theories of power and the Panopticon provide a structural lens through which the systemic dehumanization of *Night* can be analyzed, not just as historical evil but as the culmination of disciplinary modernity.

4. Interlinking Trauma and Power: Theoretical Intersection

Though Trauma Theory and Foucauldian Power Theory originate from distinct intellectual traditions, psychoanalytic and post-structuralist respectively, their intersections are profound. Both are concerned with the body, memory, and subjectivity under domination. Trauma theory examines the psychological aftereffects of overwhelming events, while Foucault investigates the socio-political mechanisms that produce those very conditions of subjugation. Together, they reveal how external power structures translate into internal psychic wounds.

In the concentration camp, trauma is not only an aftermath but an instrument of control. The Nazi system created conditions of extreme deprivation and constant surveillance that induced psychological fragmentation. Foucault’s description of the modern disciplinary system, where power works “by means of meticulous control of operations of the body” (Foucault 137), is realized in Auschwitz and Buchenwald. Here, the body is the first site of power, and trauma is the inevitable psychic consequence.

This interlinking becomes clearer when considering the internalization of surveillance. Foucault argues that the Panopticon’s power lies not in direct violence but in making individuals see themselves as objects of observation. Trauma theory similarly reveals how victims internalize the oppressor’s gaze. The traumatized subject continues to re-live

the horror, self-policing through guilt, fear, and repression. In *Night*, Wiesel not only recalls what happened but also re-enacts it, showing how the Nazi gaze continues to live within the survivor's consciousness.

As Caruth notes, "the traumatized are not simply the victims of a destructive event, but the bearers of a history that they cannot entirely possess" (Caruth 5). The same can be said of Wiesel's narrator, whose memory is both a prison and a means of liberation. The trauma he carries is the afterlife of Foucauldian power, a power that has migrated from the camp's external architecture into the survivor's internal psyche. Thus, trauma theory and Foucauldian power analysis converge in *Night*: both explore how control and subjection persist beyond physical captivity, how the visible mechanisms of domination evolve into invisible psychological imprisonment.

5. Reading *Night* through the Interplay of Power and Trauma

The concentration camp represents the ultimate realization of Foucault's Panopticon, a system of total visibility where surveillance becomes a mode of existence. Every movement in *Night* is subject to scrutiny. Wiesel describes, "The Kapos were beating us again, but I no longer felt the pain" (Night 39). The pain's absence indicates not freedom but the success of disciplinary conditioning; his body has ceased to distinguish between punishment and obedience. Foucault writes, "The perfect disciplinary apparatus would make it possible for a single gaze to see everything constantly" (Foucault 173). This gaze permeates Wiesel's world. The guard towers, electric fences, and regimented routines create a self-regulating social body. Even when no officer is present, the prisoners monitor each other. The Nazi system turns victims into agents of surveillance, Kapos policing fellow inmates, sons spying on fathers, hunger destroying solidarity. Wiesel's line, "The look in his eyes, as they stared into mine, has never left me" (Night 109), captures this transfer of the gaze: the power to see and be seen becomes internalized trauma. The external watchtower dissolves into the internal conscience. The Panopticon survives even after the camp is gone.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault demonstrates how modern power operates through the "docile body", a body that can be trained, observed, and optimized. The Nazi regime perfected this process. The first step in *Night* is depersonalization: heads shaved, clothes stripped, numbers tattooed. "I became A-7713. From then on, I had no other name" (Night 42). The inscription of the number is the inscription of power itself, a literal marking of subjection.

This transformation aligns with Foucault's idea that power "produces subjected and practiced bodies" (Foucault 138). The body becomes a political site, a surface upon which authority writes its dominance. In Wiesel's text, hunger, forced marches, and exhaustion are disciplinary mechanisms that reduce the body to mechanical obedience. "We were no longer marching; we were running. Like automatons. The SS shouted: 'Faster!'" (Night 85). The simile "like automatons" exposes the erasure of human will. Here, trauma intersects with power. The psychological breakdown that follows bodily degradation,

numbness, loss of self, guilt, is not incidental; it is the product of a system designed to destroy autonomy. The camp is not just a place of imprisonment; it is a factory of trauma, manufacturing psychic submission through physical control.

The most insidious function of the Panopticon is the internalization of its gaze. Even when no authority figure is visible, the subject behaves as if watched. Wiesel shows how this psychological conditioning destroys familial and moral bonds. The relationship between father and son becomes corrupted under the pressure of surveillance and fear. When a son kills his father for bread, Wiesel writes, “I was fifteen years old and I had seen everything” (Night 96). Seeing “everything” is not liberation, it is an initiation into the moral collapse engineered by power.

In another scene, Wiesel confesses his shame at feeling relief after his father’s death: “Free at last!” (Night 106). This internal voice reveals the complete penetration of power into the psyche. The prisoner’s emotions are shaped by the logic of the camp, where survival requires emotional numbness and detachment. Foucault’s “soul of the prisoner” (Foucault 30) finds its counterpart here: Wiesel’s inner life becomes a battlefield between compassion and self-preservation. Trauma theory explains this as dissociation, a defense mechanism where the self separates from unbearable experience. Yet, under Foucauldian analysis, this dissociation is also a political victory for power—it signifies the success of surveillance in producing self-regulating, guilt-ridden subjects.

Wiesel’s *Night* is not only a record of suffering but also an enactment of trauma through form. The memoir’s fragmented structure, repetitions, and silences mirror the characteristics of traumatic narration described by Caruth and LaCapra. The recurring line, “Never shall I forget that night, the first night in camp, which has turned my life into one long night...” (Night 34), is both testimony and symptom. Its repetition does not signify catharsis but the compulsion to repeat, characteristic of trauma survivors. LaCapra notes that “acting out” manifests in a repetitive re-living of trauma without full integration (LaCapra 144). Wiesel’s narrative voice oscillates between detachment and emotional outburst, reflecting his struggle between acting out and working through. The memoir’s abrupt temporal shifts, moving from past to present, show the persistence of traumatic time.

Moreover, the absence of elaborate description or commentary underscores trauma’s resistance to representation. When Wiesel witnesses the hanging of a child, he writes: “Behind me, I heard a man asking: ‘Where is God now?’ And I heard a voice within me answer: ‘Where is He? Here He is—He is hanging here on this gallows...’” (Night 65). The theological despair here is beyond rational explanation; it marks a rupture in language and belief. The image of God’s death becomes a metaphor for the death of meaning itself, a trauma that language cannot repair. The Panopticon’s psychological mechanism parallels trauma’s temporal mechanism. Both operate invisibly, both generate repetition and self-surveillance, and both sustain themselves through silence. The postwar Wiesel continues to

be haunted by the gaze of the camp, just as the Panopticon's architecture endures in the mind long after physical release.

Despite its pervasive despair, *Night* is ultimately an act of resistance, an assertion of selfhood through narrative. Foucault famously declared, "Where there is power, there is resistance" (Foucault 95). The survivor's testimony becomes such resistance. Writing transforms the subject from an object of surveillance into an agent of witnessing. Wiesel's decision to write *Night*, to relive and rearticulate what defies articulation, is itself a Foucauldian "technology of the self": a means of reconstructing identity and autonomy through discourse. As Caruth argues, "to be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or an event" (Caruth 4); to narrate it is to begin reclaiming that possession.

In this sense, writing becomes a counter-panoptic act. The gaze that once objectified the prisoner is now reversed; the survivor looks back at the oppressor through the act of testimony. Wiesel's pen reclaims the gaze. He writes, "For the dead and the living, we must bear witness" (*Night*, Preface). This moral imperative transforms trauma into history and restores agency to the silenced victim. Furthermore, narrative serves as communal healing. By sharing his story, Wiesel converts individual trauma into collective memory, allowing readers to confront history's violence rather than repress it. This aligns with LaCapra's notion of "empathic unsettlement," which encourages readers to engage ethically with trauma without appropriating it (LaCapra 41). Thus, while *Night* documents the destruction of subjectivity, it simultaneously performs its restoration. The act of writing reconfigures power: the survivor becomes both witness and historian, transforming pain into ethical testimony.

6. Conclusion

Elie Wiesel's *Night* stands at the intersection of Trauma Theory and Foucauldian Power Theory, revealing how historical violence operates through both external surveillance and internal psychic control. The concentration camp emerges as a Panopticon, a space where visibility equals domination, and where power inscribes itself upon the body and memory. Foucault's concepts of discipline, the gaze, and biopower illuminate the structural mechanisms of Nazi control, while Trauma Theory exposes the enduring psychic wounds these mechanisms produce. Through Wiesel's eyes, we witness how power transcends the physical to colonize the mind. Even after liberation, the survivor remains within an invisible Panopticon of memory, haunted by guilt, silence, and the gaze of the dead. The interplay between Foucault and trauma thus underscores a grim truth: modern systems of control do not merely kill; they reshape consciousness itself.

Yet, within this darkness lies resistance. The act of writing *Night* transforms surveillance into testimony and trauma into remembrance. Wiesel's narrative breaks the cycle of silence imposed by fear, reclaiming agency through language. His text exemplifies Foucault's paradox of power: wherever domination exists, so too does the possibility of revolt. Ultimately, *Night* is not only a document of suffering but also a philosophical meditation on the human capacity to survive the unthinkable. By fusing Trauma Theory

with Foucauldian analysis, we see how the camp's architecture of power continues to echo within the survivor's psyche and how narrative, as a technology of resistance, turns that echo into a voice. Through this synthesis, Wiesel transforms pain into historical consciousness and restores meaning to a world that sought to annihilate both body and spirit. ■

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Freedom and the Female Psyche: A Psychological Reading of H.G. Wells' *Ann Veronica*

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H.G. Wells' novel *Ann Veronica* serves as a captivating exploration of gender equality and liberation against the backdrop of a patriarchal society. This article delves into the narrative's portrayal of Ann Veronica's journey as she challenges societal norms and embarks on a quest for individuality and empowerment. Through a close analysis of Ann Veronica's struggles and triumphs, this study unveils the novel's themes of gender inequality, the limitations imposed on women's autonomy, and the emergence of feminist ideas in the early 20th century. The article contextualizes Ann Veronica's pursuit of education, love, and self-realization within the historical context of the suffrage movement and the evolving discourse on women's rights. By examining Ann Veronica's interactions with the male-dominated world, her relationships, and the choices she makes, the article reveals how the novel grapples with issues of identity, societal expectations, and the aspiration for gender parity. Through a comprehensive analysis of Wells' narrative techniques, character development, and thematic depth, this article showcases "Ann Veronica" as a precursor to feminist literature. It highlights the novel's role in sparking conversations about gender dynamics, women's liberation, and the enduring struggle for equality, making it a timeless work that continues to resonate with contemporary discussions on gender representation and empowerment.

Keywords: Gender equality, Liberation, Feminism, Societal Norms, Women's Rights, Individuality, Empowerment, Suffrage Movement.

While H.G. Wells is primarily renowned for his contributions to science fiction, his alignment with Fabian socialist ideologies led him to create literary works such as *Love and Mr. Lewisham*, *Kipps*, *Tono Bungay*, and *Ann Veronica*. These novels collectively paint satirical portraits of societal norms. *Ann Veronica* stands out as a groundbreaking social novel, representing Wells' audacious exploration of feminist themes. Within its pages, Wells delves into the tension between female empowerment and the personal sacrifices entailed by romantic love. When *Ann Veronica* was first published in 1909, it provoked a significant

stir. The press criticized it vehemently, and it faced condemnation from pulpits due to Wells' revolutionary treatment of female liberation.

Wells crafted this novel as a mirror to reflect the prevailing societal conditions during his time in the Victorian era, which transitioned into the Edwardian period. Within its pages, Wells skillfully captured the prevailing attitudes of Edwardian England, most notably embodied by the heroine's father and boyfriend. These characters were depicted as utterly incapable of comprehending why a woman might aspire to independence, pursue scientific study, or advocate for the right to vote, among other things.

At the age of twenty-one, Ann Veronica Stanley, characterized by her passion, strong-willed nature, recklessness, and fierce independence, was resolute in her quest to assert herself as an individual, to govern her own life, and above all, to fully experience love and living. Her initial compromise led her to pursue a science course at Tredgold Women's College. However, she soon found a burning desire to become a student at Imperial College in Westminster. When she broached the subject with her father, he adamantly forbade it. Ann Veronica also expressed her desire to attend the annual Fadden dances at a fashionable art school, alongside her friends, but once again, her father opposed the idea. In their heated discussions, she argued that she had no valid reason not to attend and challenged her father's assertion that it was an unsuitable event, emphasizing her lack of life experience and the need to explore new horizons. She yearned for more than just this one dance; she sought these experiences to gain a broader perspective on life, fervently desiring to embrace her humanity.

As Ann Veronica prepared to transform into a corsair for the evening's ball, her father abruptly barged into her room, igniting an absurd and frantic struggle. One sought to open the door, while the other desperately clung to it. In the midst of this chaotic tussle, she managed to secure the key, but her father, in his determination, tightly grasped her hand, inadvertently twisting her wrist and causing her to cry out in pain. At that moment, a torrent of intense shame and self-disgust surged through her. She was overwhelmed by a deep sense of calamity as if her very soul had borne witness to a monumental and undignified catastrophe. This had been her first decisive stand for dignity and independence as a mature and self-reliant individual, yet the universe seemed to have responded with callousness. Ann Veronica made a solemn vow to the night, swearing that she would either attend the ball or perish in the attempt. She had left her home in pursuit of an independent life, only to be met with rejection in the heart of London.

H.G. Wells skillfully addresses the contemporary predicament faced by young women in his work. He highlights the uprising born from their idleness and engagement in artificial pursuits, all within the confining walls of life's obsolete conventions, moral codes, and religious doctrines. With remarkable finesse, Wells introduces us to a compelling character, Ann Veronica, who embodies the essence of a young woman with a strong character and lofty ideals. She resides in a conventional, semi-suburban household, a situation akin to

that of countless young women of her time. The options before them often appear limited, oscillating between a confined life within the familial home and a desire for greater opportunities. In part, this story possesses a broader universality, representing the potent stimulus and intense yearning of adolescence. It encapsulates the moment when young minds, just becoming self-aware, are suddenly exposed to the vast world beyond, brimming with possibilities.

Following her altercation with her father, Veronica sought counsel from Miss Miniver, who proudly displayed a button on her lapel bearing the words 'Votes for women' with an air of sharing a profound yet often unspoken truth, Miss Miniver disclosed,

“Thousands of women have married merely for freedom, and found it a worse slavery. We live under man-made institution and that is what they amount to women have practically no economic freedom because they have no political freedom”. While we were minding the children, they stole our right and liberties. The children made us slaves and the men took advantage of it.” (Wells 112)

She continued, emphasizing the grievance that while women tended to the household and raised the children, their rights and liberties were stealthily taken away. The responsibilities of motherhood turned them into slaves, and men capitalized on this situation. Miss Miniver asserted that the only remedy lay in securing the right to vote, even though women had historically been denied a fair opportunity in this regard. She lamented that, in the end, a woman's primary means of advancement often seemed to be pleasing a man.

This novel effectively conveys several crucial messages, primarily highlighting the subjugation of women within society under the dominance of men. The protagonist, Ann Veronica, aspires to break free from the confines of Victorian norms, which were constructed around male authority. It is widely acknowledged that all human beings, irrespective of gender, inherently possess certain rights and should be treated as equals. The aspiration was for social, economic, and political equality between men and women. However, the reality of Ann Veronica's life, like many women of her time, placed women in a secondary position. The representation of women was often portrayed negatively, as weaker and less essential, while men were depicted as positive, stronger, and more vital. For a century, women endured a systemic inferiority imposed by men. Ann Veronica, like a typical Victorian girl, experienced unfair treatment from her father, who expected her to conform to the traditional role of a dutiful and obedient daughter. In her rebellion against these Victorian norms, Ann Veronica waged a challenging battle against the patriarchal system, driven by the hope of attaining freedom and liberty as a woman. H.G. Wells, the author, was well-known for his advocacy of women's suffrage and stood out as one of the most effective male voices in the early feminist movement. His work shed light on the pressing need for gender equality and the dismantling of entrenched societal norms that perpetuated male dominance over women. Wilfred Whitten writes,

“The world is moving so fast, new ideas and horizons are opening so quickly, that young people are dazzled by life as a spectacle as an aggregate of brilliant contacts and opportunities. They want to live...” (Whitten, 47)

Miss Miniver introduced Ann Veronica to a vibrant world of social and intellectual activism, which included the Tolstoyan movement and The Fabian Society. The Fabians held a central place in the intellectual landscape of the time, boasting notable figures such as Shaw, Webb, the author Wilkins, Toomer, and Dr. Tumpany, among others. These individuals were regarded as some of the most remarkable minds of their era. Ann Veronica’s engagement with these groups fueled her intellectual awakening and aligned her with a comprehensive system of ideas, as well as a widespread desire for societal transformation. The Fabians, in particular, were dedicated to effecting change within modern civilization through subtle and strategic initiatives, often working behind the scenes to bring about their vision for a more just and equitable society.

Ann Veronica’s aspiration to improve the social, economic, and political standing of women exemplifies her commitment to advancing feminist ideals. Through her diligent work and dedication to education, she achieved the very dreams she harbored. Consequently, she embarked on a path of self-reliance, emancipating herself from the confines of her family. These character traits and actions unmistakably exhibit feminist elements within her persona. Her endeavors were driven by a genuine desire to challenge the prevailing male-dominated norms that had held women back for far too long. Ann Veronica’s journey underscores her determination to bring about positive change in the lives of women, advocating for their rights and autonomy within society.

As the advice of Ramage, Ann Veronica decided to borrow forty pounds to sustain her studies at Imperial College. This decision was driven by her recognition that she still had much to learn and improve upon, acknowledging that she was not yet fully mature in her education and skills. With the financial support she received, Ann Veronica was able to fully commit herself to her studies in the biological laboratory at the Central Imperial College. During this time, she received a letter from Mr. Ramage, inviting her to attend a performance of “Tristan and Isolde” followed by a dinner at a private club. Ann Veronica eagerly accepted the invitation, as she had never before experienced these kind of performance. “Don’t the dark longings of Wagner’s music instill a stirring in your nether regions?” Mr. Ramage recklessly declared, thrusting his mouth towards her lips. Ann Veronica punched him firmly on the chin. “How dare you!” she cried “I am not a woman of lower truth.” Mr. Ramage answered her that she could not go because he had paid for her and helped her. Else he threatened her that she had all her life in his hand. Patrick Parrinder writes,

“When Ann Veronica borrows forty pounds from a man who had appeared a genial suburban gentleman of unimpeachable reputation, she finds that the wolf and tiger instincts have only dressed themselves up in thin clothing that primitive man will feed and must take his pasturage”.(Parrinder, 215)

H.G Wells writes,

“My book was written primarily to express the resentment and distress which many women feel nowadays at their unavailable practical dependence choice, and in full sympathy with the natural but perhaps anarchistic and the antisocial idea that is intolerable for a woman to have sexual relation with a man with whom she is not in love.” (Wells, Preface xii)

As Ann Veronica returned to her tiny bed-sitting room, an overwhelming sense of shame and self-disgust consumed her. She was acutely aware of the reality of a woman’s place in society. She had previously believed that the notion of women’s dependence was merely an illusion, something that could be dispelled with denial. However, she now saw that a woman’s life was, to a large extent, a game of chance – finding the right man was the supposed rule, while everything else appeared to be superficial or deceptive. Determined to break free from this form of servitude and refuse to be enslaved by any man’s expectations, *Ann Veronica* made the bold decision to join the suffrage movement. This movement was dedicated to achieving equal citizenship for both men and women, fighting for the rights and recognition that women deserved in society. Her involvement marked a significant step toward her pursuit of gender equality.

Ann Veronica’s rebellious character is a reflection of her strong idealism as a young woman. Her experiences under the domination of men in the Victorian age shaped her perspective. Her story illustrates that her struggles were not unique to her alone; countless women shared similar experiences during that era. This shared oppression compelled *Ann Veronica* to defy the norms of Victorian society, which were steeped in contentious feminist issues at the time. Her determination and perseverance in challenging the patriarchal system and advocating for women’s rights, particularly the right to vote, were driven by her aspiration for freedom and liberty as a woman. In aligning herself with the suffrage movement, Ann Veronica sought to bring about social change and pave the way for greater gender equality, not only for herself but for women as a whole. Her story serves as a testament to the broader feminist movement’s efforts to dismantle the oppressive structures of the past and secure a brighter future for women.

“*Ann Veronica*” provides glimpses into the women’s suffrage movement in Great Britain, shedding light on the struggles and efforts of suffragettes. It notably includes a chapter inspired by the events of 1908 when suffragettes attempted to storm the Parliament as part of their activism. During this period, as Western countries underwent urbanization and industrialization, educational and employment opportunities for women were on the rise. The suffrage movement emerged as a powerful force advocating for women’s democratic rights, and it played a pivotal role in shaping the identity of the “New Woman”. This movement was instrumental in challenging traditional gender norms and working towards gender equality by advocating for women’s right to vote, a significant milestone in the broader context of women’s rights and social change.

In “*Ann Veronica*,” H.G. Wells skillfully crafted a character with dual, significant natures, effectively blending elements of femininity. This unique character resonated with the prevailing societal discussions and concerns surrounding femininity during that era. The novel boldly criticized the Victorian and Edwardian attitudes towards women and unreservedly advocated for their freedom, using explicit language that led to its government ban. Wells’ portrayal of the heroine acknowledging her sexual desires and needs challenged the conservative norms of the time. Despite presenting sex as a complex issue that also tested men’s rationality, he faced condemnation from those who were uncomfortable with such candid depictions. This theme was echoed by Aldous Huxley in his 1921 novel “*Crome Yellow*”. Wells’ classic narrative of a woman’s struggle against the suffocating conventions of Edwardian England remains relevant even today, as it continues to shed light on the enduring issues of gender, freedom, and societal constraints. The themes explored in “*Ann Veronica*” continue to resonate with contemporary discussions surrounding gender equality and individual liberation. ■

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Gender Equality and Status of Women

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Gender equality is a human right, but our universe encounters a continuous break in admittance to opportunities and policymaking power for women and men. It's a reality that no nation in the world has attained complete gender equality. Nearly, half of the population faces some form of discrimination in over 190 countries, because they're female. In most of the developing countries, gender discrimination holds millions of girls and women back from attaining their full potential, avoiding many from acquiring an education, expressing their opinions, retrieving healthcare, and determining their own prospects. When examining the problem of gender inequality, consider the unstable sex ratio at birth to be the most important issue. The imbalanced sex ratio at birth has been increasing with unavoidable implications and is increasing all over the country. In present situation, the consequences of the gender inequality for the country's socio-economic development and safe life of the population have been noted. Women still have less rights and opportunities than men, but minor activities can transform this truth. The purpose of this research paper is to examine the gender equity and some social reflection on women. It also attempts to propose inclusive measures of solving the problems in the future.

Keywords: Gender equality, gender discrimination, gender inequality, biotic cause, sex-ratio at birth, socio-economic development etc.

Introduction

The word gender defines the socially created roles and tasks that societies reflect suitable for men and women. Gender equality can be defined as the equal power and opportunities for men and women. It means that men and women have equal power and equal opportunities for education, financial liberation, and personal growth. It is a human right, but our world faces a continuous gap in access to opportunities and policymaking power for women and men. Universally, women have less chances for economic contribution than men. Women have less access to elementary and higher education, better health and secure risks, and fewer political representation. "Gender equality is the goal that will help eradicate poverty that will create more equal economies, fairer societies and happier men, women and children." – GraçaMachel

Gender inequalities can be defined as when both men and women do not have the same share in the decision making and prosperity of a society. The cultural and social difference can be created between both the sexes (Ridgeway, 2004). The status of women in society is very varied throughout the world.”**What is happening today is the height of all the waves of women’s efforts that went before. Once change like this begins..... the thrust picks up and it becomes overpowering.**”

In the present scenario, gender inequality befalls on a worldwide scale. This phenomenon is understood as a alteration in the sexual structure of the population in the unfavourable way. It depends on many factors. There is overall understanding for gender equality in the world that men and women should have equal behavior in society. They should not be discriminated constructed on gender, unless there is a complete biotic cause behind.

Gender inequality is a major problem in the world. Here this problem is referred to as the gender discrimination. Women face the problem of inequality and injustice in opportunities in a society. It seems in different procedures in business life or at workplace, especially inequalities in employment, social benefits wages, and education. Gender inequality appears to be bad for economic progress, so it may cause and continue poverty and susceptibility in a society as a whole. It is said that usually women earn less money than men. They do more domestic work and suffer extra sexual violence.

In present situation, the consequences of the gender inequality for the country’s socio-economic development and safe life of the population have been noted. Women still have less rights and opportunities than men, but minor activities can transform this truth. There is no equal division of labour. Household chores and children’s care is still done mostly by women in most part of the world.

In recent years women have made great strides towards gender equality. Health is one of the important areas in gender inequality. A gender pay gap exists in most of the industrialist countries. It does not hinder only access to quality healthcare but also cause medical problems. Women compare with their male counterparts and suffer from depressive and anxiety disorder. Another problem is that women are often victims of violence, particularly sexual assault. Sexual violence is one of the examples of health problem faced by women.

In developing nations, gender disparity clutches millions of girls and women back from reaching their full potential, avoiding many from acquiring an education, accessing healthcare, articulating their views, and determining their own futures.”Today we need the talent and visions of girls to lead our businesses tomorrow. That’s why increasing educational opportunities for girls isn’t charity. It’s a keensavings in a stronger global economy and in our future.”

It was pointed out by the UN that women from developing countries do over three hours more of daily unpaid work (household chores and childcare) than men, while in

developed countries, they do two hours additional. It was found that the excess of household responsibilities can increase women's probabilities of mental illnesses. In addition, they are discouraging their production at work, therefore affecting their incomes.

Women have fewer rights and opportunities than men, but small actions can change this reality. The World Economic Forum (WEF) conducted the study in 2017 about the gender equality. It was found that women have only 68 percent of the rights, opportunities and contact to resources relished by the world's men. Those variances and the speed of development in reducing them, differ from nation to nation. But according to the World Economic Forum WEF researchers, at our existing step, it will take 100 years to eliminate gender inequalities.

The influences of gender inequity and gender variation on population size can cause the crimes of changing forms including sex crimes. In most of the rural and hilly areas where social insurance plans are not accessible to the paths of population, the elderly are not protected in economic and communal facets. It is essential to progress an effective social security structure that helps the elderly people without children in rural zones.

Education is an important area of emphasis. Although the world is making development in attaining gender equality in education, girls still make up a higher percentage of out-of-school children than boys. Nearly one quarter of girls in the developing world do not join school. Naturally, there are number of families with inadequate income who cannot afford expenses such as school fees, dresses, and materials for all of their children. But the priority of education is to be given for their sons. Most of the families may also depend on girls' labour for domestic responsibilities, carrying water, and childcare. But arranging girls' education delivers perhaps the single uppermost return on investment in the developing world. An educated girl has more opportunities to make an income and to join in political procedures. Today, in society women still struggle with important personal and internalized gender prejudice.

A final area of emphasis in achieving gender equality is women's economic and political empowerment. Women and girls do long hours of unpaid domestic work throughout the world. In some countries, women still lack rights to own land or to get property, earn income, or to move up in their workplace. At all stages, including at home and in the public ground, women are widely lessened as decision-makers.

An International Labour Organization study exhibited that if, by 2025, the global gender gap in the labour market would wither by 25 percent. One result would be a 204 million growth in the workforce.

Conclusion

Strong efforts to improve sex-specific research need to be made which should include research grants and recruitment of women volunteers for medical research studies. At the same time education is another side of the solution to gender inequality in health. Women

should be encouraged to enter in healthcare fields. People should work to empower the women by educating current and future leaders about gender equity. They should provide health literacy training to girls and women,

It is necessary to change the traditional ideology. The social status of women should be enhanced. Everyone should try to achieve equality for men and women in social life and to optimize the population size, structure and dispersal of women, Gender imbalances should be reduced. All these measures will help encouraging justifiable social development. All stake holders, civil societies and government must come onward and participate in the women empowerment development is the need of the hour. ■

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Narrating the Nation: Oral History and Postcolonial Memory in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*

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S. Hannah Evangeline

Amitav Ghosh is a renowned Indian diasporic writer, and in his writings he addresses immigration and its impacts on the diasporic community. The novel, *The Shadow Lines* deals with national identity through the lens of storytelling and collective memory. It is a historical novel that explores the history of India, Bangladesh and England, especially during the Second World War. Amitav Ghosh experiments with language in his works, blending different languages and dialects to effectively portray their depth in human experience through his characters. He is well known for his unique narrative technique. In this novel Amitav Ghosh creates his fictional world with glimpses of real historical events. He also presents how borders and boundaries play a crucial role in partition and its related issues. This article analyses how Ghosh converts domestic and intergenerational storytelling into a subversive mode of history-making that contests official colonial and national histories.

Keywords: History, Storytelling, Memory, Colonialism and Partition.

Language plays an important role in expressing and transmitting cultural and historical memory from one generation to another in various forms. In oral traditions, it includes storytelling, myths and songs. In written records, it appears as documents, books and other forms. Through language, we can understand how societies and cultures evolve and change over time. A shared language creates a strong bond among the people and helps them understand their collective past and their cultural identity as language itself contains and preserves cultural beliefs and historical memory. So the language does not only act as a tool of communication; it is also considered more powerful because it preserves and transmits the cultural and historical legacy to the generations. In *The Shadow Lines*, oral history takes the form of family stories, recollections and conversations especially those of the narrator's grandmother, Thamma and his uncle, Tridib. In this novel, the narrative technique plays a crucial role in the development of the plot. The entire story is narrated by an unnamed narrator. Amitav Ghosh presents *The Shadow Lines* as a kind of memory novel, since the narrative revolves around the unnamed narrator, whose memories form the backdrop of the plot.

The novel explores the ways in which personal memories and historical events are interconnected with individual identity. The story unfolds through the narrator's recollections and introspections. Ghosh blurs the distinction between past and present, reality and imagination. The shifting perspectives and overlapping timelines emphasize how memory reconstructs history, suggesting that the boundaries dividing nations are as illusory as the lines separating personal and collective experiences. Amitav Ghosh presents how the partition and displacement are handled by different characters and how they affect the psychological condition of an individual. The narration deals with many historical incidents such as the Second World War, the communal riots in Bangladesh, and the Partition of India in 1947, within the framework of *The Shadow Lines*. Through this narrative, Ghosh explores and questions the very ideas of Partition and borders.

The novel portrays the relationship between two families. It shows how personal bonds, shared histories, and generational connections shape their interactions. During Lionel Tresawsen's stay in India, he became interested in spiritualism and began attending gatherings of the Theosophical Society in Calcutta, where he met several prominent nationalists and gained their trust. The friendship between Tresawsen and Datta-Chaudhuri was later continued by their successors. The year 1939 is important because it marks both the beginning of the novel's story and the outbreak of the Second World War. The growing friendship between their successors forms the backbone of *The Shadow Lines*, with Mrs. Price, Tresawsen's daughter, Mayadebi and her elder sister maintaining this bond across generations.

First-person narrative is used throughout the book, and the narrator remains anonymous for its entirety. It would be accurate to describe the book as a recounting of events that occurred in someone else's life rather than the narrator's own. The story is told in layers by the anonymous narrator, who combines personal and public gatherings aimed at fostering harmony. The narrative begins thirteen years before the narrator's birth and concludes the night before he returns home from London. The narrator's grandmother, who longs to return to her ancestral home, is agitated and irritated because she was forced to leave it due to the threat of Partition. A person's family is very important to them. After separating from one's family, life seems to fall apart. The narrator's grandmother, Tha'mma, makes it clear that relationships are central in this book. She wants to bring her uncle back from Bangladesh, as her goal is to demolish the walls that distinguish individuals from one another. Even though they did not feel connected before the Partition, she now feels a deep sense of connection. Therefore, she wishes to bring him back and take care of him in his old age.

The unnamed narrator tells the story, which revolves primarily around two significant characters: Tridib and the narrator's grandmother, Tha'mma. The novel is divided into two parts, *Going Away* and *Coming Home*. *The Shadow Lines* present the story of a Bengali family and the different characters associated with them in both India and England. The entire narrative is shaped by the narrator's memories, and those memories themselves are

constructed through language. In the novel, language serves as a medium through which culture, history, and memory are transmitted. The narration shifts across different places and between the past and the present, allowing the reader to experience the emotions and perspectives of various characters through the voice of the unnamed narrator. Amitav Ghosh effectively demonstrates how language creates a bridge between the past and the present.

The narration deals with the childhood of the unnamed narrator and his family members in Calcutta. He spends his childhood in Calcutta with his mother, father and grandmother, Thamma. Through the narrator's memories, we see how, as a child, he was inspired and deeply influenced by the stories told by his uncle, Tridib. These stories reveal the power of language in constructing imaginative geographies. Tridib describes distant places, especially locations in London, with such vivid detail that the young narrator becomes familiar with them long before he ever visits. Furthermore, these early experiences also highlight the narrator's gradual awareness of the interconnectedness between personal and historical worlds. Years later, when he travels to London with Ila and Robi, he recognizes and locates the very places Tridib once described. These incidents illustrate how language shapes perception and how imagination and memory together bridge physical and emotional distances.

Tridib connects different places and people together through his stories. He believes that language has the power to transcend boundaries and create connections among individuals. Tridib admires the power of imagination and encourages the young narrator to explore and learn about unknown places. He says, "Carry oneself beyond the limits of one's mind to other places and times and to a place with no borders between oneself and one's mirror image." Through these stories, Ghosh challenges the concept of national borders; the narrator learns to view the world as an interconnected space. Tridib suggests that boundaries between countries are merely shadows, and through imagination and experience, individuals can overcome these limitations. In *The Shadow Lines*, Ghosh demonstrates how language serves not only as a means of communication but also as a powerful tool for expressing imagination and bridging the personal, historical, and cultural worlds.

Through the narration of the unnamed narrator, the reader observes how his language matures over time, reflecting the growth and transformation of his thoughts and perceptions. Age and experience shape an individual's opinion, and this development is mirrored in their actions. In this novel, language becomes closely connected to personal and cultural identity. In *The Shadow Lines*, Amitav Ghosh explores the role of English in India and its significance as a marker of the colonial legacy. Through characters such as Ila and Tridib, Ghosh portrays the postcolonial condition, particularly among the younger generation, who primarily use English as their main medium of communication. The character of Ila embodies how members of the younger generation often feel disconnected from their Indian roots, becoming influenced by Western ideals and, consequently, alienated from their native language, culture, and society. Moreover, through Ila and other characters, the novel interrogates the idea of belonging, suggesting that identity is not fixed but is constantly

negotiated between personal desires, familial expectations, and historical contexts. By doing so, *The Shadow Lines* offers a profound commentary on the lingering effects of colonialism and the complex, sometimes contradictory, realities of postcolonial life.

In this novel, the narration shifts between different places like London, Kolkata and Dhaka and moves between past and present simultaneously. As a young man, he goes to London for his studies and in his inner self he is constantly driven by one central question, the reason behind his uncle Tridib's death. He recollects his childhood memories and shares his disturbed school days, only to realise years later that his unease was a reaction to the communal riots that had taken place in Dhaka. The narrator also uncovers the reason behind his beloved uncle Tridib's death. Ghosh uses his narrative style to express how the personal lives of the characters are affected by historical and political events. He uses language and the art of storytelling to convey historical incidents to his readers. The novel, therefore, becomes not just a recounting of history but a meditation on memory, identity, and the ways in which the past continues to shape the present.

Amitav Ghosh uses memory as an important narrative tool to share a lot of historical and political incidents. The narrator's memory serves as a connection between the past and the present. It also reflects how the past incidents influenced the present lives of the characters. He exquisitely presents how memory is turned into beautiful stories in different parts of the novel. His narrative technique inspires the readers to see how the language plays a vital role in shaping the recollection of the past. Through this narrative structure, Ghosh invites his readers to reflect on the uncertainty of memory and the created nature of national identity. The narrator narrates about her grandmother, Thamma and her family in Dhaka. She and her sister Mayadevi lived in their ancestral home in Dhaka with her uncle, Jethamoshai's family. Through Thamma's uncle, the text illustrates the enduring impact of Partition on individual and collective memory. The uncle's refusal to acknowledge the division of the nation reflects a persistent attachment to a pre-Partition reality. This denial is not simply obstinacy but represents the profound psychological and emotional consequences of displacement and loss. Partition disrupted not only geographic boundaries but also social and familial structures, leaving long-lasting effects on personal identities. By isolating himself, Thamma's uncle embodies the struggle to reconcile past and present, illustrating how postcolonial subjects navigate the tensions between memory, history, and belonging.

The novel *The Shadow lines* deals with the political tensions faced by the people during the colonial period and the time of partition. The younger generation's involvement with the Indian national movement is illustrated through the character of young Thamma during her college days in Dhaka. She was very much fascinated by those movements and ready to sacrifice her life for the freedom of her motherland. However, after retiring from her work as a school headmistress, Thamma spends much of her time reflecting on her memories of Dhaka. The same Thamma, who was very much interested in Indian politics and the related movement in her college days, became largely indifferent to politics after

enduring personal losses over time. She lost her husband and as a single mother, her entire concern lies with the well-being of her only son.

The narrator recounts the communal riots against Muslims during his school days, when Hindu mobs attacked Muslim shops, public property, and communities. He vividly recalls the fear and chaos as angry mobs tried to enter his school, only to be prevented by teachers, while the headmaster dismissed students for safety. These events are narrated through the lens of personal memory and storytelling, illustrating how historical and political turmoil intersects with individual experience. Ghosh demonstrates how such experiences shape personal identity and influence one's understanding of the world. Personal narratives traverse broader historical events and nationalist movements, impacting characters' perceptions of their identity and place in society. The novel also emphasizes the transmission of family narratives across generations, showing how stories passed down from older relatives intertwine personal memory with larger historical and political contexts.

The narrator finally discovers both the riots in Calcutta and Dhaka are the result of the conflicts that occur in the Khulna district in the distant wing of Pakistan over the theft of a Muslim relic. He shares with Khulna that the Muslims kill a lot of Hindus. In the next few days, the riots spread from Khulna to other neighbouring towns and towards Dhaka. The narrator says that "so complete is this silence that it actually took me fifteen years to discover that there was a connection between my nightmare bus ride back from school, and the event that befell Tridib and the others in Dhaka". Amitav Ghosh presents the real historical event of the communal riots in 1963 and how the violence spread around Calcutta and Dhaka. How lots of people lost their lives and the shops of the Muslims are looted. The governments take military actions to control events, but it takes time to control the political unrest and communal riots in those places.

Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*, skilfully blends together personal memory, oral history, and historical reality to question the notions of identity, belonging, and national borders. Through the intertwined narratives of the unnamed narrator, Tridib, and Tha'mma, Ghosh portrays how language becomes a bridge between personal and collective memory and transmitting history across generations. The narration shifts to different places and blurs the distinctions between past and present, personal and political, real and imagined. This novel presents the effects of partition and how it leads to communal riots, violence and destroyed moral values. It deals with the violence that took place in Calcutta and Dhaka and its consequences, like changes in social conditions as well as the lives of individuals. Ultimately, *The Shadow Lines* suggests that boundaries exist only in the imagination, and that shared memories and stories have the power to unite people beyond the confines of geography or politics. ■

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ROCK PEBBLES Editorial board member Dr. R. Sheela Banu is honoured with White Lotus Saraswati Award in Puducherry on 27 November in presence of renowned Tamil poet Dr Sundara Murugan and member secretary of AuroBharati Dr Kishore Kumar Tripathy.

Exploring Wilderness and Survival: An Ecocritical Study of Peter Heller's Novels

Raksha. R.M

Sangeetha. S

The article explores the intricate relationship between humans and the natural world as depicted in Heller's fiction. It examines how Heller's novels portray wilderness not merely as a backdrop but as a dynamic force influencing human survival, identity, and spirituality. The study highlights themes of environmental degradation, rewilding, and the ethical imperatives arising from human interactions with nature through an ecocritical lens. The article probes that Heller's integration of wilderness and survival narratives invites readers to reconsider our role within the ecosystem. By engaging with environmental ethics and the lived realities of ecological disruption, the novels move beyond traditional adventure stories to evoke a profound spiritual and moral reckoning. This ecocritical approach reveals how literature can foster greater empathy for natural worlds and inspire more responsible human behaviours toward the environment. The novels of Peter Heller have important contributions to contemporary ecocriticism, demonstrating how fiction can articulate complex dialogues between humans and the wild. These narratives challenge anthropocentric perspectives and advocate for a renewed vision of coexistence, resilience, and reverence for the natural world, providing lessons in an era marked by environmental crisis.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, Resilience, Wilderness, Survival, Civilization

Introduction

Peter Heller's novels *The Dog Stars* (2012) and *The River* (2019) are significant contributions to 21st century environmental literature, combining survivalist adventure with ecological introspection. Drawing on his career as an adventure journalist for *Outside*, *Men's Journal*, and *National Geographic Adventure*, Heller writes with an observational vision sharpened by years spent immersed in wild landscapes. His ability to render environmental detail emotional booms situates his work in the lineage of North American nature writing while simultaneously engaging with contemporary literary currents such as post-apocalyptic fiction, climate fiction, and eco-thrillers.

In the era of climate change and biodiversity crisis a period some theorists term the “Great Acceleration” of the Anthropocene literature about human survival in changing environments has taken on new urgency. Ecocriticism, the scholarly study of literature’s relationship to the physical environment, provides a framework for analysing how Heller’s fiction challenges anthropocentric thinking and explores reciprocal relationships between humans and nonhuman systems. It also invites analysis of how narrative art can shape ecological ethics and foster an expanded environmental consciousness.

The Dog Stars imagines a Colorado landscape slowly being reclaimed by nature after a pandemic decimates the human population. Narrated by Hig, a small-plane pilot living with his dog Jasper and wary neighbour Bangley at an abandoned airport, the novel examines how survival requires not merely physical resilience but also ethical negotiation with a powerful, indifferent, yet vital nonhuman world.

By contrast, *The River* occurs in a present-day northern Canadian wilderness that is largely intact but increasingly threatened. College friends Jack and Wynn embark on a canoe journey down the Maskwa River, where the encroaching dangers of wildfire, violent strangers, and unpredictable storms interrupt moments of profound beauty and companionship. This novel spins from post-collapse adaptation to pre-collapse vigilance, emphasizing the urgency of protection before irreversible loss.

This article applies an ecocritical framework to analyse how *The Dog Stars* and *The River* depict wilderness and survival as intertwined phenomena that reveal broader ecological and philosophical insights. By examining Heller’s narrative strategies, character development, and thematic concerns, it seeks to demonstrate how literature can serve as a vital medium for engaging with environmental issues. In doing so, the article highlights the capacity of fiction to evoke empathy for the natural world and inspire critical consideration of ecological responsibility amid ongoing environmental decline.

Theoretical Framework: Ecocriticism and Anthropocene

Cheryll Glotfelty defines ecocriticism as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment”, advancing a critique of anthropocentrism – human-centered worldviews that position nonhuman entities merely as resources or backdrop. Lawrence Buell emphasizes that environmental writing should have “dual accountability” (Buell 1995), to environmental accuracy and imaginative possibilities (*Environmental Imagination* 7), suggesting that the most compelling works engage readers emotionally while also deepening ecological literacy.

The Anthropocene, as popularized by Paul Crutzen, marks a period in which human activity has become a force as significant as geology in shaping Earth’s systems. Dipesh Chakrabarty insists this recognition collapses the division between “natural history” and “human history” (*Climate of History* 206). Climate disruptions, biodiversity loss, and environmental degradation are no longer distant or slow-moving events but immediate factors shaping lived experience.

Human-Nature Relationships: Domination to Coexistence

A recurring thread in ecocritical discourse is the shift from viewing nature as something to dominate to recognizing it as a co-participant in life's processes. Val Plumwood critiques the "*Mastery of Nature*" (Plumwood 2002) narrative, which underpins exploitative relationships with the environment. Instead, she calls for an ethic of mutuality and respectan ethos vividly embodied in Heller's protagonists. Unlike traditional survival narratives that glorify conquering the wilderness, Heller's characters often survive precisely because they align their behaviours with ecological rhythms. Hig in *The Dog Stars*, for example, relies on an intimate understanding of seasonal patterns for fishing and hunting, while Wynn and Jack in *The River* demonstrate paddling expertise and respect for riverine ecosystems.

Ecological Ethics

The combination of ecocriticism and Anthropocene scholarship provides a powerful lens for interpreting Heller's novels as calls for ecological ethics. An ecological ethic, as articulated by Aldo Leopold's "land ethic" (Leopold 1949), extends the boundaries of moral consideration to include "soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively the land" (Leopold 1949). Heller's works illustrate this principle narratively, demonstrating how survival is contingent upon recognizing and respecting ecological interdependence.

By situating *The Dog Stars* and *The River* within this theoretical framework, one can see how Heller destabilizes anthropocentric assumptions and offers imaginative space for rethinking humanity's place in planetary systems. This approach enriches the literary analysis and underscores the urgent cultural work that fiction can do in an age defined by environmental crisis.

Wilderness as Character in *The Dog Stars*

The Dog Stars functions not as static backdrop but as an actor in the drama. Through Hig's first-person narration, we sense shifts in weather, light, and seasonal markers not as incidental details but as plot-relevant signals foretelling scarcity, abundance, danger, or reprieve. His observation that "the grass was higher than I'd ever seen, bending under seedheads" (Heller 45) encodes ecological recovery in human absence, aligning with Monbiot's description of rewilding as the "realignment of ecological processes" (*Feral!* 28). Nature here oscillates between sanctuary and hazard what Buell calls the "environmental double bind" (Buell 286). For Hig, fishing a clear stream is a moment of healing, but tall grass also masks movement of potential assailants. Even in its beauty, the land reminds him of vulnerability. Isolation among nonhuman life deepens Hig's "ecological self" (Naess 81) while also magnifying loneliness. His bond with Jasper, his dog, represents interspecies companionship that upholds his morale and complicates purely survivalist logical dilemmas underscored when Jasper's safety shapes Hig's choices as strongly as his own.

Heller's background in outdoor reportage surfaces in his prose catalogues of bird species, the real feel of wind-shifts mid flight, the precise visual geometry of approaching

weather fronts. Such specificity achieves what Buell identifies as a necessary condition for environmental literature to render place “palpably real” (*Future!* 63), awakening the reader’s attentiveness to the nonhuman.

Survival Narratives and Ecological Ethics in *The Dog Stars*

Hig’s survival code embodies Leopold’s “land ethic” (Leopold 204) take only what is needed, preserve what you can, and maintain the integrity of the community of life. For instance, while others might track game indiscriminately, Hig avoids overfishing a stream, preferring to let spawning runs pass untouched. “Take only what you can use, leave the rest” (Heller 97) becomes a quietly radical ethic in a scarcity economy.

Heller also shows that ecological literacy is crucial to survival. Hig reads wind direction to predict weather, follows subtle shifts in bird calls to detect predators or intruders, notes the seasonal rhythms of plant edibility. Such skills echo Berkes’ account of traditional ecological knowledge local, adaptive, and sustainable (*Sacred Ecology* 56).

Beyond strategy, Hig’s survival entails meaning-making. Sightings of geese formations or the aurora borealis serve no direct utility but renew his sense of purpose, what Buell terms the “environmental sublime” (Buell 145). These moments show that in crisis, survival depends as much on connection to beauty and relationship as on caloric intake or ammunition.

The River as a Metaphor for Flow and Fragility

In *The River*, the Maskwa waterway serves as the narrative’s central axis and a sustained metaphor. Richard White’s notion of a river as an “*Organic Machine*” (White 58) is apt, it is both a natural entity and a system that moves supplies, wildlife, and travellers while itself being shaped by weather, geology, and human presence. The calm, mirror smooth bends invite the two protagonists, Jack and Wynn, into moments of peace, while sudden shifts in current or wind dismantle their ease in seconds.

The opening of the novels builds a rhythm of paddling and observation loons calling across the water, the rhythmic dip of paddles interrupted only by the disquiet of wildfire smoke on the horizon. This comparison encapsulates the delicate balance between stability and disruption that defines wilderness life in the Anthropocene. The river’s fluidity also serves as a plot device, its changes mirror the progression from companionship to danger, just as it physically carries Jack and Wynn deeper into both wild beauty and human threat.

Their intensive adherence to leave no trace principles demonstrate an ethic of minimal intrusion, a stark contrast to the carelessness of other travellers they encounter. The advance of distant wildfire smoke operates as the novel’s emblem of vulnerability slow to arrive, yet inexorable, echoing Nixon’s concept of “*Slow Violence*” (Nixon 2). The origin of the threat lies hundreds of miles away, but its effects are inescapable an unmistakable reminder that environmental disruptions ignore boundaries.

Healing, Grief, and Wilderness in *The River*

While *The River* is driven by external conflict, it also charts an internal journey of healing and reckoning. Jack's backstory, marked by the loss of his brother, informs his vigilant, sometimes fatalistic outlook. Wynn's gentle optimism stems from a deep rooted biophilia (Wilson) that makes him attentive to subtle signs of life and change in the ecosystem. Together, they read the river differently Jack scanning for dangers, Wynn remarking on the shimmer of fish beneath the canoe.

Moments of immersion in the natural world offer pause from fear and grief, the lifting of morning mist, a distant moose browsing along the shore, or the layered songs of unseen birds. These episodes align with Glenn Albrecht's idea of *solastalgia*, where emotional distress caused by environmental change can be counterbalanced, at least temporarily, by intimate engagement with a still thriving landscape.

The moral hub of the story the decision to warn or assist an endangered camp downstream parallels debates within environmental ethics about when and how to intervene in delicate systems. Jack and Wynn's choice to act, despite the risks, affirms a stewardship ethic based on responsibility, not just self preservation. For Heller, such acts, whether toward fellow humans or toward a threatened ecosystem, are inseparable from the definition of survival.

Exploration of *The Dog Stars* and *The River*

Combining these two novels reveals a thematic continuum in Heller's work. In *The Dog Stars*, nature is in a state of post collapse regeneration, and the human role is adaptive integration into a rewilded order. In *The River*, nature remains intact but faces the looming possibility of harm, and the human role becomes one of prevention and guardianship.

Both settings demand ecological literacy, restraint, and moral choice. Hig, Bangle, Jack, and Wynn must all navigate environments where human and nonhuman agencies intertwine. Yet the tonal emphasis differs: *The Dog Stars* is elegiac, suffused with loss and cautious hope amid ruins *The River* is urgent, a plea to prevent the conditions that make post collapse worlds possible.

From an ecocritical perspective, these narratives represent two poles of Anthropocene fiction stories that grapple with living after ecological disaster and those that try to forestall it. By exploring both ends of this spectrum, Heller expands the survival narrative beyond reaction to catastrophe into proactive environmental care.

Challenging Anthropocentrism in Heller's Fiction

Across both novels, Heller de centres human primacy by foregrounding nonhuman agency. In *The Dog Stars*, weather rhythms, animal migrations, and seasonal plant cycles control the tempo of Hig's life as much as any interpersonal decisions. In *The River*, the currents, winds, storm systems, and even the gradual invasion of wildfire smoke shape events alongside human actions.

Timothy Morton's call for "*Ecology Without Nature*" (Morton 15) a rejection of romanticized, human serving views of environment finds expression in Heller's depiction of wilderness as neither benign backdrop nor purely hostile territory, but as a dynamic, complex community with its own imperatives. Jane Bennett's notion of vibrant matter is evident in the active presence of the dog Jasper, whose instincts and companionship alter the trajectory of Hig's survival, and in the Maskwa River, whose flows, obstacles, and moods dictate Jack and Wynn's pace and choices. By casting these elements as actors rather than props, Heller reframes survival as a negotiation with forces beyond anthropocentric control. His fiction suggests that resilience in the Anthropocene hinges not on mastering nature but on co existing with adapting to and respecting its autonomy.

Conclusion:

The Dog Stars and *The River* present distinct but connected visions of survival within ecologically charged landscapes. In both, wilderness functions as an ecological protagonist, shaping human fate, demanding moral reflection, and offering both sustenance and challenge. Heller rejects the survival as domination model common in adventure fiction, instead framing endurance as contingent upon ethical engagement with the nonhuman world. These novels embody ecocriticism's central premise that stories about the land are never just about land, but about the moral, cultural, and spiritual ties binding humans to the planet. In an age of accelerating environmental change, Heller's fiction offers a narrative compass pointing toward sustainable co existence. ■

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Life Writings in K.V. Raghupathi's *Between Me and the Babe* and *Orphan and Other Poems*

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This abstract provides a comprehensive overview of the life writings found in K.V. Raghupathi's acclaimed literary works, *Between Me and the Babe* and *Orphan and Other Poems*. It emphasizes the significance of Raghupathi's life writings and their potential contributions to the discourse on literature, culture, and identity. Raghupathi, a prominent contemporary poet and writer, explores profound themes in his works, drawing from personal experiences and observations of the world around him. *Between Me and the Babe* serves as a poignant memoir, tracing the author's journey through various life stages, while *Orphan and Other Poems* delves into the human experience through diverse poetic forms. Raghupathi's introspective narratives capture the complexities of human existence and evoke introspection among readers. His verses touch upon displacement, cultural heritage, political unrest, and the quest for identity, fostering empathy and understanding. The abstract argues that Raghupathi's life writings possess a universal appeal, exploring shared human emotions and experiences and shedding light on cultural identity. Raghupathi's lyrical prose and poetic prowess captivate readers, enabling intellectual and emotional engagement. Ultimately, his works offer profound reflections on life, identity, and societal dynamics, blending personal experiences with universal themes and transcending cultural boundaries. The inclusion of Raghupathi's works in an international conference on literature presents an opportunity for scholars and enthusiasts to explore the transformative power of his writing and engage in cross-cultural dialogue.

Keywords: Life writings, memoir, introspection, shared human experiences, cultural identity, poetic prowess, societal dynamics, transformative power, cross-cultural dialogue.

Life writings, also known as life narratives or stories, are autobiographical or biographical texts that give us unique insights into individuals' personal experiences, thoughts, and emotions. They come in various forms like autobiographies, memoirs, diaries, letters, and oral histories, authored by both famous and ordinary people. The significance of

life writings lies in their ability to offer intimate and firsthand accounts of historical events, social movements, personal growth, and the ups and downs of human existence. By connecting readers with the emotions and perspectives of the subjects, life writings foster empathy and understanding.

Throughout history, life writings have played a crucial role in preserving personal stories, shaping cultural memory, and providing valuable insights into different social and cultural contexts. Thanks to technology and the internet, life writings have evolved into new forms like blogs and vlogs, making it easier for people to share their narratives globally. This democratizes the genre, expanding its reach to a wider range of individuals and experiences.

K.V. Raghupathi, a prominent Indo-Anglian poet hailing from the enchanting landscapes of south India, has been a prolific writer for nearly three decades. With poetry as his main forte, he has carved a distinguished place in contemporary Indian English Poetry. Notably, Raghupathi's literary works extend beyond just poetry, as he has also explored the realms of novels, critical writings, and books on Yoga.

However, it is in the realm of life writings where Raghupathi's literary brilliance truly shines. In his collections *Between Me and the Babe* and *Orphan and Other Poems*, he offers a captivating and introspective journey into the human experience. These writings go beyond the surface and delve deep into the personal realm of emotions, reflections, and memories.

Raghupathi's life writings are a testament to his profound connection with nature and the environment. Rooted in the abundance of nature, his poetry gracefully weaves together themes of biodiversity and ecological consciousness. The author's love for all living beings, regardless of their perceived value, becomes evident as he gives voice to marginalized entities, emphasizing the importance of preserving and cherishing every form of life.

Through his single long narrative poems and shorter verses, Raghupathi's life writings in *Between Me and the Babe* and *Orphan and Other Poems* speak volumes about eco-philosophy and eco-criticism. The poems exude an eco-centric perspective, prompting readers to reflect on their own relationship with the natural world and encouraging a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness between humankind and the environment.

Between Me and the Babe and *Orphan and Other Poems* are captivating collections of life writings penned by K.V. Raghupathi. Through these works, the author takes us on an intimate journey into his personal experiences, emotions, and reflections. Within the pages of these literary treasures, Raghupathi delves into a diverse range of autobiographical and biographical themes, weaving together a rich tapestry that celebrates the intricacies of human existence. These thought-provoking writings offer a profound insight into the human condition, inviting readers to connect with the universal complexities that shape our lives.

Through the genre of life writings, Raghupathi shares intimate accounts of significant events, memories, and encounters that have shaped his life and perspective. These texts delve into the depths of the human condition, touching on moments of joy, sorrow, love, loss, and self-discovery.

Between Me and the Babeis likely to focus on the author's own life journey, unraveling the narrative of self-exploration and transformation. Readers can expect to accompany Raghupathi on a reflective voyage as he navigates through his past and present, sharing the profound lessons learned along the way.

In *Orphan and Other Poems*, Raghupathi might delve into the lives of others, capturing the essence of their stories through poetic expressions. These verses may serve as tributes to real or fictional characters, shedding light on their trials, triumphs, and the myriad emotions that define their existence.

"Death of a Book Seller," a compelling poem penned by Raghupathi, delves into the intricacies of life through the lens of poignant themes. With masterful use of imagery and reflective contemplation, the poet unveils the essence of human existence, inviting readers to embark on a profound journey of self-discovery and understanding.

At its core, this poem serves as a quintessential example of life writings, offering insights into the human experience through the art of poetic expression. Raghupathi's exploration of life is multifaceted, as seen in these textual lines:

Impermanence and Transience:

"He is gone like a patch of summer clouds,"
"Leaving me alone like a deserted bird"
"Death tells none in light or darkness" (OOP, 40)

These metaphors symbolize life's transient and ephemeral nature, effectively capturing the essence of impermanence. Raghupathi's portrayal underscores the fleeting moments that make up our lives, prompting readers to reflect on the brevity of human existence.

Attachment and Emotion:

"He loved and cared me so much
like the mentor his pupil in the ancient lore"
"like the dyed colour on white cloth." (OOP, 40)

Throughout the poem, the poet delves into the complexities of human attachment. The metaphor of dyed colour on white cloth speaks to the deceptive nature of emotional bonds, revealing how attachments can mask authentic feelings. This theme highlights the emotional tapestry that shapes human connections, inviting readers to contemplate the depth and significance of their own relationships.

Acceptance of Mortality:

“Life tells none in darkness or light
While entering into the mortal world to stay.”
“My prayer at that juncture
unanswered, I realize
‘What is to happen will happen
What is not to happen will not happen.’” (OOP, 42)

The inevitability of death is a recurring motif, depicted as a silent force that spares no one. Raghupathi’s portrayal of death as an unannounced departure serves as a reminder of life’s unpredictability. Through this theme, the poem encourages readers to confront the existential questions surrounding mortality and to find solace in the acceptance of life’s ultimate end.

Healing and Transformation:

“Tears for whom?
For the lifeless body:
Or for the tinselled love!”(OOP, 43)

As the poem progresses, it touches on the process of healing and transformation in the face of loss. The act of cleansing the departed’s feet and shedding “unpressed tears” portrays a cathartic release of suppressed emotions. Raghupathi underscores the role of memories and emotions in the healing process, revealing their power to transform pain into acceptance.

Cyclical Nature of Life:

“Looking down into my heart
I fashion nothing to see you in any form.”
“May be in a different manner
to trace my roots
for which I keep waiting” (OOP, 46)

The poem’s conclusion contemplates the cyclical nature of existence. By juxtaposing the departed’s departure with the inevitability of one’s own eventual passing, Raghupathi highlights the perpetual rhythm of life. This theme encourages readers to embrace the present moment and find meaning in the continuous cycle of birth and death.

In essence, “Death of Book Seller” is a testament to the intricate tapestry of life writings. Through vivid imagery, emotional depth, and reflective insights, the poet delves into the core of the human experience, prompting readers to engage with life’s complexities, uncertainties, and profound beauty. As a timeless piece of literature, this poem stands as a poignant reminder of the power of words to illuminate the many facets of existence.

In the poem “Accident” the poet delves into the profound theme of life writings, exploring the human experience in the face of adversity and transformation. Through vivid

imagery and introspection, Raghupathi presents a compelling narrative that resonates with the challenges of existence and the resilience of the human spirit.

The poem revolves around the theme of life writings, where the poet pens down his inner journey and reflections after surviving a life-altering accident. The verses capture the emotional and physical turmoil the speaker undergoes, highlighting the stark contrast between life's fragility and its enduring strength. The poem ultimately reflects on the renewal of life and the pursuit of purpose and transcendence.

Initial Shock and Isolation:

“Once awoke, I found
Myself on the bed
from which all my consciousness left
like a thin mist in Malabar.”(BMB, 22)

These lines introduce the reader to the disorienting aftermath of the accident. The imagery of consciousness dissipating like mist paints a vivid picture of the speaker's initial shock and disconnection from reality.

The Saline Bottle and Visitors:

“The saline bottle
hanging on my right shoulder above
like a gourd starting at me
consoling me like mother with its intravenous drips”(BMB, 22)

Here, the saline bottle becomes a symbol of sustenance and nurturing, paralleling the care of a mother. The visitors' attempts to comfort the speaker amid their own anxieties reflect the human need for support during trying times.

Surreal Imagery and Coping:

“the naked walls, whimpers, sterilized floor,
and the smell of drugged bodies, dirt or faeces
from the toilets
created surrealistic images on my moisture pupils.”(BMB, 22)

These lines depict the jarring and unsettling environment of the hospital. The speaker grapples with both physical pain and emotional distress, illustrating the coping process after the accident.

Acceptance and Renewal:

“Redeemed from the accident shock and pain
it is a second life, a renewed life.
A boon bestowed on me, I realize”(BMB, 23)

This segment marks a turning point in the poem, where the speaker embraces the idea of renewal and sees his survival as a blessing. The accident becomes a catalyst for a fresh start, symbolizing the resilience of the human spirit.

Pursuit of Purpose and Transcendence:

“music, my second passion, is heavy and haunting
ever wanting to grow like a creeper in my consciousness.”
“Yet I reconcile within me
as it is no time to contemplate more
on life but meditate more
to slip into transcendental bliss.”(BMB, 23)

These lines reveal the speaker’s determination to channel his passions and pursuits toward a higher purpose. The focus shifts from contemplation to spiritual growth and transcendence, embodying the theme of life writings.

In “Accident,” the poet masterfully weaves together vivid descriptions, emotional depth, and profound reflections to capture the essence of life’s challenges and the enduring strength of the human spirit. The poem’s journey from shock and pain to acceptance and renewal mirrors the complexities of existence, ultimately emphasizing the pursuit of purpose and inner transformation.

“Amma” is a Raghupathi’s another poem it explores of motherhood, mortality, and the profound impact of a mother’s love and sacrifice. Through evocative imagery and heartfelt emotions, the poet delves into the intricate relationship between a mother and her children, reflecting on the cycle of life and the inevitable passage of time.

The central theme of the poem revolves around life writings intertwined with the roles and emotions associated with motherhood. The poem encapsulates the journey of a mother who has borne the weight of bringing eight lives into the world, each marked by its unique character. The progression from birth to eventual passing underscores the transient nature of existence.

A Mother’s Revelation:

“You are the sixth”
“After me there are still two more!”(BMB, 27)

The opening lines convey the mother’s remarkable capacity to bring forth life, as she shares the sequential order of her children’s births. Her revelation illuminates the sacrifice and dedication inherent in motherhood.

Fading Symphony of Life:

“Her symphony is lost in dwindling life of her age,”
“it made the life gloomy as the black clouds over the western sky.”(BMB, 27)

These lines portray the fading vitality of the mother as she ages, paralleling the diminishing vibrancy of her symphony of life. The imagery of “black clouds” underscores the sombre undertones that mark this stage of her existence.

Yearning for Release:

“Oh, God take me away
I am useful
neither to my partner nor to my children
not to the world.”(BMB, 27)

The mother’s plea for release reflects her sense of detachment and longing for an end to her suffering. Her words evoke a sense of resignation and a desire for an escape from the burdens of life.

Parting Words and Final Rest:

“Take care till you inhale last, my son.”
“She lay stretched immobile
on the cold mat on the cold floor
as her lips sealed forever in the vacant space,
eyes half-closed like the hen’s.”(BMB, 28)

The mother’s parting words convey her enduring love and concern for her child. The vivid imagery of her lifeless form and sealed lips captures the finality of her passing, evoking a sense of reverence and solemnity.

Nature’s Reflection and Mourning:

“The air outside the window
is thick with over ripened leaves
sparkling in summer sunlight
and my surging tears sank like the autumn well.”(BMB, 28)

These lines juxtapose the vividness of nature with the poet’s own grief, creating a poignant contrast between the vitality of the world and the weight of loss. The imagery of “over ripened leaves” and “autumn well” captures the natural cycles of growth and decay.

In “Amma,” Raghupathi masterfully captures the profound emotions and complexities of motherhood, mortality, and the universal experience of bidding farewell to a loved one. The poem’s tender portrayal of a mother’s journey and the impact of her departure exemplifies the power of poetry to illuminate the intricate tapestry of life’s emotions and relationships.

In the poem “Father, For Whom the Last Bells Tolded”, the poet pays a heartfelt tribute to the relationship between a father and a child, reflecting on the profound impact of life lessons and a father’s enduring influence. Through emotive language and vivid

imagery, Raghupathi explores themes of legacy, loss, and the enduring presence of a father's guidance.

The central theme of the poem revolves around life writings intertwined with the influence of a father's teachings and the legacy he imparts. The poem delves into the emotional connection between a father and his child, highlighting the lasting impact of the father's guidance on the individual's growth and identity.

Memories of a Father's Guidance:

“I held his shivering mica hand
that led me warmly in my childhood.”(BMB, 63)

These opening lines paint a vivid picture of the father's comforting presence and guidance during the speaker's formative years. The imagery of the “shivering mica hand” conveys both vulnerability and strength.

A Silent Farewell:

“His eyes were paling; no tear fell running down the sunken cheeks.”
“That hand that gripped me like hawk's talons
released slowly, the last dregs struggled.”(BMB, 63)

These lines capture the poignant moment of the father's passing. The absence of tears and the imagery of the hand's release evoke a sense of quiet resignation and a gradual letting go.

The Legacy of Life Lessons:

“Darkness was nothing but joy for me
because life lessons that he taught
spread like banyan branches, I picked up everything like a reaper.”(BMB, 63)

Here, the poet emphasizes the enduring nature of the father's teachings. The metaphor of “banyan branches” suggests the expansive wisdom passed down by the father. The act of picking up the lessons like a reaper conveys the speaker's active engagement with the legacy.

Identity and Self-Realization:

“I wouldn't be I am today
it is not Dharmaraju, Ashoka, Gandhi or like
It is me, I am.”(BMB, 63)

These concluding lines underscore the profound impact of the father's influence on the speaker's identity and self-realization. The comparison to historical figures emphasizes the personal significance of the father's teachings in shaping the individual's character.

In “Father, For Whom the Last Bells Told,” Raghupathi beautifully encapsulates the depth of a father-child relationship and the enduring legacy of a father's guidance. The

poem's exploration of memory, loss, and the transformative power of life lessons exemplifies the capacity of poetry to illuminate the intricacies of human emotions and the profound connections that shape our lives.

Conclusion:

In these life writings of K.V. Raghupathi, we have taken a journey that reminds us of the fleeting nature of life. The poems talk about unexpected events like chance meetings, tragic accidents, and the passing of time through the tolling of bells.

Within these reflections on life's ups and downs, the poems also highlight the importance of family and love. We see the warmth of a mother's care, the complexities of a father's role, and how relationships shape who we are.

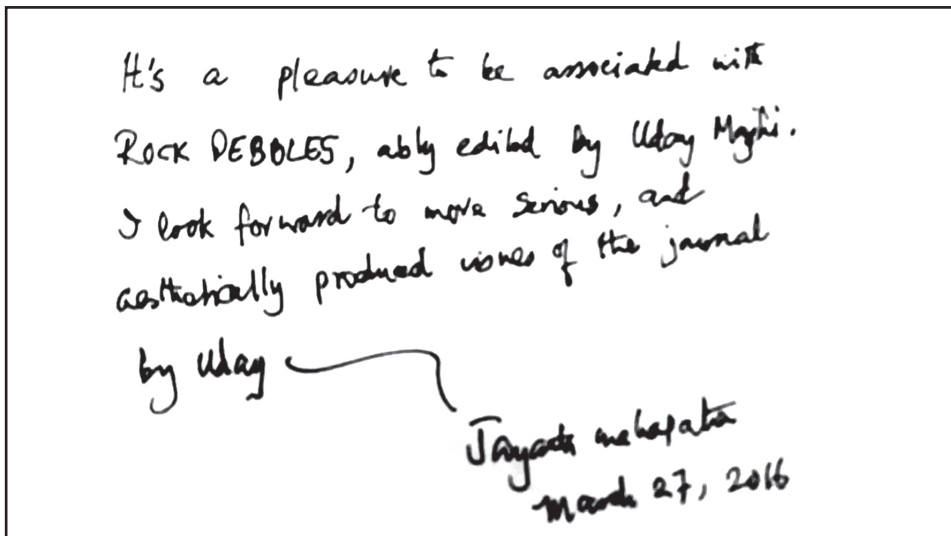
In the end, these writings encourage us to find meaning in every moment, whether happy or sad. They show us that our connections with others and the impressions we leave behind are what truly matter. K.V. Raghupathi's words prompt us to think about our own journey, relationships, and the legacy we want to create. ■

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What Jayanta Mahapatra (noted Indian English poet) wrote about ROCK PEBBLES Journal.

Gender Bender :

A Study of Mahaesh Dattani's *Dance Like a Man*

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In the modern world, human identity has become so complex that, it cannot be adequately explained by a single discursive domain. Identity has been examined by gender studies as an issue of agency within the heterosexuality binary. However, as gender roles continue to go outside the bounds of dualism, the legitimacy of normative constructions is being called into question. Gender Performativity, a term introduced by Judith Butler, attempts to explain the tentative nature of gender signification and provides room for re-signification of gendered bodies, so challenging the complacency of gender studies. In *Dance Like a Man*, Mahesh Dattani, a dramatist, critically addresses these issues. He challenges the gender hierarchy and the social acceptance of gender roles. By highlighting the shortcomings of such repetition, the current research aims to deconstruct the performative character of gender and examine how gender roles are repeated in patriarchal institutions such as family, and kinship.

Keywords: Gender Discrimination, Inequality, Patriarchy, Marginalisation, Essentialism.

INTRODUCTION

Literature is a diverse and varied type of artistic expression including novels, poetry, plays, and other pieces explore the human experience. Readers are taken to various worlds, viewpoints, and emotions. In essence, literature offers a window into the depths of human creativity and imagination and is an effective instrument for both delight and enlightenment. Indian English drama is drama written and performed in English in India. A number of well-known writers, including Mohan Rakesh and Rabindranath Tagore, helped the drama develop. Social issues, cultural identity, and the complexity of modern India are the main topics of contemporary Indian English theatre. Similar themes have been explored by contemporary playwrights, who have shed light on the complex facets of Indian society. Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar, and Badal Sircar established the groundwork for contemporary Indian English drama.

Sudhindranath Sircar, often known as Badal Sircar, is a well-known playwright and dramatist from India. His significant contributions to Indian theatre, notably in the 20th century, are well-known. Sircar was a pioneer in India's third theatre and street theatre movements, and his works frequently addressed social and political themes. His plays were distinguished by their unconventional and experimental approaches to theatre, which questioned established rules. His major creations include *Evam Indrajit* and *Pagla Ghoda*. The world of Indian theatre is still influenced by Badal Sircar.

Indian playwright and screenwriter Vijay Tendulkar is well-known for his significant contributions to Indian drama. One of his most well-known plays *Sakharam Binder*, generated a great deal of debate and controversy when it was originally produced in 1972. Vijay Tendulkar had a lasting influence on Indian drama by tackling important social concerns and stretching the boundaries of storytelling in this and many other works. His plays frequently served as a mirror to society, inspiring viewers to face hard realities and consider prevailing conventions. Tendulkar's contributions to Indian drama are still analyzed and praised for their socially conscious and thought-provoking themes.

Girish Karnad is a renowned and very important Indian playwright, actor, and filmmaker, who made a tremendous impact on the drama and theatre industries. He was one of India's most well-known playwrights of the 20th century. He was renowned for his creative storytelling methods that incorporated parts of modern themes with folklore, history, and mythology from India. His plays frequently contrasted old and modern concepts to produce compelling stories. Numerous plays by Karnad explore the complexity of identity, cultural conflicts, and the evolving nature of Indian civilization. He explored these topics in works like *Tughlaq* and *Hayavadana*. Karnad's plays frequently recreated legendary tales and historical events in a modern setting.

Mahesh Dattani is well-known for creating plays that are both thought-provoking and socially relevant. For his contributions to Indian theatre, he has received multiple awards, such as the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, the Sahitya Akademi Award, and the Padma Shri. Playpen Theatre, a renowned theatre group in India, was founded by him which has been instrumental in advancing modern Indian theatre, has performed Dattani's pieces as well as those of other outstanding playwrights. With his plays and the activities of Playpen Theatre, Mahesh Dattani has significantly influenced Indian theatre, addressing a wide range of social themes. In addition to theatre, Dattani has worked as a director and screenwriter for film companies. He turned his *Dance Like a Man* into a movie.

Tara examines the complexities of interpersonal relationships, especially those that take place in families, as well as the secrets that might cause them to fall apart. *Final Solutions* tackle significant themes of religious and social harmony by focusing on racial tensions and the fallout from the riots in Gujarat in 2002. In *Dance Like a Man*, a Bharatanatyam dancer and her husband's lives are explored in detail, stressing the challenges of pursuing art in the face of social expectations. The plot of *Bravely Fought the Queen*

revolves around the interactions between two women from different eras, with topics of identity, aspiration, and the influence of literature being touched upon. *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* explores the difficulties of urban relationships, communication breakdowns, and loneliness in a busy metropolis. The play *30 Days in September* addresses the delicate subject of child sexual assault and its lasting repercussions on survivors. Dark comedy *Where There's a Will* follows a dysfunctional family as they assemble to hear a will read, exploring themes of greed, family, and inheritance.

A family's connections are explored in *Dance Like a Man*, with a particular emphasis on Lata, the daughter, and her love of Bharatanatyam dance. Lata's aspirations to become a well-known dancer are hindered by cultural norms and familial demands. Jairaj, Ratna's husband, attempts to strike a balance between pursuing his goals and encouraging those of his wife. Lata's parents continue to argue over dance and love. This drama explores gender roles in Indian society as well as the tension between tradition and modernization. Flashbacks are used throughout the story to disclose the family's past and secrets. Lata's will to dance becomes a representation of her defiance of social expectations. How the sacrifices people make for their passions affect their relationships are discussed in the play. It also emphasizes the disparity in attitudes and goals between generations. In the end, *Dance Like a Man* examines issues of identity, creativity, and complex family dynamics.

The competition between the father, his son, and daughter-in-law makes dancing a hot topic of conversation at home. He talks about subjects that are rarely discussed in society. His plays frequently tackle and skilfully portray these kinds of issues that are frequently discussed in the society. The play is elevated to a new level by the stage's technical features. Mahesh enjoys playing with lights, which may convey a variety of complex meanings when read aloud. The play that is presented on stage or in a theatre is not the same as the book. From the outset of the play, Dattani challenges the identity and sexuality of men. In light of the gender-specific roles that society assigns and the ways in which individuals and society marginalise those who don't fit into them, the play examines the self and the significance of others.

The result is the playwright's variation on the clichés around "gender" issues. The play flips open from the perspective of the other gender and demonstrates how even males can contribute to or become victims of such situations by being marginalized and oppressed by society and the other gender. A trio of generations are crucial to this play. Ratna and Jairaj desire to advance their dance careers. They consider dance to be their life's purpose as well as their passion. They aim to advance their professional careers in this area. Despite the socially prescribed gender boundaries, Jairaj continues to seek a profession as a dancer.

An old-fashioned home's living room is shown in the play's opening scene. Viswas visits the home to meet the girl's parents before the wedding. The Parekhs will be giving their potential son-in-law a sort of evaluation during the event. Lata and Viswas enter the room. But regrettably, one of their musicians was involved in an accident, and Lata's parents,

Jairaj and Ratna, were both sent to the hospital. Lata and Viswas are seen talking in the background as they gradually reveal more information about her parents:

LATA. I know they had to go out. Emergency.

VISWAS. Only doctors and fireman go out on emergencies. Dancers stay at home till it's show time. They also stay at home they have invited their future son-in-law to their house (DLM 387).

Like Lata, Lata's parents, Jairaj and Ratna Parekh, are dancers. Lata explains; LATA (smile). I told you, they are different (DLM 388). They live in a house that is between forty and fifty years old. The site of the property appears to be in high demand because it is near the city's centre. Once a garden, now a living room, the massive ancient space with modern living was constructed in lieu of a big lawn:

VISWAS. Almost like a shrine in memory of him.

JAIRAJ. Rubbish. This was my world. I have kept it the same because it's mine. This is where I spent my childhood (DLM 406).

According to Lata, there are certain sentimental reasons why Jairaj is reluctant to give it up. Lata keeps telling Viswas that her parents were students of the same guru there, where they too trained and danced. She tells Viswas that, her father is a little more accommodating than normal and that, her grandfather, a social reformer and freedom warrior, grew preoccupied with his son's desire to be a dancer.

Jairaj's father, Amritlal, the "patriarch," demands that Jairaj and Ratna reside under his rule. Amritlal believes that dancing is a profession for prostitutes, so he cannot tolerate his daughter-in-law learning it and finds it unimaginable that his son would choose to pursue it as a career. This is mostly because he was a reformist and Jairaj's actions, which caused him to be ridiculed by others, would damage his reputation. The fact that his son is rushing around the house while practicing with bells jingling in his leg is unacceptable to him.

AMRITLAL. I have no objection to your efforts in reviving the art, but I definitely do object to the people you are associating with.

JAIRAJ. Who do you mean?

AMRITLAL. Your guru. What kind of a family is he from?

JAIRAJ. His mother was not a devadasi, if that's what you wanted to know.

AMRITLAL. Why does he wear his hair so long?

JAIRAJ. Why do you ask?

AMRITLAL. I have never seen a man with long hair (DLM 417).

Both his son and his guru have long hair, which his father finds objectionable when the effeminate guru comes to their house. A woman who works as a prostitute then teaches Ratna the dance. According to Amritlal, temples have progressively turned into brothels

because people practise dancing there. He forbids Ratna from seeing the elderly devadasi who teaches her the increasingly extinct traditional forms and techniques of Bharatnatyam.

The song makes no explicit mention of sexual orientation, although there are suggestions that a male who learns dance and has a guru like that would be considered feminine. Because he cannot accept his child pursuing his ambition of becoming a dancer, he employs every tactic in the book to stop him from doing so. They are left without any financial assistance after he disowns them and throws them out of his house. Ratna goes with Jairaj as he leaves. But the results are awful. They remain at Ratna's uncle's house, where he tries to take advantage of her, causing them to leave and then come back. Amritlal's remark to Jairaj, preventing him from dancing:

AMRITLAL. All right I will allow it. I realize, of course, that you have come back more out of necessity than any real intension of patching up what you have undone. I don't mind ... But I definitely mind your silence. It carries to much hate... so I have changed my mind. I will allow you to dance (DLM 425).

He later makes an agreement with Ratna. He says that, only if she helps him pull Jairaj away from his passion and make him more "manly" will he allow her career to thrive. Seeing his son's silent resistance, Amritlal makes the decision to concede. Ratna's character may be described as selfish, even if she complies with her father-in-law's desires and considers the fact that she would have one less competitor. Despite being his wife, she constantly deceives him and plays with his emotions. Even though Jairaj was the sole male member, he never forced his views on anyone, even though Ratna always had the upper hand and made decisions for herself, Jairaj, and now their daughter.

AMRITLAL. "A woman in a man's world may be considered as being progressive. But a man in a woman's world is pathetic. (DLM 427)

Ratna was prepared to put her own career ahead of her husband's, and she did just that. She teamed up with Amritlal, because she was so consumed by desire. Her connection with Jairaj, which was primarily driven by her own self-interest, is subtly depicted here. She married Jairaj because he was a dancer and would never stop her from dancing, even after they were married. If she had married another guy, she might not have been able to follow her career and her passion, leaving her vulnerable. The point had already been made when Jairaj might have learned of her intentions—that he was a failing dancer who had not achieved much in life. Alcoholism had set in for him. She repeatedly exploited Jairaj's affection for her and his marriage to her. She encouraged him to enter the world of dancing even though she was aware that he was not a particularly talented dancer and could not hope to compete with the best of them. She was to blame for Jairaj's downfall as a dancer.

Lata, Ratna's daughter, was brought up to be a traditional dancer. She also exploited her daughter to achieve financial success and international notoriety. To get her daughter's profession off to a good start, she schemes, lies, and makes use of all her connections. She

also makes use of the connections to get her daughter's work praised. In this instance, Lata is seen as the younger Ratna who succeeds with the help of her mother:

RATNA (breaks down). Oh! (Exits quickly to her bedroom). Flute music takes over. Jairaj exits to the kitchen. The living room changes to the garden, bathed in moonlight. After a while the younger Ratna and Jairaj enter from the garden. Ratna is wearing a splendid Bharatanatyam costume which she has covered with a shawl. Jairaj is in an ordinary kura-pyjama suit. He is evidently drunk (DLM 440).

Jairaj's reliance, sense of incompleteness, and sense of failure underline the play's conflicts. Jairaj is a character that is always working on the level of muddled feelings and thoughts. He must strike a balance between his wife's concerns about his past because he is male. Ratna, strives to create a way for her prior identity as an artist that she carries with her. Jairaj struggles to understand his place in regard to his wife and his father. He attempts unsuccessfully to find a mooring and expects his son Shankar to teach his father Amritlal a lesson. Jairaj says, his wife killed their son by leaving him at home with nanny because she wanted to be successful. The nanny gave him a sleeping pill so that he would stop crying and she could sleep well, but she gave him too much of it, which ultimately led to his death. Jairaj blames her for his failure in his career. Thinking too much about his incapacity:

JAIRAJ. Yes. Let's go up. Up. To see if baby's all right.

RATNA. You stay right here. Till you learn to be quiet.

JAIRAJ. Oh, I will be quite! (Whisper.) Real quiet. Come, let's go up real quiet. (Hiccups loudly.)

RATNA (Pushes him away). Stay here, you drunkard. Don't you dare come up? (Exits to the bedroom.)

JAIRAJ (to himself). Yes. Yes, I'll stay here. You go and see how our little Shankar is sleeping. When he grows up, I'll teach him how to dance—the dance of Shiva. The dance of a man. And when he is ready, I'll bring him to his grandfather and make him dance on his head—the tandava nritya. (Strikes the Nataraja pose and hops about wildly.) The lord of dance, beating his drum and trampling on the demon (DLM 441).

Jairaj was accused of not being a man enough to work and provide for his family, Amritlal would never approve of his son becoming a dancer, and Ratna had deceived him. Amritlal's authoritarianism over Jairaj and his belief that granting his daughter-in-law freedom will buy his son's favour backfired to return his son to Amritlal with Ratna, who he believes to be a man. Since he has no interest in the arts and considers them to be little more than crafts, he misinterprets his son's passions. He can entice Ratna to agree to his demands in order to wean Jairaj off dancing. While powerless, he is not weak. Jairaj burst in frustration and stated:

JAIRAJ. Don't pretend, I am not blind. Why did he allow us to dance? you really have style. Not to mention brains. You destroy me first, then give the impression that there wasn't much to destroy in the first place, then blame it all on my father, then suggest I make myself useful by being your stage prop, then use words like 'regret' and expect me to shrug my shoulders, resign myself and believe that my calling in life is to serve you (DLM 443-444).

The play *Dance Like a Man* explores the psychology of the family's members realistically and expressively. To portray the tragic predicament of Jairaj and Ratna, it adheres to the tradition of the absurdist play. Everyone is coexisting in harmonious force, with some feeling of compromise allowing each person to live autonomously. The play is no exception to the rule that Dattani's feminine characters are more dominant than the male characters. The relationship between Jairaj-Ratna and Viswas-Lata serves as a vehicle for Dattani to emphasize the need for compromise in marriage. Even though Jairaj and Ratna both love to dance, their marriage is not truly harmonious because of a lack of compromise. The play ends with these lines:

JAIRAJ... We were only human. We lacked the grace. We lacked the brilliance. We lacked the magic to dance like God. The younger couple is ready to dance and salute the audience while the music builds up and the spotlights fade (DLM 447).

These factors all contributed to the conditions that demonstrate the operation of gender stereotypes in Indian society. Dattani depicts the clash of gender issues in the play via the method of traditional dance. His plays are therefore still relevant now and will remain so for years to come. The audience is presented with significant difficulties by the play *Dance Like a Man*. It challenges us to think about and reevaluate how society shapes our behaviour and how we blindly accept it.

No one is to blame for this programming, which begins in childhood. The norms were established in accordance with the society at the time, and it is impossible to adhere to them even today, particularly given how rapidly society is changing. Personally, this paper explores that, the laws should be changed to reflect the circumstances and the passage of time. The characters are fashioned in a way that makes it impossible to categorize them as a real black or white character. It shows greyscale tones.

CONCLUSION

Mahesh Dattani hopes to make this point clear to the audience by using shorter dialogues that are written in everyday English. The tragic and hurtful reality of men and women who are supposed to be the victims of gender conflict is brought to light in the drama *Dance Like a Man*. Particularly in Indian civilization, a person's qualities, desires, capacity, and success are determined by their gender. While a woman has no rights or voice in the household, a male who dances with passion is viewed as being lower in quality and rank. The social ill that has overtaken Indian society is gender inequality, and it can only be

eliminated when people stop supporting it. Understanding that gender disparity is a “mere social construct” is important. A person should not be judged solely on the basis of their gender, but also on their qualities and abilities. Afterward, civilization will actually advance. Every person has rights and a purpose, thus, they are all entitled to respect. ■

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Bhubaneswar correspondent of the National English daily The Pioneer Mr Sugyana Chaudhary, ROCK PEBBLES editorial board member Dr Chittaranjan Bhoi, Dr Abanikanta Dash and chief editor Dr Udayanath Majhi with His Excellency Prof Ganeshi Lal, Governor of Odisha in Raj Bhawan, BBSR while releasing ROCK PEBBLES September 2022 issue.

From Fields to Festivals: Folk Songs Representing the Regional Consciousness of Odia Culture

Radharani Nayak

Beenalaxmi Bag

Folk songs occupy a unique and enduring place in the cultural imagination of Odisha. Rooted in the rhythm of rural life and transmitted through generations, these songs embody the collective consciousness of a populace whose identity is shaped by the land, labour, and language. This paper explores how Odia folk songs - from agrarian chants and harvest melodies to marriage songs and festival hymns - articulate the region's emotional, social, and spiritual fabric. They are not merely oral compositions but living texts that express a deep connection between nature, community, and culture. This study explores the multifaceted dimensions of Odisha's folk songs - ritualistic, festive, occupational, and lyrical - examining their functions as repository of collective memory and instruments of social cohesion. Drawing upon extensive field documentation, the paper analyses how these songs embody local variation of pan-Indian mythological narratives, encode ecological and moral values and continue to retain relevance in modern society, despite processes of urbanization, migration, and media transformation. This research reaffirms the role of folk songs as dynamic carrier of Odia identity and intangible cultural heritage.

Keywords: Folk Songs, Regional consciousness, Oral Tradition, Myth, Ritual, Marriage song.

Introduction

Folk songs are the most authentic expressions of the Odia people's soul - simple in form yet profound in meaning. They arise from the soil of everyday life, sung by farmers in the fields, women during rituals, and communities during festivals. In Odisha, music and life are inseparable; the song becomes both work and worship. From the plough to the paddy field, from the courtyard to the temple, every moment finds expression in melody. These songs not only entertain but also educate, sustain, and unite. They encapsulate the regional ethos, celebrating fertility, rain, harvest, love, and devotion while preserving a sense of belonging to the land. In their rhythm and imagery, one finds the

Odia worldview: nature as divine, labour as sacred, and community as the centre of existence. Thus, the folk song emerges as both art and identity, a living archive of Odisha's regional consciousness.

Folk literature occupies a central place in the cultural consciousness of Odisha, a land known for its syncretic heritage and deep connection between art, ritual and everyday life. Western Odisha comprising districts like Sambalpur, Bolangir, Bargarh, Sonepur, Kalahandi and Nuapada has preserved a distinct repository of folk songs that reveal the rhythmic pulse of rural life. The region's linguistic diversity with its Sambalpuri dialects and tribal idioms enriches the oral art forms transmitted across generations without formal documentation.

A folk song is not merely an aesthetic artefact, but a living practice performed in the fields, homes, temples and village courtyards. It marks the rhythm of labour, sanctifies life cycle rituals, celebrates fertility and harvests and mediates between the human and the divine. The western Odisha's folk imagination blends local myths with classical epics such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata adopting their characters into songs that mirror social realities and emotional nuances.

This study seeks to document and analyse various genres of folk songs in Western Odisha, exploring their mythic and ritual associations and interpreting their continuing significance in modern contexts of social change.

Review of Literature

There are a few research articles which specifically talk about Odia folk literature. Dr. Krushna Bihari Dash in his book *Odia Loka sahitya O Sanskruti* emphasized on the oral and communal character of Odia folk literature. Defined as the "spontaneous expression of collective life" Dr. Kunja Bihari Dash has examined 'Baramasi Geeta' and 'Rasarkeli' as examples of women's emotional articulation within agrarian cycles. Another researcher Ashutosh Bhattacharya's reflections on Indian Folk music highlighted its fluidity and performative essence, noting that labour songs often "merge physical rhythm with emotional cadence". Further contributions by Dr. Mahendra Kumar Mishra, Prasanna Kumar Pradhan and Prafulla Kumar Mohanty have traced the sociological and linguistic features of Western Odisha's folklore, especially its integration of Tribal and Hindu ritual elements. The Sambalpuri folk traditions documented by the Odisha sahitya Academy and the Folklore Atlas of India have also recognised the region's unique synthesis of myth, music and moral ethos.

Despite these efforts, comprehensive academic attention to the internal typology of Western Odisha's folk songs, connecting rituals, myths and having modern relevance remains limited. The present paper attempts to fill this gap through ethnographic description and interpretive analysis based on field data.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the present study are

1. to analyse the socio-cultural and mythological dimensions embedded in folk songs.
2. To study the performative contexts of these songs like rituals, labour, festivities and gendered spaces.
3. To explore the contemporary relevance of the folk song traditions in the age of globalisation and digital culture.

The Folk Song Tradition of Western Odisha

Folk songs in Western Odisha constitute a multidimensional art form, combining melody, rhythm, and narrative. They are performed collectively by women and men during daily chores, rituals, and festivities. Oral transmission ensures both continuity and transformation; lyrics evolve with time, but the emotional core remains intact.

These songs often begin with an invocation to local deities or natural elements—rivers, trees, hills—reflecting the ecological ethos of the community. The singer, whether a farmer, labourer, or housewife, becomes the custodian of cultural memory. The themes oscillate between devotion (bhakti), love (æringara), labour (shrama), and social satire. The folk song thus becomes not only a form of entertainment but a cultural document, articulating community values, gender roles, and historical consciousness.

Categories of Folk Songs

The folk song of Odisha reflects the cultural, social and emotional life of the region, and they can be broadly classified into several categories. Those are as follows.

Ritualistic Songs

These songs are traditional songs performed during religious ceremonies, festivals and sacred community practices. They hold deep cultural and spiritual significance, as they are believed to invite divine presence, purify the surroundings and strengthen collective faith. Ritual songs accompany every significant stage of human life, from birth to death. Though many rituals such as ear-piercing or sacred-thread ceremonies have faded, marriage and funeral songs remain vibrant.

Wedding Songs:

Ceremonies like Lathadia, Haldithesa, Betarula, Kania Sanpa, Jautukadekha, Galseka, and Kandana form a cycle of performances sung predominantly by women. Mythological figures—Dasharatha, Janaka, Rama, Lakshmana, Sita, Krishna, Vasudeva—are invoked as models of conjugal virtue. The Lathadia song sung at the bride's arrival symbolically compares family members to epic characters, linking domestic life with divine archetypes.

The Kania Sanpa or Kanya Samarpan song dramatizes the conversation between Janaka and Dasharatha, offering moral instruction to the new bride. Similarly, Jautukadekha songs, sung during dowry viewing, blend humour and social critique, mocking the inadequacies of the bride's possessions.

Jautukadekha song:

Aan re ghia ra salita, suniba bara kania ra katha.
Aan re ghia ra se dipa, dekhiba se kania tukil ra rupa.
Aan re haladia muna, Rakhiba barbara suna.
Aan re banka munha peri, rakhiba guda dhua khuri.

Meaning:

This is a bride viewing song. After a male member gets married the women folk of the community come to see the newly wedded bride as well as the dowry she has brought. They together sing the song to mock the bride. Here the song implies that the girl was so dark that her face couldn't be seen inside the house. Therefore, it was necessary to see her face with a lamp. The yellow pouch is a symbol of gold. The intention of saying to keep gold in the yellow pouch during the groom's welcome was that there was no gold at all. The meaning of keeping rice pudding in a crooked-mouthed container or box was to bring a small, incomplete container as dowry. Every word contains only sarcasm.

Funeral or Elegy Songs:

The Mriduri songs sung by women during death rituals express grief, remembrance, and philosophical resignation. These laments often compare the deceased to heroic or divine figures and mirror literary laments in classical Sanskrit works such as the Raghuvansa and Kumârasambhava. Through oral mourning, women articulate both personal loss and communal empathy, transforming sorrow into lyrical catharsis.

Example:

Mote kahin chhadi gala raja ho,
Mora pua jhia chheunda heigale raja ho.
Tama maa bua ke nishakha karigala kaen hati ho,
Thumbhe pancha lok jhane heuthila je,
Dare chhati fuli jauthila kaen hati ho.

Meaning:

Here in this song the singer is a woman who laments the death of her husband. She affectionately refers to him as "raja" which means king. In Odia folk tradition raja does not always mean the real king, it often symbolises someone loved or respected. In the eyes of a wife, her husband is a king. Even if he dies in old age, he is still her king. With the husband's passing, everything is lost. It seems her husband had no siblings and he made his own parents miserable and lonely. Even though he was one but she compares

him with an elephant having the capacity and strength of five men whose presence made her feel proud and other people scared. So here through this song, she is recalling her husband's support, good qualities and responsibilities towards her, her children, and her parents-in-laws.

Play Songs (Krida Geeta)

Play songs reflect the innocence and creativity of childhood. Games like Humo, Samdhen, Bhai-Bahen, Gho-Gho Rani, Chhilolai, and Chhurki Khela are accompanied by rhythmic singing. Girls, more than boys, are the chief composers and performers, transforming play into imaginative rehearsal for adult life.

The Humo Geeta, beginning with invocation to Saraswati, explores the emotional world of adolescent girls anticipating marriage. Verses invoke mythic couples—Rama and Sita, Shiva and Parvati—projecting idealised images of love and domesticity. Samdhen Khela dramatizes conversations between mothers-in-law negotiating a child marriage, revealing the socio-moral anxieties of women in patriarchal settings.

These songs subtly teach values of cooperation, endurance, and emotional intelligence, while their performative context fosters communal bonding.

Example:

**Chhi lolae
Aa khelma bae,
Bae gala rusi,
Aa go mo piusi.
Panas bari ken jaithili,
Panas gote paie thili
Se Panas pita,
Bohu ken lagla chinta.**

Meaning:

It's a playful rhyme where children invite each other to play. The mood shifts as someone (Bai) gets angry, and the speaker calls out to an auntie. In a light, teasing tone, they describe finding a jackfruit in the garden — but it turns out to be bitter, leaving the daughter-in-law uncomfortable or irritated. These play songs do not carry the literal meanings as such, it is used by children during their play time but it reflects the rural natural atmosphere of those times.

Labour Songs (Shrama Geeta)

Labour songs are spontaneous expressions of working people who amalgamate toil with tune. In agrarian Western Odisha, farmers, boatmen, and cart drivers transform physical exertion into melodic rhythm.

Halia Geeta (Ploughman's Song): Sung to the accompaniment of oxen's steps, these songs celebrate the farmer's life, blending mythic narrative with rustic philosophy. Verses condense episodes from the Mahabharata or Ramayana—like Draupadi's Swayamvara or Sita's abduction—into two-line aphorisms. The farmer thus becomes both performer and philosopher, transforming sacred lore into lived experience.

Example:

Baila re a a a
Raja duryadhan je uman guman,
Lakha bindhba ku sakhya j pandaba arjun,
Ye lakh ra bhitre je unari kunari,
Lakhe raja pakhe bandi padile j,
Padile j dura pati kaniya ra lagi ho.
Chadi dele sara pandaba je uthila upara,
Mina macha ra akhin futi uthila bahara.

Meaning:

Here the song starts with a rhythmic chant which is used to start the folk song. It means King Duryodhan stood proudly and confidently, but only Arjuna, the pandav warrior, had the skill to target the lakh at times as he can perform extraordinary feats of archery. Many princes are present in the competition, they are waiting and trying one by one to win the challenge and marry Droupadi, the most eligible maiden. But the Princess (Droupadi) was destined to won by a distant husband. The pandav released his arrow and it rose upward piercing the eye of the fish and making it fall.

Shagadia Geeta (Cart-driver's Song): Sung along village paths, these songs are meditative and rhythmic, echoing the pace of bullock carts. They reflect on love, transience, and moral duty. Unlike Halia Geeta, their tone is more contemplative, capturing the solitude of travel and the cosmic rhythm of motion.

Together, labour songs illustrate the Odia ethos of finding joy in work and expressing emotion through collective sound.

Festival and Ritual Songs (Parba Geeta)

Festivals such as Ratha Yatra, Nuakhai, Karam Puja, Bengula Osha, Dalkhai Osha, and Pushpuni animate the folk calendar. Each festival has its distinct corpus of songs dedicated to deities or seasonal events. During Ratha Yatra, Pahandi Bije and Bahuda Bije songs praise Lord Jagannath's attire and divine play. In Karam Puja, both tribal and Hindu devotees sing devotional verses celebrating Karamsani, a manifestation of the goddess Durga.

The Bengula Osha songs, sung by children invoking frogs to bring rain, symbolise ecological balance and the community's dependence on nature. Holpuni songs, sung during Holi, often use humorous or even coarse language, functioning as social satire that

temporarily suspends hierarchies and releases collective tension. These calendric songs mark cyclical time, reaffirming continuity between nature, divinity, and human life.

Example:

Chala dekhiba go sakhi pahandi bijaye,
Bada deularu bahara kalia, bada deularu bahari kalia ,
Angu sramajhala buhe,
Chala dekhiba go sakhi...
Age balabhadra, pachhe jaganatha majhi re sohadra maae,
Kala dhala mukha jhalsi disuchi chandra- surjya- tara praye,
Chala dekhiba go sakhi....

Meaning: During Pahandi Bijee, a song describing the attire of the deities, the chariot, and the services of the servitors is first sung by a melodious singer, after which a group of musicians, accompanied by instruments like ghanta, mridanga, karatala, and jhanja, sing the chorus of the song. This song is called the ‘Pahandi Bijee’ song and it says,

Let’s go and see, friend, the Pahandi procession. Kalia (Jagannath) comes out of the great temple, sweat drips from Kalia’s body as he comes out of the great temple, let’s go and see, friend. Balabhadra in front, Jagannath behind, and in the middle is Mother Subhadra, their black and white faces shine like the moon, sun, and stars. Let’s go and see, friend.

Love and Baramasi Songs

Love (Sringara) remains a pervasive theme across Odia folk literature. Songs like Rasarkeli, Dalkhai, Sajani, and Jaiphula embody both sensuality and spirituality. The protagonists Radha and Krishna dominate the emotional landscape, symbolising divine union and human longing.

Baramasi Geeta, songs of the twelve months portray the pangs of separation felt by Radha during Krishna’s absence. Each month brings a new mood: the rains of Âcâ

ha intensify yearning, autumn evokes melancholy, and spring awakens hope. These songs fuse natural imagery with emotional cycles, linking human emotion to seasonal rhythm.

While early scholars termed Baramasi “women’s songs,” many are now also sung by male farmers (Halia Baramasi), showing fluid gender boundaries in oral creativity.

Example:

Rasarkeli re... a...a...
Nayi ra arfale pila mor maa ghar,
Suna demi,rupa demi,danga pari kar.
Tor suna rupa nani tor thane thau
Ghinuan demu hele juda lumbau mor,
Danga chali jau, rasakhasribas re.
Chaete futae mali, har har kari mali,

Guthi thili haar ashi basi hela jaeful re,
Mor din naesare bhale jaiiful re.

Meaning: A rhythmic chant typical of Sambalpuri folk songs used to set the tone of joy and movement. Here the lady is saying to the boatman to carry her in his boat to cross the river for her maternal house is on the other side of the river. She offers to give him gold and silver, for this. But the boatman here, does not want those valuable things rather he wants her love and affection so he says, “Let your gold and silver stay with you, just let loose your hair, and the boat will move on joyfully.

Representation of Mythical Characters and Cultural Values

Western Odisha’s folk songs serve as a living repository of Hindu mythological consciousness. Characters from epics like Rama, Sita, Krishna, Radha, Lakshmana, Dasharatha, Janaka are invoked not merely as divine figures but as moral exemplars reflecting human emotions.

By embedding mythic narratives in everyday rituals, the community localises pan-Indian epics into accessible moral allegories. For instance, in Kania Sanpa, King Janaka’s humility before Dasharatha models parental devotion, while Halia Geeta’s retelling of Draupadi’s Swayamvara from Mahabharata epic condenses epic grandeur into rustic idiom.

These songs also carry implicit commentaries on social issues—dowry, widowhood, labour exploitation, gender norms—through symbolic storytelling. The mythic idiom thus functions as both moral pedagogy and social critique.

Relevance of Folk Songs in Modern Society

In an era of digital media and rapid urbanisation, folk songs continue to serve as anchors of identity for the people of Western Odisha. Their relevance manifests in several ways:

1. **Cultural Identity:** Folk songs sustain linguistic and regional pride. The Sambalpuri dialect, through song, asserts a distinct Odia sub-culture recognised even in contemporary popular music and cinema.
2. **Women’s Expression:** As women are primary composers and performers of many genres, these songs remain vehicles of female subjectivity—articulating desire, pain, resistance, and humour within patriarchal constraints.
3. **Community Cohesion:** Collective singing during festivals, marriages, or agricultural work reinforces social solidarity and inter-generational learning.
4. **Moral and Ecological Wisdom:** Songs like Bengula Osha and Karamsani Geeta express ecological awareness, linking human wellbeing with natural harmony.
5. **Artistic Adaptation:** Folk motifs are now revitalised in modern Sambalpuri pop, theatre, and educational programmes, bridging tradition with innovation. Institutions such as the

Universities of Western Odisha and regional cultural troupes actively document and digitise these oral heritages.

Therefore, rather than relics of the past, these songs remain adaptive, resonant, and pedagogically valuable in shaping cultural consciousness.

Preservation of Regional Identity

The folk song tradition of Western Odisha is one of the most vital markers of the region's collective identity. In a culturally diverse state like Odisha—where coastal, tribal, and western zones have distinct linguistic and ritual patterns—the songs of Western Odisha serve as the living voice of its people.

These songs preserve the regional dialect, unique proverbs, and idiomatic expressions that distinguish the region from coastal Odia culture. Through oral continuity, they carry forward the rhythm, humour, and worldview of rural Western Odisha. For instance, words such as *bauli*, *humobaula*, and *dalkhai* have entered popular parlance, symbolising the region's pride and distinctiveness.

Festivals like *Nuakhai* and *Dalkhai* are not merely agricultural events but cultural identifiers; the songs associated with them reinforce shared belonging among scattered communities both within and beyond Odisha. For migrant labourers and the Odia diaspora, these songs function as mnemonic bridges, evoking the landscape, dialect, and ethos of home.

Moreover, folk songs help preserve historical memory and resistance—as seen in songs of the *Paika Rebellion* or agrarian struggles—by transforming history into poetic narrative. Thus, Western Odisha's folk music operates simultaneously as a cultural archive, a linguistic repository, and an emotional homeland. It is through these songs that the region asserts its place within the broader mosaic of Indian culture while maintaining its unique voice.

Conclusion

The folk song tradition of Western Odisha embodies a continuum of faith, art, and social experience. Rooted in agrarian realities yet elevated by mythic imagination, it exemplifies the creative vitality of ordinary people. Through wedding laments, play songs, labour chants, and festival hymns, the community narrates its own story—of joy, sorrow, devotion, and endurance.

In modern times, while globalisation threatens linguistic and cultural homogenisation, these songs endure as resilient voices of identity. They are not only artistic relics but dynamic archives that encode collective memory and ethical imagination. Preserving them through documentation, education, and performance is crucial for safeguarding Odisha's intangible cultural heritage. Ultimately, the folk songs of Western Odisha remind us that music and myth, labour and laughter, divinity and daily life are inseparable threads in the woven fabric of human civilisation. ■

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ROCK PEBBLES managing editor Mrs Namita Sutar receiving Felicitation from District Governor Shri Manoj Tripathi, RID - 3262 at JAJPUR TOWN for her contribution to the society as a teacher.

Expatriation and Cognitive Dissonance in Bharati Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughters*

S. Manivannan

M. Anisa Barvin

Bharati Mukherjee, a Bengali Indian-born American settler is known for her diasporic novels. Her novels mainly explore the migrated women, their struggles, cultural conflicts and identity crisis. Her early novels expressed her personal struggles later on expanded general issues of immigrated women. This paper deals with *Desirable Daughters*, one of three novels which is considered as three sisters. It throws light on the protagonist's movement to America from India and how the character gradually Americanizes.

Keywords: Expatriation, Diaspora, Immigration, Cognitive dissonance

Introduction

Geography has a significant impact on culture. People's migrations from one place to another leave a trail of culture on the land as well as themselves too. As time flies, men run to places to make money which takes them to a point to decide to leave their home or homeland and transfer to an alien land. Following the family head, the family too moves with him. More than men, it is women who face lots of struggles in this shift. They get tormented between cultures and society. Bharati Mukherjee, an Indian born American writer, through her writings depicts the struggles of women during and after immigration. In her novels she not only displayed the outer struggles but also the inner struggles which include the emotional and cultural conflicts.

Expatriation and Cognitive Dissonance

Bharati Mukherjee, born in Kolkata in 1940, a notable Indian-born writer and professor, was known for her exploration of immigration and identity in her writings. She lived with her father's extended family until emigrated to the United Kingdom in 1947 and was there for three years. Returning India, she got her Bachelors' and Master's in English and ancient Indian Culture. She emigrated to USA to become Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing and Doctorate in English in Comparative Literature.

After her marriage with Clark Blaise in 1963 and completing doctorate in 1969 she moved to Canada where she felt discrimination and found Canadian citizens generally hostile toward Asian immigrants which became the prominent theme of her earlier works. After moving to America in 1980, the embracement of melting pot philosophy made her an American citizen in 1987. Then she called herself an American with Bengali origins by shedding the idea of Asian American or Indian American.

Her novel, *Desirable Daughters* (2002), has been criticized often for the exploration of immigrant issues and has challenged the stereotypes of immigrants. To break the stereotypes, i.e. Indian immigrants has same cultural background, Mukherjee emphasized the individuality of each characters which displays the multi-faceted Indian culture. To show that a person not only gets influenced by past experiences, culture, and beliefs but also present experiences, culture, and beliefs play a vital role. Mukherjee's characters are embodiments of range of immigration experiences – expatriates – cling into their pasts with nostalgic zeal as well as embrace a new life irrespective of their origins. Expatriation is a term to indicate the act of leaving one's home country to live in another; the choice could be either voluntary or influenced external force.

The novel, *Desirable Daughters*, starts with the account of marriage of Tara Lata, a five year old girl. Her father, Jai Krishna Gangooly, a pleader, has arranged a pompous marriage and all the formalities such as poojas and aachars have been strictly followed to get the blessings of gods and goddesses. Just before the wedding, people tell him that the groom was bitten by a venomous snake and they blamed it on them as the snake goddess was not correctly worshipped. Further the groom's father demanded more dowry. Gangooly, refusing to give it, took Tara into the Sundarban forest and married her to a tree as it is better than turning to be a widow and considered as a social outcast. As in Hinduism, the only way to reach nirvana for a woman is by worshipping her husband. That earned her the title Tree Bride.

In the modern day, Tara, a great grand-child of Gangooly, is married to Bishwapriya Chatterjee, a techie later developed into tech world tycoon and together moved to California's Silicon Valley after their marriage. For Bish, it is a passage to grow and develop and create a tech empire, a classical male act. But for Tara, it is a part of emancipation from the restrains of her born-country. Most of the female emigrants were taken to foreign lands as a part of after-marriage settlements, running after their husbands, living the life of a traditional Indian wife. Very few find it as an unchaining moment, a freedom to explore outside India, trying new things which were forbidden to do in their homeland.

In Tara's case, her newly found freedom made her to choose herself over Indian cultures and her parents' belief too. As she was not satisfied with her married life, Tara and Bish are divorced and an American divorce settlement happened. She then started to live with Andy, a Buddhist carpenter, whom Bish calls as Tara's mistri. If they were in India, this less likely could have happened, as Indian culture values the bond of marriage as a

sacred one and a divorce is a lot more treated as a social taboo. Her expatriation made her comfortable as well as confident on her decisions, since geographic location plays a humongous role and the people they meet leave a trail in cultures and customs. After migration few habits change, and then changes happens in diction, body language, behavior which extends to lifestyle, beliefs and customs.

When Tara talks about the marriage with Bish, she says, “I married a man I had never met, whose picture and biography and bloodlines I approved of because my father told me it was time to get married and this was the best husband on the market.” On the other hand, the same of Andy is “Love is having fun with someone, more fun with that person than with anyone else, over a longer haul.” Still Tara left Andy and started to live alone with her son Rabi. When Bish comes to know this he asks cool, “Tara’s mistri has flown the coop?” It could have been an awkward situation or somewhat weird. Their life in Western world has made them prone to Indian cultures but not wholly.

Thinking life goes on with good vibe, a bomb drops on Tara’s lap, named Christopher Dey, the self claimed illegitimate son of her elder sister Padma. He enters the life of Tara with a knock that shook her peace. Claiming himself as the son born for Padma and Dr. Ron Day, Padma’s teenage mistake, now has come to meet her mother with the help of his aunt Tara. This drags her through past memories and fear of what-her-parents-would-do. As in Indian culture a woman’s virginity is seen as a wedding gift given by the wife to the husband and a child before marriage is totally unimaginable. This questions not only the wife but also the upbringing of her, the parents, the total pride of her ancestors. Instead of affecting Padma alone, the impact of this shatters the honour of Battacharjee as well as her ancestor Tara Lata – the Tree Bride.

Here comes the cognitive dissonance which is the mental discomfort when someone feels when their beliefs, values or actions contradict each other but the contradiction doesn’t have to be the exact same thing on both sides. In her personal life she gave importance to her happiness. She did what she felt right and what made her happy. She chose things irrespective of her culture or others opinion or judgment. But when it comes to others, her stereotype Indian culture starts to kick in. She started to think about what people would say, what the society would say, how things could go down as it will also affect her life too.

But, when her son Rabi revealed that he is a gay, Tara was in profound shock. In her Indian-Bengali upbringing, homosexuality is unacceptable and a taboo too. For a moment she wondered how to take it to Bish as well as her sisters. However, she ultimately accepts his sexuality and valued Rabi’s feelings and happiness over anything else which is a pivotal moment in her assimilation to American culture.

Conclusion

Immigration is not a conscious or voluntary choice for Bharati Mukherjee’s protagonists. They were either forced or happened to move from their place either for

upliftment or settlement. They take it as an unchaining moment or emancipation. In that journey, they lose their tongue, actions, sense of fashion, beliefs, cultures or they themselves to become a new person – a better person – a new identity. In that shift, they get caught in the swirl of cultural calamity where they cannot lose their culture which is deep rooted in their genes as well as run in the river's flow. In this novel, the protagonist, Tara also struck with cultural calamity embraces the American culture growing inside her, at the same time decides to travel to India to get to know about her roots further more. ■

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Voices from the Subaltern: A Critical Study of Mulk Raj Anand's *Collie*

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Mulk Raj Anand's *Collie* (1936) is a social-realist novel that foregrounds the voice of the subaltern through its protagonist, Munoo, a young boy labourer who traverses India's rural hills and urban industrial centres. This research article critically examines how *Collie* articulates subalternity — economic, caste, colonial, and child labour oppression — and how Anand uses narrative strategies to give voice to marginalized humanity. Drawing on Marxist, postcolonial, psychoanalytical, and sociolinguistic critical perspectives, this study explores key themes of exploitation, religion, East–West encounter, and linguistic code-mixing. The paper also surveys major critical receptions, situating *Collie* within subaltern studies and its continuing significance for reading the voices from the margins.

Keywords:- Subaltern, Exploitation, Voice, Suffering, Untouchable, Oppression.

In the historiography of Indian English literature, Mulk Raj Anand holds a pivotal place as a pioneer of social-realist writing. His works consistently represent the marginalized, giving affective and political weight to the lives of the oppressed. *Collie* (1936), Anand's second novel, emerges as a compelling testimony of subalternity — particularly in colonial India — by chronicling the life of a fourteen-year-old hill boy, Munoo, and his brutal journey through poverty, labour exploitation, and social hierarchies. The term subaltern, which refers to those who are socially, politically, and geographically outside of or marginalized from dominant power structures, becomes a useful lens through which to analyse Anand's novel. Drawing on critical theory from subaltern studies, Marxism, postcolonial criticism, and sociolinguistics, this article investigates how *Collie* gives voice to those whom history often silences.

To analyse *Collie* as a voice of the subaltern is first to understand how Anand constructs his protagonist and setting. Munoo is dispossessed:

an orphan from Kangra, he lacks not only familial support but also protection from systemic inequalities. Anand presents Munoo's condition as deeply rooted in the social structures of colonial India — his exploitation is not anecdotal but systemic.

From a Marxist standpoint, Bina Adhikari in her study of *Collie* argues that the novel's central theme is

“the exploitation of the poor and the under-privileged by ... forces of capitalism, industrialism and colonialism” (Adhikari).

She contends that Munoo's life — first as a servant in Simla, then as a mill worker in Bombay, and finally as a rickshaw *Collie* — represents the universal plight of labourers in colonial India. Through this class-struggle narrative, Anand exposes the intersections of capitalist exploitation and colonial power.

Moreover, in *Discrimination and Exploitation of Labour in Mulk Raj Anand's Collie*, also by Adhikari, the critic highlights the

“class distinction between the wealthy and the needy” and the “significant harsh and miserable life of Munoo” (Adhikari).

She underlines that the suffering of Munoo is not due to fate alone but is structured by social relations — he is a victim of systemic alienation, humiliation, and commodification.

In situating *Collie* within subaltern studies, it is useful to draw on the foundational work of Ranajit Guha, whose scholarship emphasized peasant agency and the autonomy of subaltern classes (Guha). While Anand does not explicitly align his work with academic subaltern studies (which emerged decades later), his narrative aligns with their concerns: he centres a dispossessed protagonist, gives moral and narrative agency to the poor, and foregrounds the materiality of subaltern suffering.

Anand's *Collie* does not represent economic exploitation in isolation; it also embeds spiritual and religious critique, which several scholars have interpreted through psychoanalytical lenses. R. Esther Reshma and S. Bharathiraja, in their paper *Religion as an Instrument of Exploitation:*

A Psychoanalytical Perspective in the Select Novels of Mulk Raj Anand, examine how religion becomes a means of ideological control (Reshma & Bharathiraja).

According to their reading, Anand critiques Hindu caste hierarchy — especially the treatment of lower castes — and shows how religion is manipulated to perpetuate social stratification.

Reshma and Bharathiraja argue that Anand's presentation of religion is not purely spiritual but deeply political: in *Collie*, the caste system and religious ideology intersect with colonial and capitalist exploitation, thereby amplifying Munoo's marginalization. The novel shows how indigenous hierarchies (caste) and external power (colonial capitalism) collude to dehumanize the subaltern.

Another critical dimension of *Collie* is the East–West encounter. Anand’s novel is not just a social realist text about class struggle; it also reflects on colonial modernity and cultural conflict. In the study *East West Encounter in Mulkraj Anand’s Collie*, the authors argue that the novel dramatizes the tensions between traditional Indian society and the modern, often Eurocentric world (Scholar: National School of Leadership). Munoo’s movement from the rural hills to colonial Bombay signifies this encounter spatially. His experiences in industrial settings — under European (British) management, as well as Indian bourgeoisie — reveal how colonial economic structures impose themselves on Indian labourers.

This encounter isn’t harmonious. Anand shows that colonial modernity fails to uplift Munoo; instead, the machinery of colonial capitalism further exploits and marginalizes him. Thus, *Collie* implicitly critiques not just capitalism but colonial modernity: the encounter is exploitative, not emancipatory.

An important formal strategy in *Collie* is Anand’s use of bilingual dialogue, code-mixing, and code-switching — especially between English and Hindi. Dileep Pastapure’s article *A Study of Code-Mixing and Code-Switching in Mulk Raj Anand’s Collie* investigates precisely this (Pastapure 2020). Pastapure shows how Anand recreates the linguistic texture of subaltern life by embedding Hindi words, phrases, and idioms within English dialogues. This code-mixing and code-switching not only enhances realism but also gives voice to subaltern subjectivity:

Munoo and other working-class characters do not speak only in polished English; their speech reflects linguistic hybridity.

Pastapure classifies types of code-mixing/code-switching using Hoffman’s (1991) framework, showing how Anand employs intra-sentential, inter-sentential, and tag switching in character dialogue. This linguistic strategy is more than stylistic. It reflects social identity:

the working class in colonial India lived in multilingual worlds, where English (colonial power language) coexisted with native tongues. By representing this, Anand asserts a subaltern voice that resists being fully subsumed by colonial English norms.

While *Collie* centres Munoo, the novel also hints at other forms of subaltern suffering, including the sexual and gendered exploitation of marginalized women. Pooja Kumari and Poonam Rani, in *Social Images of Sexual Exploitation and Human Suffering in Mulk Raj Anand Collie and Untouchable*, analyse how both novels portray exploitation beyond labour — including sexual abuse (Kumari & Rani). Their reading suggests that Anand does not restrict subalternity to class or caste; he also acknowledges how gender and sexuality shape the experiences of the marginalized.

In *Collie*, female characters (though not the primary protagonists) endure exploitation in domestic and social spaces. Kumari and Rani argue that Anand's portrayal underscores that the subaltern is not monolithic: subaltern suffering is interwoven with gendered power. Their analysis reveals how Anand's novel does not romanticize poverty but rather demonstrates its brutal realities, including the exploitation of women.

Critical responses to *Collie* have emphasized Anand's class consciousness and his unflinching depiction of exploitation. PrachiPriya's *Class Representation in Mulk Raj Anand's The Collie* discusses how Anand portrays class as deeply entangled with caste, tradition, and colonial structures (Priya). Priya posits that the novel highlights not only economic deprivation but also the social orthodoxies that marginalize the lower classes. Particularly, the study notes Anand's focus on caste prejudices:

Munoo's treatment is not just that of a poor labourer, but of someone from a subaltern caste, subject to upper-caste cruelty intertwined with class oppression.

Other critics have called *Collie* an "epic depiction" of subjugation. In the article *Mulk Raj Anand's 'Collie': An Epic Depiction Of Subjugation*, Ramanadham Ramesh Babu and P. Sreenivasulu Reddy argue that Anand makes the suffering of Munoo universal and archetypal (Ramesh Babu & Reddy). They claim the novel reaches "epic dimensions," elevating personal suffering to a broader symbol of dispossession.

Subhash Singh, in his *Study of Tragedy in Mulk Raj Anand's Collie*, highlights Munoo's existential predicament:

born in the hills and dying in the hills, his journey is tragic in the classical sense (Singh).

Singh believes that Anand uses Munoo to evoke universal moral responsibility, making readers feel shame for a society that allows such suffering.

Anand's broader literary legacy also merits discussion. Tanya Gupta, in *Mulk Raj Anand: The Influence of His Works on Indian Literature*, reflects on how Anand's narrative strategies and social concern influenced later generations of Indian English writers (Gupta). Gupta argues that Anand pioneered using the English novel as a tool of social protest — not just record but a voice for justice.

By bringing subaltern lives to the literary foreground, Anand challenged the colonial and nationalist literary canons. His humanistic realism — his empathy for Munoo, for exploited workers, for marginalized women — broadened the scope of Indian English literature. For readers in colonial and postcolonial contexts, *Collie* remains a powerful text: it reminds us that subaltern voices are not merely victims but agents of moral reflection.

To synthesize, *Collie* can be read as an early literary enactment of subaltern studies, even though it predates the formal academic school. Anand's representation aligns closely with the concerns of scholars like Ranajit Guha and his successors, who sought to reclaim histories of peasants, workers, and other marginalized groups. While Guha's work is historiographical and Anand's is fictional, the political resonance is clear:

both seek to recover marginalized agency and voice.

Yet, some limits may be noted. Anand, as a novelist writing in English, reaches a bourgeois and colonial-educated readership; his narrative voice, though empathetic and moral, is still mediated. One might ask: to what extent does Anand's own positioning—male, educated, writing in the colonial English language—filter or shape the subaltern voices he seeks to represent? Critics like Pastapure help answering this by showing how his linguistic strategies strive for authenticity; but the question remains of mediation and representation.

Moreover, from a postcolonial perspective, Anand's critique of colonial capitalism and caste also resonates with the idea that subaltern voices are not entirely silenced but exist within the colonial literary field. The East–West encounter in *Collie* underscores how colonial power is internalized and resisted both materially and culturally.

Why does *Collie* still matter? In twenty-first-century India, issues of child labour, exploitation, inequality, and caste remain pressing. Anand's novel continues to speak across time: it is not a historical artefact, but a living text that illuminates systemic violence. Recently published scholarship— for instance, in Pursuits:

A Journal of English Studies — continues to apply Marxist critique to *Collie*, demonstrating that Anand's work remains fertile ground for understanding class struggle in a postcolonial frame (Adhikari).

The subaltern voice in *Collie* is not triumphant in the sense of classical victory: Munoo's life ends tragically. But Anand's realism does not seek redemption through nationalism, nor does it offer sentimental closure. Instead, it calls the reader to moral witness. By portraying the unmediated suffering of a subaltern boy, Anand demands recognition, empathy, and social transformation.

In conclusion, *Collie* is a powerful articulation of subaltern consciousness through narrative form, language, and critique. It remains relevant as both a literary achievement and a political indictment. Through Munoo's story, Anand gives voice to those whom dominant discourses often silence: the exploited, the oppressed, the subaltern. ■

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A Black Feminist Analysis of Jacqueline Woodson's American Black Young Adult Fiction

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Black Feminism and inequality are major themes in American Black Young literature, as they are in American politics and society at large. One of the most prominent subjects in American literature is racism and its manifestations throughout the country's history, including bigotry, violence, and social exclusion. The effects of globalisation on American racism in Jacqueline Woodson's Young Adult novels are examined in this paper. Jacqueline Woodson's American Black Young Adult novels form the material objects of this study. According to the findings of the research, the societal setting of Jacqueline Woodson's novels revolves around black feminism or racism during the American era of globalisation. White racial negotiation is a tactic used to sustain racism in the modern, globalised world in the novels written by Jacqueline Woodson. The findings of this study also revealed that the young adult novels of Jacqueline Woodson show that racist or black feminist ideology is powerful and dominant even in this age of globalisation.

Keywords: Feminism, Young Adult Novels, Jacqueline Woodson, American Literature, Black Feminism

1. INTRODUCTION

Due to the global struggle against black feminist or racist ideology, the twentieth century provided little refuge for racists. The message that should have been sent during the United Nations conference on anti-racism and xenophobia in 2001 in Durban and in 2004 in Geneva, Switzerland, was that racist regimes should have been abandoned. However, racism as an ideology continues to serve a covert and even dominant purpose, as it persists even in societies where racism is explicitly outlawed. Because he does not necessitate the obvious backing of the state and the law, implicit racism persists (Jayasuriya 4).

Neither does a philosophy predicated on the idea of inherent biological inequalities. It doesn't take much for institutional and individual forms of racism to persist and even flourish when faced with the appearance of non-racism. In reality, contemporary racism has

shifted its focus from race to ethnic and cultural distinctions as a rationale for discriminatory attitudes toward various groups of people. Several polemic discourses concerning racism in the United States document racist attitudes and behaviours.

Discussions surrounding racism in American society go through ebbs and flows, but remain delicate topics. In his article titled “Has Racism Declined in America?” The answer to the question of whether racism has reduced in America depends on who asks the question and what questions are asked”It Depends on Who is Asking and What is Asked” (McCohanay 578).

The white race will respond that racism has diminished in the United States if you ask them why; they’ll say that the level of physical violence caused by racism has gone down. Institutions in the public sphere, including universities, hospitals, and other public agencies, have also legally abolished discriminatory policies. However, Black people will respond that they still experience injustice and frequently fall prey to prejudice when questioned about this. Many American discourses construct the lived experience of people navigating atmospheric racism.

Literary works are among the several forms that discourses developed to uphold or condemn racism in the United States can take. Regardless of the author’s race, racial identity and diversity continue to be major themes in works of American literature. Prejudice, discrimination, violence, and exclusion are all forms of racism that have persisted throughout American literature. The written word is a potent tool for preserving these contemplations, collecting insights, and rousing individuals to the betterment of life. Both white and black writers explore racism and racial identity in their works through the topic. Jauss uses the phrase “series of literature” to describe a body of literature that repeatedly returns to the same theme (Jauss).

According to Jauss, a piece of literature by any given author is inseparable from the literary canon to which it belongs. Jacqueline Woodson, more often known as JW, is one of the most articulate and well-read American authors to have written on racism. Her writings represent a larger body of work that chronicles the experiences of people of African descent in the United States during the 1900s. Italian, Dutch, Tagalog, French, German, Japanese, Mandarin, and Turkish are just a few languages that have received translations of JW’s novels. “*Visiting Day*” and “*Miracle’s Boys*” are two of her novels that have been adapted into films. This points to JW as one of the most consequential writers of this century, whose writings reflect both the zeitgeist and the historical setting (in this case, the persistence of racial tensions) in which they were written (Jasus 27).

Racism in JW novels is the subject of this investigation. Two books written by Jacqueline Woodson are the focus of this investigation. The adult books “*If You Come Softly*” (1998), at this moment shortened to IYCS, and “*Behind You*” (2004), at this moment shortened to BY. There were multiple motivations for undertaking this investigation. To begin, many American discourses, including literary ones, continue to address racism.

Studies examining the prevalence of racism in literature, particularly JW's works, are closely related to this phenomenon. JW novels are published works of literature that explore racial inequality in the 20th century, following the civil rights movement in the United States (Al Hafizh).

Many writers have praised Woodson for his tremendous output. She has been honoured with numerous accolades over the past thirty years for her work, which spans both children's and adult literature. These include the following: "the Children's Literature Legacy Award in 2018, the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award in 2018, the Library of Congress's 2018-19 National Ambassador for Young People's Literature, the Poetry Foundation's 2015 Young People's Poet Laureate, the Children's Literature Legacy Award in 2018, the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award in 2018, and the 2020 Hans Christian Andersen Award, among many more" (Kunze 72).

In addition to winning the National Book Award once and being a finalist four times, Woodson has received the "Coretta Scott King Award" twice, been honoured with the "Newbery Award" four times, and been named a "Coretta Scott King Award" honoree four times. Poetry collections "*Brown Girl Dreaming*" (2014) and "*Locomotion*" (2010), young adult novels, "*After Tupac and D Foster*" (2008) and "*Miracle's Boys*" (2000), and picture books "*Each Kindness*" (2012), "*Show Way*" (2006), and "*The Other Side*" (2001) are among Woodson's most acclaimed works (Johnson 210).

Woodson has utilised poetry as a formal method in numerous works, including "*Locomotion*" and "*Brown Girl Dreaming*," which are narratives in verse. Hughes, Countee Cullen, Nikki Giovanni, Maya Angelou, and Nick Flynn are just a few of the African American poets and professors who had a profound impact on her love of and comprehension of poetry, as she has discussed in interviews and in her own writing. Poet Woodson describes her works on her website, describing "*Brown Girl Dreaming*" as "poetry as memoir," "*Locomotion*" as "poetry as fiction," "*The Other Side*" as "poetry as picture book," "*Show Way*" as "poetry as history," and "*Each Kindness*" as "poetry as empathy." They all contain and convey meaning as poetry (Stover).

In addition, a number of her non-poetry works start with an epigraph that alludes to a poem that had an impact on the subject matter and title. For example, in "*Feathers*" (2007), the lines from Emily Dickinson's poem "*Hope is a thing with feathers / that perches in the soul, / And sings the tune without words / And never stops at all*" are used as an epigraph, and the protagonist of the work delves into the poem's meaning (Christian 26).

Similarly, in "*If You Come Softly*" (1998), the title is taken from a poem by Audre Lorde, and the epigraph references lines from that poem, as well. A fresh perspective on poetry's function and worth for young readers is laid forth by viewing it not only as a formal device but also as a means of evoking emotion and thematic understanding. A departure from most queer young adult fiction and even Woodson's earlier novels is offered by the queer Black adolescent viewpoint in "*The House You Pass on the Way*," a 1997 novel

by Jacqueline Woodson about a young biracial girl who comes to terms with her sexual identity during the summer with the help of her adopted cousin.

Jacqueline Woodson's 1995 Young Adult book *The Notebooks of Melanin Sun*, the protagonist (a heterosexual narrator) struggles with the homophobia he and his friends experience when his mother starts seeing another woman. By allowing a purportedly straight (or asexual) child to relate to the narrator, these works promote acceptance of the LGBT population rather than comprehension. It is not unexpected that the Lambda Literary Foundation has limited its citations to novels published by self-identified LGBT individuals (or, more accurately, "family"). This is because many of these novels are written by authors who identify as straight.

In light of this, *The House You Pass on the Way* represents a sea change in adolescent queer literature, moving the genre away from books about straight people accepting queers and toward books where queers express their subjectivity. Most queer Young Adult literature glosses over race due to implicit white privilege; therefore, Woodson's treatment of race is also important. To emphasise the need for Black queer studies to critically investigate children's literature, this essay places *The House You Pass on the Way* in dialogue with queer theory (broadly) and the field (Thomas 91).

One of Woodson's recurrent themes in *The House You Pass on the Way* is interracial relationships. A Black father and a white mother had an interracial relationship, and Staggerlee is the child of both. Woodson employs Staggerlee to reimagine the tragic mulatta cliché by bestowing upon her a growing sense of sexual agency and self-assurance. There is a clear gap in young adult literature that Woodson fills with Staggerlee.

As Lois Thomas Stover pointed out, *The power of The House You Pass on the Way comes from Woodson's ability to take the reader inside Staggerlee's mind, to give us her thoughts and feelings in heartbreakingly poetic prose and to just let her be, without giving her or the reader any definite answers* (Stover 127).

In addition, as an implicitly transgressive blurring, Staggerlee's queerness and biraciality run concurrently. The outward manifestation of her racial identity is shown in her brown-gold ringlets: *Her hair looked like this. Including her mom's. As well as her dad's (3). "He looks like me," she thought to herself as she noticed the colour of her hair reflecting the stained-glass image of Christ at Sweet Gum Baptist, her local church. "Not one colour, not one race, but all of it"* (Stover 8).

She stands out as an outsider as she commits herself to Christ, and some may see this as a way for her to identify with Blake's depiction of the young black kid, who is portrayed as being raceless as he kneels before God in heaven. Others attempt to classify her as either black or white, but she can only be herself. Her betrayer and fellow saviour, Trout, tries to categorise her at first: *"As Trout smirked, she narrowed her eyes. "Who are you?" The test seemed obvious to Staggerlee. There was one that she had to take a thousand times. "Pick a side," Trout said. White or black. This is me. I'm done"* (Stover 59).

A “tomboy “has been variously viewed as icons of feminist defiance, symbols of juvenile delinquency, and precursors of sexual deviance,” according to Michelle Ann Abate’s research on the “tomboy” in American culture (Abate 7). Because of their “precursor” position, one might assume that children either do not have sexual organs or are unable to have them. While young people may not yet have a clear sense of who they are sexually, Woodson argues that their sexual orientation is shaped by a combination of ambivalent emotions, strong urges, and physical attraction (Kunze 76).

The girls, who identify as tomboys, question societal assumptions about children and how race, gender, and sexuality interact. According to Abate, tomboyism emerged as a racist norm in the middle of the twentieth century. This code of behaviour advocated for modest dress, regular exercise, and a healthy diet to foster a stronger and more resilient next generation of American women and mothers.

Tomboyism was thus more than just a new manner of raising girls or expressing their gender; it was a eugenic strategy or, at the very least, a tool to maintain white dominance in the country. Jacqueline Woodson cast doubt on the idea of a lesbian teen heroine in her 1995 novel, which was published two years before *“The House You Pass on the Way.”*

“I don’t think I can write about a lesbian girl who is fourteen years old, as I’ve never met one and don’t think they exist. But I can write about a girl of fourteen who is coming to terms with the fact that she doesn’t want to be like her pals, who see a lesbian couple out and about and worry that it may be her. This generation is still discovering who they are, and I think that’s a perfectly normal part of growing up. It is our responsibility as adults to lay out their choices for them while still allowing kids the freedom to act independently” (Woodson 613).

The works written by American citizens of African descent are collectively known as African American Literature. Phillis Wheatley, an orator, and Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou, Walter Mosley, James Baldwin, etc. were among the first practitioners of the genre in the 18th and 19th centuries; it peaked during the Harlem Renaissance and has since continued with writers like these. African American literature delves into a wide range of topics, including but not limited to: culture, religion, history, racism, slavery, segregation, migration, feminism, and many more. The viewpoints of Black and white communities collide in Jacqueline Woodson’s novel *“The Brown Dreaming Girl,”* which is the subject of this thesis. It lays up the white people’s mistreatment of black people straightforwardly and concisely.

Identity and freedom, two aspects of humanity that are fundamentally lost to Black people, have been eradicated from their minds and emotions. The novel also delves into the journey of a young Black woman seeking her own identity in a society that prohibits the natural and free existence of both women and Black people. She gives Black women a new perspective on their own experiences in the world through the female protagonist and raises their standing and the roles they can play within American and African-American society.

This work from the 20th century ought to be a love story because of how passionate it is. Because of how remarkable it is, it ought to provide emotional fulfilment (Collins).

Since the beginning of her life, Jacqueline has been entirely alone. She has endured many forms of tyranny, which have tarnished her identity. For a long time, she has been silent due to the trauma she endured as a child. The fact that she is a woman explains a lot of her quiet. Even though she despises travelling, she begins her journey nevertheless. From her travels, she encounters people from all walks of life.

However, not all of her destinations are pleasant; for example, she had heard that New York was the wealthiest city in the world when she was younger, but her perception was incorrect when she was moving. In her works, the now-acclaimed Woodson depicts people of many different colours, ethnicities, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Speaking about her goal to introduce readers to people they would not otherwise meet, Woodson states, "*There are all kinds of people in the world*" (Woodson).

In addition to depicting strong female characters, Woodson frequently writes about female friendships in her stories. "*The phrases 'strong' and 'independent' that Woodson uses may be self-deprecating. 'I can't write about nice, easy topics because that won't change the world,'*" she says, admitting that writing about important issues isn't always easy for her (Woodson 719). On the other hand, my goal is to influence others to make a difference in the world through my writing. Improving society necessitates a shift in perspective toward matters such as adolescent pregnancies, racial inequality, sexual assault, and socioeconomic disparities. She thinks it's important to perform this work, even though it can be challenging at times, so that her readers can have a greater understanding of diversity and be more prepared to impact change in the future (Al Hafizh 179).

Similarly, Woodson frequently visits libraries and schools to discuss her work and the pressing concerns it addresses. Grounded adults are cynical, she remarks. Kids have the potential to make a difference because they are more receptive to new ideas and perspectives. The majority of African Americans have held the belief that "things may change" for the last several years. There is a constant expectation that "*one day the sun will shine brightly*" among the people. Jacqueline Woodson shares the hope of being a ray of sunshine for her neighbourhood (Durgesh 866).

By extending the metaphor of dreaming to connect the midwestern, southern, and northern geographies of her youth, Jacqueline Woodson creates an aesthetics of a long Civil Rights Movement in her award-winning memoir-in-verse "*Brown Girl Dreaming*" (2014). Black women reimagine location and utter "speech" via personal subjectivity. Autobiographical Black girlhood can be a lens through which to examine migration, locality, and civil rights memory, according to Woodson's memoir.

Jacqueline Woodson's memoir presents a multiregional and prolonged tale of her youth during the civil rights movement. The memoir delves into her family's travels inside

the US and how they are linked with her memories of being born in 1963. Woodson's description of her formative years in Greenville, South Carolina, Brooklyn, New York, and Columbus, Ohio, provides an aestheticised version of what Jacquelyn Dowd Hall has referred to as the protracted Civil Rights Movement. It is commonly believed that the Black political struggles of the 1960s and 1970s represented a rejection of the internationalist appeals of the classical period (1235), but this is not the case. Who argues that the long Civil Rights Movement connected the "classical phase" of the 1950s and 1960s to the labour rights movement of the 1940s (Abdur-Rahman 183).

According to what most people remember, the civil rights movement "*began in 1954 with the Brown v. Board of Education and ended in 1968 with the death of Martin Luther King Jr. and the rise of Black Power in the country's northern and western cities*" (Raiford and Romano 14). Importantly, there are geographical ramifications to a unified story of the classical period. The popular imagination places the North's civil rights movement in the "later 1960s", according to Jeanne Theoharis, while "*tens of thousands of people were active in the civil rights struggle outside the South*" from the 1940s to the 1980s (Theoharis 32). The upshot is the consolidation of a myopic view of space and time that downplays the complexity of the children's actual experiences throughout the relocation (Raiford and Romano).

One of the many autobiographies that examine the lives of Black children and youth during the era of segregation and desegregation is "*Warriors*," written by Melba Pattillo Beals. Books by Ruby Bridges include "*Through My Eyes*" (1999) and "*Ruby Bridges Goes to School: My True Story*" (2003), as well as a collection of essays by Ellen S. Levine titled "*Freedom's Children: Young Civil Rights Activists Tell Their Own Story*". as well as her most recent work, "*March Forward, Girl: From Young Warrior to Little Rock Nine*" (Burnham).

The anthropologist August is the hero of "*Another Brooklyn*" (2016), Jacqueline Woodson's autobiographical work, who studies customs and ceremonies around death all over the globe. She goes back to Brooklyn, where she spent some of her childhood, to be there for her father's funeral after he passes away. While there, August runs into an old friend on the train, which brings up memories of her childhood companions Angela, Gigi, and Sylvia.

In contrasting Toni Morrison's "*The Bluest Eye*" (1970) with Woodson's coming-of-age story, Morrison shows the dangers of the white gaze on young Black girls while they grow up, while Woodson shows the dangers of the adultifying gaze, which reads Black girls as always adults and therefore sexually available (Flynn 111).

Because it insists on using the genre to describe the evolution of particular characters, Woodson's work also signifies a significant departure from the majority of autobiographical literature by African Americans, both autobiographical fiction and autobiography. Woodson presents all autobiographies through the lens of heavily fictionalised storytelling to highlight

how the teleological narrative of self-discovery—a trait that appears common in both autobiographies and coming-of-age stories—is more of a forced imposition than a genuine account of the author’s life path.

Woodson uses a strategy of coming of age that queer scholar Kathryn Bond Stockton calls “growing sideways” through the utilisation of a nonchronological framework. “‘Growing up’ may be a myopic, restricted depiction of human development, one that strangely would suggest an end to growth when full stature (or reproduction) is achieved,” Stockton contends. “Growing sideways” implies, on the other hand, that a person’s experience, beliefs, goals, and actions can be broad at any age.\

Woodson rejects the simple teleological linearity of traditional coming-of-age stories by utilising this concept of teenage growth; instead, she frames August’s coming-of-age as something that may be comprehended by reflection on her past experiences. In other words, August’s present sense of self is connected to the events of her past through the narrative of her youth. This retrospective narrativization is the source of the coherent subject stance at the time of writing (Dawson 115).

2. OBJECTIVES

- i To understand Jacqueline Woodson and her literary work.
- ii To examine the relationship between American literature and Black feminist novels.
- iii To know how black feminism is depicted in American literature
- iv To study the portrayal of black feminism in Jacqueline Woodson’s novels.
- v To know the depiction of young adult literature by Jacqueline Woodson

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Chambers (2014) found that American author Jacqueline Woodson told her childhood tale in her poetry in her 2014 book “*Brown Girl Dreaming*.” The book was added to the reading list of “*Children’s Middle Grade Books*” by its publisher, Penguin. The author specified on her website that this was a book for young adults. Following its release, the book was honoured with three prestigious awards: “the Newbery Honour Book, the National Book Award for Young People’s Literature, and the Coretta Scott King Award.” The esteemed Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, a worldwide accolade, was bestowed upon Jacqueline Woodson in 2018.

Books aimed at younger readers have won all of these prestigious literary awards. Quite a few reviewers were also quite complimentary of the book. The existing reviews, similar to the literary award juries, describe Woodson’s novel as suitable for younger readers. For instance, the children’s book section of The New York Times included a review of *Brown Girl Dreaming*. Writer and editor Veronica Chambers expressed her belief in the book’s ability to impact young readers as they navigate the journey of self-discovery in her review (Chambers).

Howard (2020) mentioned that there are two primary ways that “*Brown Girl Dreaming*” has been described, as adult fiction, aside from the debate about its target audience. Reviewers and scholars analysed the book as an adult fiction driven by human rights assertions; it chronicles the coming-of-age of a brown girl in the context of the Civil Rights Movement and the sociopolitical climate of the 1960s in the US. Simultaneously, they saw it as the heartfelt story of a young woman grappling with her identity about her family and the world at large. She is enchanted by language and stories and aspires to one day create novels (Howard 8).

Van Lierop-Debrauwer (2021) stated that American author Jacqueline Woodson’s 2014 young adult novel “*Brown Girl Dreaming*” is a free-verse memoir about her youth. Most American critics saw the book as a personal biography of the author’s growth as a writer as well as a human rights story of a brown girl’s coming-of-age in the midst of racism and the Civil Rights Movement in the US in the 1960s. The article’s primary emphasis is on the book’s development as a political memoir and a personal story of coming-of-age story. Van Lierop-Debrauwer argued that the work is written for both young adults and adults, despite being classified as young adult fiction. Voice, silence, and black feminism are the central arguments about the novel’s political and personal characters of “*Brown Girl Dreaming’s*” crossover potential (van Lierop-Debrauwer 110).

Al Hafizh (2016) analysed that group of individuals may act more civilised and view other groups as more barbaric due to racism. Because colonialism is often based on the supremacist idea that the European or Western race is superior, racism is directly tied to both Orientalism and colonialism. This research delved into the exploration of racial themes throughout Jacqueline Woodson’s literary works. The theory of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was used to perform this research. To further expose the novel’s racial themes, the researcher also employed a deconstruction reading strategy. The research concluded that these novels reveal racist tropes from the American postcolonial period. The white protagonist’s racist treatment of the black characters is on full display in this book. White people’s bias against Black people as a means of sustaining white supremacy is one way in which this relationship manifests itself. Secondly, white-constructed forms of discrimination and segregation keep Black people on the margins of society. Expressions of prejudice and segregation can take many forms, including but not limited to avoiding, excluding, verbal and physical abuse, and extinction. The third point is the fight that Black people have waged against racism (Al Hafizh 180).

Hinton-Johnson (2020) wrapped up that the novels by Jacqueline Woodson were studied from a black feminist point of view to place them in the well-established literary tradition of African American women. “*The Dear One*” (1991) and “*Like Sisters on the Homefront*” (1995) by Jacqueline Woodson were the primary focus of their study on Young Adult fiction and Black feminist theory. The novels were examined to determine if they demonstrate any principles of Black feminist theory, particularly those that pertain to cultural

or personal identity (such as the many forms of racial, class, and gender oppression experienced by young African American women, the importance of sisterhood, the importance of finding one's voice and subjectivity, etc.). Family, African American expressive culture, black feminism, and sexuality are some common themes that literary analysis has shown to be present (Hinton-Johnson).

McDowell (1987) stated that Black women authors of adult fiction have given readers a unique perspective on family in the past ten years. As a result of not believing in the concept of a "fantasy family" or an idealised portrayal of the role of Black men and women within it, a significant portion of Black women's writing, and even some young adult fiction, "rethinks and configures the structure of the family. He further added that many individuals, regardless of their ethnic background, have begun to redefine family in various ways as the traditional nuclear family continues to unravel. As they are prompted to concentrate on the similarities between themselves and individuals of other ethnic groups, students may be able to see beyond cultural differences by critically analysing families in some YA novels. If literature is taught in a manner that "enables students to view concepts, issues, events, and themes from the perspectives of diverse ethnic and cultural groups (McDowell 192).

According to **Crew (1994)**, found that understanding the culture and historical background of a people is essential for properly interpreting their literature. Teaching African American literature while considering C. Lee's assertion requires familiarity with both the literary history of the African American people and the principles of black feminism, in my opinion. By doing so, important issues, such as the impact of gender, class, and race on Black people's lives, can be examined and addressed. Since literature reflects society's mores, Hade claimed in 1997 that it is crucial to learn how racial, class and gender identities are portrayed in literature to understand society's value system. This method of analysing literature is similar to the way black feminists focus on the oppressed Black woman both within and outside of literature. One way to help students embrace and understand diversity is to have them consider societal issues through the eyes of marginalised groups, such as African American women. This can help achieve other, more challenging objectives of the multicultural movement (Crew 81).

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology allows the audience to independently evaluate the study's reliability and validity. A simple description of the steps taken and their impact on the final product. Methodology in research aids academics in developing thorough study designs that produce trustworthy findings that support the findings of the investigations. Essays, theses, academic journals, and dissertations all have sections on research methods that detail the who, what, where, and how of data gathering and analysis. The Descriptive Methodology served as the foundation of this investigation. A descriptive study aims to offer a thorough and structured description of a population, environment, or phenomenon.

While it is capable of answering questions about “how,” “when,” “where,” and “what,” it is unable to answer the question “why.” You can use any number of methods to investigate one or more variables in descriptive research. Works written by Jacqueline Woodson. Donations will be the study’s primary data source. Plus, we will be looking at secondary sources like journals, articles, papers, and more. Data collected for this study are qualitative in nature, specifically data presented as discourse (i.e., words, sentences, paragraphs, expressions, or speeches) pertaining to racism. Reading meticulously is the method of data collection. There is a record of every instance of racism, black feminism, or young adult fiction in Jacqueline Woodson’s novels, whether it manifests in the characters’ actions, looks, ideas, prejudices, or fashion choices.

5. CONCLUSION

Conflicting viewpoints and ideological conflicts about race and young adult fiction are prevalent in the stories found in JW books. Supporters of racist ideology fortify their coalitions through ideological hegemony in an effort to tip the scales in favour of racism. Making white supremacy against non-whites seem natural and deserving of support is one way racist proponents’ ideologies change in the JW young adult literature. Also, by downplaying, ignoring, or otherwise misrepresenting the reality of white supremacy to non-whites. Disenfranchising white supremacists and other non-white groups is another means of ideological reform. Also, it portrays a transient non-white condition as though it were permanent. Even non-white people’s dominant morals, religious beliefs, and academics were impacted by the pervasive racism in society and everyday life. Comparing the study of racism to that of cancer is like looking at a medical mystery. By no means does the researcher offer moral support or condemn cancer; rather, he makes a diagnosis and searches for potential treatments. To combat racism, researchers should seek out effective solutions rather than merely denouncing it. Researchers interested in racism in literature should examine the issue from a variety of scientific angles in the future. Due to the significant differences, it is feasible that the issue of racism in this novel can only be addressed by applying Gramsci’s hegemony theory to the study of JW novels. Many situations call for unique responses to racial and racist issues. ■

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American Transcendentalism: Is it redemptive or regenerative?– A Study

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“The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers. -
William Wordsworth.

The weariness of the material life as opposed to the transcendental philosophy lay bare in these above lines of Wordsworth’s sonnet ‘The world Is Too Much With Us’. The claims of materialism at the cost of neglecting our spirituality are highlighted. The intellectual contemplation on the term ‘transcendentalism’ leads to spiritual awareness. Transcendentalism is not a religion. It is an idealistic and pragmatic philosophy that mainly focuses on the individualistic aspects of present life. There are several approaches and approximations to the concept of transcendentalism. This paper examines whether transcendentalism is redemptive or regenerative in the context of American Philosophy.

Keywords –Transcendentalism, Calvinism, Unitarianism.

In the philosophical context, transcendentalism has been defined as

the recognition in man of the capacity of
knowing truth intuitively or of attaining knowledge
transcending the reach of the senses(1).

The transcendentalists are the strong believers in the power of the individual and divine messages. They had eternal faith in the truth that for every person there exists a private relationship between the self and the universe and they thought that every individual has a universal soul. Transcendentalism is based on the belief that human beings have self – wisdom and it encouraged individuals to find their own voice and reject social expectations of conformity and conventionality. The transcendentalists believed in intuitive thought that is the ability to know something through instinctive feelings rather than conscious reasoning. According to transcendentalists, the flashes of intuition are the most fundamental form of knowledge. They believed that the intuition could be provided by the universal soul.

The chief assets of transcendentalism are :

- it questioned established cultural forms.
- urged to reintegrate spirit and matter.
- turned ideas into concrete action.
- developed a momentum of its own.
- influenced the spheres of religion, education, literature, philosophy and social reform.
- posited the essential divinity of man as opposed to tenet of innate depravity.
- proposed self – trust and self – reliance
- believed in democracy and individualism
- trust in intimate relationship with nature and
- believed that human being have self – wisdom intuitively

Transcendentalism has been a divine religio-philosophical idealistic and literary movement in the history of nineteenth century American literature and thought. This movement has developed during the late 1820 s and 30 s in the Eastern region of the United States as a protest against the general state of spirituality and in particular the state of intellectualism at Harvard University and the doctrine of the Unitarian. Unitarianism was strongly established when there was a remarkable break with Calvinism. William Ellery Channing –the most influential of the early Unitarians and formulator of American Unitarianism delivered a speech on ‘moral argument against Calvinism’ – against orthodox beliefs. In 1831 Emerson brought out a formula of compromise between Calvinistic and Unitarian groups. Emerson felt that the Calvinistic ideals were highly rigid and he knew that the Unitarian principles were very liberal. He urged the people to borrow something of eternal truth from both these opinions. The third important group was the Quakers. They believed in the divinity of Christ and in the Bible as the inspired word of god. They insisted upon the essential sinfulness of man. Quakerism was more benevolent and humanitarian than Calvinism and more pietistic than Unitarianism.

There was a strong sense of dissatisfaction and disbelief in the doctrines and laws of the church. The church had become too conservative. This sort of religious background prepared the way for transcendentalism by insisting that man is essentially good and that man may trust his own perceptions of religious truth. William Ellery Channing, the Unitarian, Spoke of “the confidence which is due to our rational and moral faculties in religion”. Channing the Unitarian stressed on conscious reasoning but Emerson the representative of transcendentalism brought out the major distinction between ‘understanding’ and the ‘Realism’. According to Emerson the sense of ‘understanding comes out of rational faculty and the ‘reason’ remains as an individual’s supra rational or intuitive faculty.

Every individual is an eternal source of intuitive reasoning skill, free thinking and self - reliance. Transcendentalism is a philosophy emphasizing the intuitive and spiritual

above the empirical. This philosophical concept called on people to view the objects in the world as small versions of the whole universe and to trust their individual intuitions. It is a system developed by Immanuel Kant an eminent philosopher which is based on the idea that in order to understand the reality one must first examine and analyze the reasoning process which governs the nature of experience. Immanuel Kant had called all knowledge transcendental which is concerned not with objects but with our mode of knowing objects. The New England intellectuals of the early 19th of embraced Kant's philosophy and German idealism as an alternative to and as a reaction against 18th century rationalism. John Locke's philosophy of sensualism and Calvinism transcendentalism plays a vital role in the reformation of the doctrines and laws of the church. It is fundamentally composed of a variety of diverse sources including Hindu Vedic texts, the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita.

In 1832 Emerson founded transcendentalism as the Unitarianism was not sufficient to rehabilitate individual. Emerson's 'nature' (1836) was the "Bible of the early transcendentalists". There was a transcendental club – that served as a center of activity. Apart from this there was a quarterly magazine 'the Dial' that insisted on transcendentalist principles. This magazine has been edited by Margaret Fuller (1840-1842) and by Emerson (1842-1844). Emerson in the opening number of the Dial says

the spirit of the time is in every form a protest
against usage and search for principles².

A clear picture of this philosophic concept can be perceived in the definition given below

Transcendentalism was a distinct philosophical system. Practically it was an assertion of the inalienable worth of man; theoretically it was an assertion of the immanence of divinity in instinct, the transference of supernatural attributes to the natural constitutions of mankind. Transcendentalism is usually spoken of as a philosophy. It is more justly regarded as a gospel. As a philosophy it is sofar from uniform, that it may rather be considered several systems than one... transcendentalism was Enthusiasm, a wave of sentiment, a breath of mind³.

Transcendentalism should not be confined to only philosophical context. It has got literary background in European romanticism and individualism. To romanticism it owed the concept of nature as a living mystery. Emerson's 'nature' is a manifesto of transcendentalism that is closely related to the worship of nature writers of the romantic age like Wordsworth, Shelley and Coleridge.

A subtle chain of countless rings
Next unto the farthest brings

The eye reads omens where it goes
And speaks all languages the rose;
And, striving to be man, the worm
Mounts through all the spires of form—(Nature).

The influence of European romanticism is highly noticeable in the above mentioned lines of Emerson. The pioneers of transcendentalism are Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau and Margaret Fuller. The other important expositors are Amos Bronson Alcott, Oreste Augustus Brownson, William Ellery Channing, William Henry Channing, James Freeman Clarke, Charles Anderson Dana, John Sullivan Dwight, Frederick Henry Hedge, James Marsh and Theodore Parker. Apart from such social theorists, educators and reformists, the other remarkable followers of transcendentalism are Hawthorne Melville, Emily Dickinson and Edgar Allen Poe. Emerson's *Nature* suggests that divinity suffuses nature and reality can be understood by studying the celestial aspects of nature. Emerson's nature consists of eight sections :nature, commodity, beauty, language, discipline, idealism, spirit and prospects. Each section deals with relationship between humans and nature. 'Wholeness' in nature can be experienced only when the people are separated and detached from the flaws and distractions imposed on them. Solitude is the only chief means of getting fully engaged in the world of nature.

“To go into solitude, a man needs to retire as much from his chamber as from society. I am not solitary whilst I read and write, though nobody is with me. But if a man would be alone, let him look at the stars”(Nature)

Access to nature leads mankind to peak and happiness. “Nature in its ministry to man, is not only the material but also the process and the result”. All the parts incessantly work in to each other's hands for the profit of man. The wind sows the seeds; the sun evaporates the sea, the wind blows, the vapor to the field; the ice, on the other side of the planet condenses the rain on this; the rain feeds the planet; the planet feeds the animal; and thus the endless circulations of the divine charity nourish man”(Nature). Emerson thus depicts the transcendental union between mankind and nature. Nature should be accepted as 'universal being'.

Emerson uses spirituality as the main theme of 'Nature'. Emerson believed in reimagining the divine as something large and visible, which he referred to as nature; such an idea is known as transcendentalism. According to Emerson nature is regarded as 'universal being' and he believed that there was a spiritual sense of the natural world around him. Depicting this sense of 'universal being' Emerson states

the aspect of nature is devout like the figure of Jesus, she stands with bended head, and hands folded upon the breast. The happiest man is he who learns from nature the lesson of worship 4.

Here nature is treated as a living soul and as a manifestation of the divine. It has an independent entity and a soul. Man is also considered not merely as a social or political product but as a spark of the divine –a spiritual entity.

Emerson, the most influential American thinker of the nineteenth century, got acquaintance with the writers of the Romantic Movement when travelled to England; he was greatly influenced by the writers of Romanticism-which stressed the human development of emotional forms of expressions –based on the ideas and principles of Romanticism. Emerson, like Wordsworth believed that one could transcend the materialistic world of sense experience and become conscious of the all – pervading spirit of the universe and that God could best be founded by looking into one’s own soul. These words which are “finite organs of the infinite mind” can be compared to Wordsworth’s transcendental ideas who felt:

..... A sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused
A motion and a spirit that impels
An unthinking things, all objects of all thought
And rolls through all things: (Prelude)

The seeds of transcendentalism spring from romanticism. In his essay self – reliance Emerson expressed his view that

people should cast off the behaviors and formulas of past times and create new forms of expression. The old ways having become dead to you prevent you from making yourself clear- to initiate, to invent your own way we need self – reliance5

Thoreau a well-known transcendentalist was Emerson’s student. Many passages in Thoreau seem echoes of Emerson though Thoreau’s expression of the thought is always more concrete than Emerson’s. Thoreau called himself a transcendentalist. He wrote in his journal in 1853 “ I am a mystic, a transcendentalist and a natural philosopher to boot”.

Thoreau was against the greed and materialism that was affecting Americans in their daily lives. The basic tenets of his philosophy of life were that man should advance confidently in the direction of his dream and that he should live a simple life.

Simplicity, Simplicity, Simplicity!. I say let your affairs be as two or three and not a hundred or a thousand; Instead of a million count half a dozen, and keep your accounts on your thumb – nail . Simplify, Simplify instead of three meals a day, if it be necessary eat but one; instead of a hundred dishes, five, and reduce other things in proportion. (Walden)

Thoreau gave importance to two aspects of Transcendentalism – The first one was the stress which it laid upon solitary communion with the Infinite. The second aspect was the assurance it afforded him that what his intuition told him was right. This aspect seems to be unconventional. In Walden he has drawn a distinction between himself and his fellow transcendentalists, while distinguishing between philosophers and professors of philosophy.

There are nowadays professors of philosophy. but not philosophers. To be a philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts, not even to found a school, but so to love wisdom as to live of a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity and trust. It is to solve some of the problems of life, not only theoretically but practically.(Walden)

Thoreau resembles Keats when he had purposely withdrawn from the mundane realities of life in order to lose himself in the mystic nature. Keats poetic lines find an echo in Thoreau's Transcendental companionship with nature.

Fade far away, dissolve and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever and the fret
Here, where man sit and hear each other groan'

(Ode to Nightingale, stanza III)

'The desirability of communion with nature was one of the few articles of faith in which all transcendentalists agreed. Instead of indulging in mere theory Thoreau would be putting his belief into practice. At the same time he would be doing what he longed most to do'. The apt observation of Crawford brings out the transcendentalist nature of Thoreau's poetic art

Thoreau's transcendentalist experiences when he went to the Walden Pond find divine expression in the following lines of Thoreau. Time is but the stream I go a fishing in. I drink at it, but while I drink I see the sandy bottom and detect how shallow it is. It is thin current slides away but eternity remains.

I would drink deeper; fish in the sky, whose bottom
is pebbly stars. I cannot count one. I know not the
first letter or alphabet. I have always been regretting
that I was not as wise as the day I was born'. (Walden)

Whitman, the world famous American poet stands supreme among the transcendentalists in the history of American literature; his '*Song of Myself*' echoes principles of Transcendentalism – free thinking, self-reliance and non-conformity, growth and renewal of individual, revolt against tradition and established institutions, brotherhood of man, love for nature and spiritual unity. According to all transcendentalists "words are finite organs of

the infinite mind” as Emerson says in ‘nature’ Whitman found nature to be symbolic of spiritual facts and he indulged enormously in mystical speculations. The possibility through asceticism of uniting contemplation and action became for Whitman a further guide towards fulfillment.

Whitman in ‘Song Of Myself’ gave an inventory of major religions and indicated he respected and accepted all of them – a sentiment he further emphasized in his poem ‘With Antecedents’. He affirmed

I adopt each theory, myth, god and demi-god / I see
that the old accounts, bibles, genealogies are true,
without exception –

Whitman incorporated transcendentalism and realism in his works.

Transcendentalism refers to a philosophy emphasizing the intuitive and spiritual above the empirical: Transcendentalists look of nature as a metaphor of human mind. To sum up, the transcendentalists are not the poets of the body but poets of the soul and they are being identified as the best and distinguished world poets. ■

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Amit Chaudhuri's Creative and Critical Intellectuality in his Non-Fiction: A Critical Study

Padmalochan Sahu

Amit Chaudhuri is a towering figure in the firmament of contemporary Indian English literature. He is now more active in writing non-fiction. This paper studies his critical thoughts applied in his non-fiction and also studies his creativity in non-fictional writings to maintain high level of intellectuality to make his works more effective. This paper specifically explores the style of intellectuality applied through critical thoughts and creativity. His high level of intellectuality was admired by the Nobel Prize Winner Economist, Amartya Sen. In his Congratulatory address for the Infosys Prize for the Humanities, Amartya Sen has stated :

He is, of course, a remarkable intellectual with a great record of literary writing showing a level of sensibility as well as a kind of quiet humanity which is quite rare. It really is quite extraordinary that someone could have had that kind of range that Amit Chaudhuri has in terms of his work and it could be so consistently of the highest quality.

Amit Chaudhuri achieved world-wide reputation as a novelist, an essayist, a poet, a musician and a social thinker and created an image of an important intellectual through his number of creative non-fiction. Chaudhuri's non-fiction are not merely commentary or reportage but also an arena where aesthetics, self-reflection, cultural history, and philosophical questioning meet together. His works such as *Clearing a Space*, *Calcutta: Two Years in the City*, and *Finding the Raga* touch cultural criticism, literary analysis, autobiography, and focus on music and society. His style of giving importance to present time and to small things are well noticed by British author Hilary Mantel; two times winner of Booker Prize. Mantel has given her personal review in the journal "New York Reviews of Books",

Amit Chaudhuri has, like Provst, perfected the art of the moment [he] is a miniaturist, for whom tiny moments become radiant, and for whom the complexities of the fleeting mood uncurl onto the page like a leaf, a petal.

Chaudhuri personally believes that non-fiction is not different from creative or critical writing. In a recent interview, he notes,

“Critical writing is creative writing, it creates something and that something can be as powerful or even more so than the novel that follows.”

For all these reasons, investigating creative and critical intellectuality in his non-fiction writings is of prime importance in this research paper.

Key words: Creativity, Intellectuality, Non-fiction, Fiction.

On Creative and Critical Non-Fiction:

AmitChaudhuri’s essays maintain the artificial borders between fiction and non-fiction, debating that writing itself is an act of living and thinking. In “The Origins of Dislike” (2025), he says: “I like the essay as an artform because it might be a vehicle for questioning received notions, whether fiction and non-fiction, or art and life ... Poet and ‘craft’ writer can hug here”. His work follows fragmentary, aphoristic prose, dive into the modernist tradition while giving a deeply personal touch. His narrations in non-fictions are not only critical but also unique enough to prove his creative power. In the book “The Origin of Dislike”, Chaudhuri has given his critical observation that attacks the institutional divide between creative writing and literary criticism, arguing for their intrinsic connection,

“We have created a critical economy in which one is either a novelist or a critic. The two activities are viewed as entirely separate, or antagonistic.”

These lines of Chaudhari are showing his unique observations on literature. Again he is well known for his another bold and unique statement,

“The moment a book by a writer from the non-West is anointed as the work of ‘genius’, it has often been subtly converted into an anthropological item...”

Creativity is often used in narrative style where he is able to give the reader the deep vision of the problem in a positive way which has the ability to provoke the peaceful soul of the reader. In the book “The Origin of Dislike”, Chaudhuri in a highly creative way questions the fundamental purpose of the novel,

“What if the novel’s subject isn’t the momentousness of experience but its opposite: the non-momentousness, the duration, the everyday?”

Again in the same book, we can see his creative analysis where he argues for literary forms,

“The novel is a place where many literary acts converge. It’s a sort of meeting point...that has, in the modern period, became the opposite: a segregation of different kinds of writing.”

He often creates creativity to succeed his critical thinking.

Creative Way: Personal as Political and Philosophical

Introspective Lyricism:

Giving personal touch in non-fiction writings seems non-personal is one of unique styles of Amit Chaudhuri. In the book “Clearing a Space”, he says,

“My purpose was not to annotate or chronicle but to examine, and be examined by, the matter of my own experience.”

Chaudhuri’s non-fiction is characterized by lyrical introspection, a method that merges inner experience with broader cultural and social meaning. As noted, “His second important technique is that his works lack a conventional plot of action, giving more importance to the inner life as opposed to the external life. He is able to influence the reader through his works. His writings are a depiction of the personal as political and vice-versa is an effective expression of post-colonial beliefs”. This style has pragmatic importance as many lines are delivered after Chaudhuri gains physical experience on many areas. After watching and observing the city Calcutta directly, Chaudhuri has given the analysis. His personal touch seems non-personal analysis because the lines are not on the personal life of Chaudhuri, but on the reality of Calcutta city experienced by him.

Uses of Quotations as Thoughtful Provocation:

Prediction and provocation has a long history of success in attracting reader into action. Similarly, Chaudhuri often uses quotation as a mode of thought rather than a mere reference. For example, in “Clearing a Space”, he draws on T.S. Eliot: “Eliot writes that the poet must have a ‘historical sense’ — the ‘feeling that the whole of the literature from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order.’ This is exactly what Chaudhuri is doing for himself and other Indian writers after him — providing a way of seeing and thinking without which even an essay like this one would not be possible”. In the book “The Origin of Dislike”, he provokes deep thought about how disliking is an essential part of critical engagement rather than mere rejection,

“Dislike is real... The one indefatigable, modest, self-renewing moral purpose of both creative and critical language is to dismantle, and refuse to confirm, what we already know to be true.”

Innovation in Language and Aesthetics

Linguistic Experimentation:

Chaudhuri’s language is precise, yet stylistically adventurous and brave. He describes his aesthetic in “*Calcutta: Two Years in the City*” as “a discovery of loss ... the city passed through me, rather than the other way round.” This suggests not only a meditation on place, but also a shifting of perspective, inviting complexity and nuance. He usually blends English language with words from other Indian languages, reflecting the polyglot reality of Indian urban life. Critics note that “the technique of blending such words into the main theme is quite appreciable. It excites the reader to go deep into the novel to get the real meaning from the context”.

Rather than emphasizing climactic events, Chaudhuri focuses on the minor, the marginal, and the reflective: “He never kills the soul of the novel to follow the rules. His technique is to change the rules to maintain the essence of his creative works”. This philosophy extends to his non-fiction, which often appears to be “eventless narration”—its beauty lies in its meditative quality and philosophical questioning of what counts as significance.

Literary Criticism as Cultural Critique:

Chaudhuri’s ‘Clearing a Space’ is a landmark in Indian literary criticism, going beyond binaries such as colonial/postcolonial or Indian/Western. The essays there, as one critic notes, “present to us a newer, more complex and more engaging idea of Indian modernity. This modernity is an on-going, dynamic negotiation between the writer and the world”. In the book, ‘The Origin of Dislike’ Chaudhuri states :

The essay is a form that should not aspire to the certainty of the treatise or the drama of the novel. Its work is to question, to hesitate, to remember, and to forget—for memory is also a kind of forgetting, and what the essay memorializes is not always what happened, but what was possible.

In one of his essays, he reflects: “The idea of India as it appears in my essays fluctuates, and I want to insist that it should remain in a state of fluctuation, because that is the condition of all living things”. Such positioning is intellectually powerful because it refuses closure, invites debate, and foregrounds ambiguity as an intellectual value.

Chaudhuri’s work consistently gives references to the importance of vernacular energies and traditions. In ‘A Strange and Sublime Address’ and other essays have provided “impetus and confidence to nonmetropolitan writers” and insist “the ordinary, the commonplace, the impermanent are worth our interest”.

The Interplay of Music and Prose:

Amit Chaudhuri is unique among Indian intellectuals for his simultaneous achievement in music and literature. He stated in his book “Finding the Raga”,

“I came to Hindustani music as I later came to writing essays: not as a matter of routine, but as an unsettling joy.”

In the same book, his statement shows how deeply and personally he is connected with music,

“To sing in the morning is to be reconciled, if briefly, to yourself and to the world’s possibility.”

This statement shows how passionate he is in the field of music, especially Indian music. His book Finding the Raga is as much about autobiography as it is about music theory,

improvisation, and the history of Indian classical music. He writes, “Music was a presence that entered into me at certain unpredictable moments, as poetry or philosophy might have.” Through this, he demonstrates how disciplines interpenetrate, and how musical improvisation informs his literary thinking.

Literary Activism and Symposia:

Since 2014, Chaudhuri has organized “literary activism” symposiums, seeking a new space for literary thought distinct from both the literary festival and the academic conference. Simon During described this as a “quasi-academic space,” and Simon Glendinning called it “a space for misfits”. This project further demonstrates Chaudhuri’s intellectual leadership: founding new arenas of discourse and fostering interdisciplinary and global dialogue.

Chaudhuri’s essays have become essential reading for writers and critics interested in Indian literature, modernism, and the evolution of world literature. His impact is not just literary but philosophical: “He has shone a powerful blaze of light ... providing a way of seeing and thinking without which even an essay like this one would not be possible”.

Reviewers often focus on how Chaudhuri’s so-called “eventless” prose is, in fact, intellectually invigorating. His contemplation of small details opens windows to larger truths, echoing the modernist dictum that art should teach people how to see anew. “His novels and essays happen as naturally as life, without planning and expectation ... his depiction has no clear demarcation between present and past ... Every time he uses the same ordinary characters, each time he percolates a new story”.

Conclusion

AmitChaudhuri’s creative non-fiction is a testament to intellectual power uniquely manifested in the essayistic mode. His prose, at once lyrical and analytical, opens up new spaces for Indian and global intellectualism. By defying genre boundaries, aestheticizing the everyday, foregrounding introspection as public philosophy, and melding artistic forms, Chaudhuri establishes himself not only as a writer of ideas but as a maker of worlds. His non-fictions remind readers that the essay—rooted in uncertainty, guided by curiosity, and alert to the ordinary—can be site for the highest intellectual play. ■

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Dr Udayanath Majhi,, chief editor, receiving Lifetime Humanitarian Service Award from the Hon’ble Chief Minister of Puducherry on 17 November in presence of noted Tamil poet Dr Sundara Murugan and others in Puducherry.

The Aesthetics of the Ordinary in Amit Chaudhuri's *A Strange and Sublime Address* and *Afternoon Raag*

S. Subhaa Sri

S. Valliammai

Amit Chaudhuri's fiction has long stood apart from the dominant trajectories of Indian English writing that privilege grand narratives of nationhood, migration, or postcolonial trauma. Instead, Chaudhuri's novels turn toward the minutiae of daily life—the unnoticed, the routine, and the seemingly banal—to explore an alternative aesthetic grounded in the ordinary. This paper examines how *A Strange and Sublime Address* (1991) and *Afternoon Raag* (1993) articulate a poetics of the quotidian that reconfigures the relationship between experience, memory, and narrative. Through a close reading of these two novels, the paper argues that Chaudhuri's prose transforms ordinary spaces—Calcutta's middle-class households, the Oxford of a foreign student—into sites of aesthetic revelation. Drawing on modernist influences such as Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, Chaudhuri reinvents the realist tradition in Indian fiction by privileging perception over plot and atmosphere over action. His attention to temporality, domestic rhythms, and sensory detail evokes what he calls “a literature of stillness,” positioning his work as a quiet counterpoint to the spectacular narratives of postcolonial modernity. This study demonstrates how Chaudhuri's fiction reclaims the everyday as a locus of artistic and philosophical meaning, proposing that beauty resides not in the exceptional but in the persistence of the ordinary.

Keywords: Aesthetics of the Ordinary, Indian English Fiction, Poetics of the Quotidian, Narrative Stillness, Modernism and Postcolonialism.

Introduction

Amit Chaudhuri occupies an incredible position in the landscape of Indian English fiction. Emerging in the early 1990s, his work appeared at a time when writers such as Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, and Arundhati Roy had captured international attention through exuberant narratives of hybridity, nationhood, and magical realism. In contrast, Chaudhuri's fiction eschewed the spectacular and the global, turning instead to the domestic, the local, and the minute. His novels, as Meenakshi Mukherjee observes, “celebrate the unheroic and the commonplace” (Mukherjee 87). Through subtle observation and an

impressionistic style, Chaudhuri crafts an aesthetics of the ordinary that challenges the reader to reconsider what constitutes literary significance.

In the context of Indian English literature, Chaudhuri's quiet narratives appear almost radical. At a time when the "postcolonial boom" favored sweeping historical and diasporic epics, Chaudhuri's attention to the humdrum details of everyday life marked a profound shift in literary sensibility. He himself described this as an attempt to recover the "unhistoric" aspects of life—moments that rarely find expression in a culture dominated by spectacle and progress (Chaudhuri, *Clearing a Space* 52). By focusing on the subtle, the overlooked, and the quotidian, Chaudhuri aligns himself with a lineage of writers who view perception itself as a moral and aesthetic act.

This paper explores that aesthetic through a detailed examination of *A Strange and Sublime Address* and *Afternoon Raag*. Both novels resist linear plots and dramatic events, offering instead meditations on perception, time, and memory. In doing so, they transform the everyday experiences of middle-class Bengali life and diasporic existence into occasions for aesthetic reflection. The discussion situates Chaudhuri's fiction within a broader modernist lineage—drawing parallels with writers like Woolf and Joyce—and considers how his work redefines realism in the postcolonial context. The paper argues that Chaudhuri's art of the ordinary is not merely a stylistic choice but a philosophical stance that privileges the minor and the momentary as sites of revelation.

Reimagining Realism: The Ordinary as Aesthetic Principle

In *A Strange and Sublime Address*, Chaudhuri narrates the summer visit of a young boy, Sandeep, to his relatives in Calcutta. The novel unfolds through a series of vignettes rather than a cohesive plot. The narrative attention falls on the rhythms of domestic life—the preparation of meals, the languor of afternoons, the laughter of cousins, the changing light in a room. What emerges is a new kind of realism, one that privileges atmosphere over event. Chaudhuri himself has described his fiction as "the poetry of the everyday," a phrase that encapsulates his resistance to both melodrama and political grandstanding.

The novel's title encapsulates its paradox: the "strange" and the "sublime" emerge precisely within the ordinary. The narrative does not move through conflict and resolution but through sensory experience. Descriptions such as "a curtain moving slightly in the wind" or "the smell of frying onions mingling with afternoon heat" invite the reader to dwell on perception itself (Chaudhuri, *A Strange* 14). The act of noticing becomes central; through it, the mundane attains a quiet transcendence. The novel, therefore, aligns itself with a modernist aesthetics of attention, recalling Woolf's injunction in *The Common Reader* to "record the atoms as they fall upon the mind" (Woolf 188).

Chaudhuri's realism departs from the social documentarian mode of earlier Indian English fiction. Where R.K. Narayan's *Malgudi Days* offered moral fables drawn from the rhythms of small-town India, Chaudhuri offers instead a phenomenological realism—one

that does not seek moral closure but sensory immersion. Similarly, unlike Anita Desai's psychological realism, which focuses on interior crises, Chaudhuri's narratives resist dramatic emotion, favoring tranquility and presence. The city of Calcutta, for instance, is not portrayed as a site of poverty or postcolonial decay but as a sensuous environment—alive with smells, textures, and voices. The domestic scenes, too, gain significance not as sociological portraits but as manifestations of an inner rhythm that links perception and being. In this sense, Chaudhuri transforms realism into an introspective art of noticing, reimagining representation as revelation.

Temporality and Memory: The Poetics of Stillness

In *Afternoon Raag*, Chaudhuri extends his exploration of the everyday to the diasporic context. The novel follows an unnamed Indian student in Oxford who reflects on his relationships and memories of home. The narrative oscillates between the present in England and recollections of Bombay and Calcutta, dissolving temporal boundaries. Time in Chaudhuri's fiction is not linear but rhythmic—a series of recurrences and reverberations. This structure mirrors musical composition, a recurring metaphor in his work.

The title itself, *Afternoon Raag*, signals a temporal and aesthetic sensibility. The raag—a melodic framework in Indian classical music—is associated with specific times of day and moods. By invoking the afternoon, Chaudhuri situates his narrative in a liminal temporal zone, a space of introspection and languor. The novel unfolds in this suspended temporality, where past and present coalesce in the act of remembering. As the narrator notes, “memory is not a story we tell ourselves; it is a sound that continues to echo” (Chaudhuri, *Afternoon* 63).

This musical structure allows Chaudhuri to construct what John Updike called “a narrative without narrative,” where repetition and variation replace causality. The novel's temporal rhythm mirrors the aesthetics of the ordinary: it resists acceleration, inviting the reader to inhabit moments rather than move through them. In this poetics of stillness, duration itself becomes meaningful. The quiet afternoon, the sound of rain, or the sight of Oxford's grey spires—all acquire a meditative intensity that transforms the banal into the lyrical.

Chaudhuri's representation of time also gestures toward a postcolonial reevaluation of temporality. Against the narrative of progress that underpins both colonial modernity and global capitalism, he posits a cyclical, reflective temporality rooted in memory and repetition. The ordinary becomes a site of resistance—a way of reclaiming time from the demands of productivity and spectacle. His fiction thus performs an ethical as well as aesthetic act, privileging slowness and attention in an age of acceleration.

Moreover, memory in *Afternoon Raag* is not nostalgic but reconstructive. The narrator's recollections of India are filtered through the sensibility of his present experiences in Oxford; one space folds into another. The sound of a flute across the quad recalls a song from Calcutta; a grey sky evokes the smell of rain-soaked earth in Bombay. This layering of

memories enacts what Henri Bergson calls “duration”—a continuous interpenetration of past and present in consciousness. Through this musical temporality, Chaudhuri’s prose embodies stillness without stasis, movement without progress.

The Domestic and the Urban: Spaces of the Everyday

Spatially, Chaudhuri’s fiction moves between the domestic interiors of Calcutta and the urbane exteriors of Oxford. Yet both settings share a common texture of ordinariness. In *A Strange and Sublime Address*, the Calcutta household is a microcosm of sensory and emotional life. Chaudhuri’s prose lingers on the acts of cooking, cleaning, and resting—spaces traditionally feminized and overlooked. As Elleke Boehmer observes, “Chaudhuri recuperates domesticity as a site of aesthetic plenitude rather than constraint” (Boehmer 134). The family home, with its daily rituals, becomes an archive of affective history, embodying what Gaston Bachelard termed the “poetics of space.”

In *Afternoon Raag*, the setting shifts to the university city of Oxford, yet the narrator’s gaze remains attuned to the minutiae of the everyday: the play of light on old stone, the sound of bicycles, the smell of rain. These sensory details domesticate the foreign landscape, translating it into a space of familiarity. The narrator’s oscillation between India and England—between memory and observation—produces what Homi Bhabha might call a “third space,” where identity is not fixed but continuously reconstructed through perception.

Chaudhuri’s urban realism thus resists both exoticization and alienation. Unlike Rushdie’s exuberant London or Naipaul’s alienated Trinidad, Chaudhuri’s Oxford is subdued, contemplative. The city is not a site of cultural conflict but of aesthetic attunement. Through this, Chaudhuri redefines cosmopolitanism—not as mobility or hybridity but as a mode of attentive dwelling within the ordinary. His urban spaces, like his domestic ones, are less backdrops for action than environments of perception.

The Modernist Inheritance: Woolf, Joyce, and the Indian Everyday

Critics have often positioned Chaudhuri as a “postcolonial modernist,” and with reason. His fiction inherits the modernist concern with consciousness and form but transposes it into an Indian milieu. *A Strange and Sublime Address* recalls Joyce’s *Dubliners* in its mosaic of everyday scenes, while *Afternoon Raag* evokes Woolf’s *The Waves* in its lyrical interiority. Yet Chaudhuri departs from these predecessors in his emphasis on stillness and harmony rather than fragmentation or alienation.

Where Joyce’s Dublin is marked by paralysis, Chaudhuri’s Calcutta breathes with quiet vitality. His prose rhythm, often compared to the raag itself, transforms narrative into music. The influence of Indian classical aesthetics is crucial here: the concept of *rasa*, or aesthetic emotion, underlies his depiction of the everyday. Each sensory detail becomes a note in a larger composition that evokes *shanta rasa*—the mood of tranquillity. Thus, while Chaudhuri inherits modernism’s attention to perception, he infuses it with an Indian sensibility rooted in contemplative rather than disruptive aesthetics.

Furthermore, Chaudhuri's language demonstrates a unique synthesis of modernist restraint and Indian lyricism. His sentences are short, elliptical, often rhythmic, yet suffused with texture. This stylistic minimalism is not derivative but transformative. It situates modernist interiority within the Indian middle-class milieu, revealing how global forms can be indigenized through language and rhythm. As he notes in *Clearing a Space*, "India's modernity lies not in rupture but in a continuity that is constantly being rediscovered" (Chaudhuri 61).

By merging modernist form with Indian content, Chaudhuri performs a subtle postcolonial intervention. He provincializes the modernist canon, demonstrating that the aesthetics of consciousness and the everyday are not Western monopolies but universal possibilities. In his fiction, the ordinary Bengali household or the Oxford college room becomes a legitimate site of artistic exploration, extending modernism's reach into new cultural terrains.

The Ethics of Attention: Reclaiming the Everyday

Underlying Chaudhuri's aesthetics of the ordinary is an ethical dimension. In an interview, he remarked that "to pay attention is itself a moral act" (Chaudhuri, *Clearing a Space* 52). This ethics of attention manifests in his narrative technique: the slow pacing, the descriptive density, the refusal of sensationalism. His prose invites readers to cultivate patience and sensitivity—to perceive the world not through events but through sensations.

This ethical stance positions Chaudhuri's work as a counterpoint to the dominant narratives of globalization and postcolonial spectacle. By focusing on the unremarkable, he resists the commodification of Indian experience for Western markets. His fiction insists on the autonomy of the local and the personal. As Anjali Gera Roy notes, "Chaudhuri's insistence on the domestic and the mundane is a quiet politics, asserting the dignity of the unhistoric life" (Roy 212). The aesthetic of the ordinary thus becomes a mode of resistance—against both cultural homogenization and literary sensationalism.

Moreover, this ethics of attention aligns Chaudhuri with philosophical traditions that valorize mindfulness and perception. His writing resonates with the contemplative ethos of Rabindranath Tagore, who saw art as a means of "seeing the world anew." Chaudhuri's fiction, in this sense, is a moral pedagogy: it trains readers to notice, to listen, and to value slowness in an accelerated world. The political power of such attention lies precisely in its refusal to perform or protest; it reclaims interiority as a legitimate domain of meaning in postcolonial literature.

Conclusion

Amit Chaudhuri's *A Strange and Sublime Address* and *Afternoon Raag* exemplify a rare literary commitment: to find sublimity in the ordinary. Through their meditative attention to time, space, and perception, these novels propose an alternative modernity rooted not in rupture or spectacle but in stillness and continuity. Chaudhuri's art transforms

everyday life into an aesthetic event, inviting readers to perceive the extraordinary textures of the mundane.

His fiction stands as a reminder that literature need not dramatize to matter; it can illuminate by lingering, by noticing, by listening. In celebrating the ordinary, Chaudhuri not only redefines the possibilities of Indian English fiction but also offers a profound philosophical insight—that beauty, meaning, and truth often reside in the quiet persistence of the everyday.

By reclaiming the domestic, the minor and the momentary, Chaudhuri challenges the contemporary reader to reconsider what it means to see and to feel. His work reaffirms that the everyday, far from being trivial, is the very fabric of human experience. In an age obsessed with novelty and spectacle, his fiction restores dignity to attention itself—transforming stillness into revelation, and the ordinary into the sublime. *Ultimately, Chaudhuri's quiet poetics gestures toward a larger human truth: that art's enduring power lies in its ability to illuminate the smallest corners of existence with tenderness and grace.* ■

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Preparing a Model Lesson for Developing the Writing Skills of College Students: An Innovative Approach

S. Valliammai

S. Subhaa Sri

College students in general find it difficult to write flawless essays and articles. Hence, they may be trained to work in different groups. They are provided with different short stories, dialogues, and poems. They will be asked to write after using different techniques such as simulation, replication, citation, and comparison and contrast. Finally, they will discuss among themselves and learn to write essays and articles. Through this collaborative and technique-based approach, learners gradually develop greater confidence and clarity in their writing. Group interaction exposes them to diverse perspectives, enriching their understanding of structure and style. Regular practice with varied literary forms enhances their analytical and interpretative abilities. Over time, such guided exercises cultivate coherence, creativity and academic precision in their written expression.

Keywords: Developing writing skills - Citation - Simulation - Replication- Comparison and Contrast - Group work

Introduction

It is essential for college students to develop their writing skills as they have to attain academic success, professional advancement and personal growth. Critical thinking and creativity would help the students to write logical essays. Writing skill is sought in almost any profession, from writing resumes and cover letters to writing emails, reports and reviews. With strong writing skills, one can achieve greater professional development and advancement opportunities within an institution. Self confidence of the candidate will be boosted by way of successful communication.

Different strategies are used to develop the writing skills of college Students. The students should be practised how to plan, draft and review one's writing. Examples of good writing could be provided to the students. Different tasks may be given to the students and they may be asked to carry out the tasks with the help of fellow students. They are expected

to demonstrate clear competence in writing on both the rhetorical and syntactic levels. Their essays should be well organized and well developed. Appropriate words should be used in their writing.

The researchers in their experiment to develop the writing skills of college students, had used short stories, dialogues and poems carrying similar themes. They also divided the students into different groups. After reading the text, the students were asked to communicate among themselves. Later, using the techniques such as citation, simulation, replication and comparison and contrast the students were asked to write paragraphs, letters, articles and poems. They are also asked to rewrite the text in a different form.

Citation is a process in which the teacher provides a model sentence and the students have to write sentences of their own using the same sentence pattern. The students may be asked to construct sentences of their own using certain idioms and Phrases.

Simulation is nothing but imitation of a situation or process. It is an imitative representation of a process or system that could exist in the real world.

Replication is an activity in which students rewrite the text or obtain opinions of other students regarding the subject matter.

A model lesson plan has been provided in this paper which could act as an innovative approach for developing the writing skills of college students. A short story entitled “Let’s go Dad” has been chosen for this study. Activities based on citation, simulation and replication have been suggested. Similarly a dialogue and a poem carrying a similar theme have been presented in this paper along with the communicative activities. Finally activities based on comparison and contrast have been given as model ones. Dementia is the central theme of the short story, dialogue and poem. The researchers have introduced this innovative way of combining texts carrying a similar theme.

At first, the students are encouraged to read the short story entitled “Let’s Go Dad” which is given below.

Let’s Go Dad

At the bus stop, an old man and a young pregnant woman were waiting together.

The man kept staring at the woman’s round belly, intrigued. Then he gently dared to ask:

“How far along are you?”

The young woman seemed elsewhere, lost in thought. Worry was written on her tired face. At first, she didn’t answer. Then, after a few seconds of silence, she murmured:

“I’m at twenty-three weeks...”

“Is this your first child?” he asked.

“Yes,” she replied, her voice barely audible.

“Don’t be afraid,” he added. “Everything will be all right, you’ll see.”

She placed a hand on her belly, looked straight ahead, her eyes shining, fighting back tears.

“I hope so...” she replied.

The old man continued:

“Sometimes we let ourselves be overwhelmed by worries that, in truth, don’t deserve it...”

“Maybe...,” she whispered sadly.

He looked at her more closely, with more compassion.

“You seem to be going through a hard time. Your husband... is he not with you?”

“He left me four months ago.”

“Why?”

“It’s complicated...”

“And your loved ones? Your family, friends? No one to support you?”

She took a deep breath.

“I live alone with my father... He’s ill.”

A long silence. Then the old man asked:

“Is he still the pillar you once knew as a child?”

Tears rolled down the young woman’s cheeks.

“Yes... Even now.”

“Even in his condition?”

“What’s wrong with him?”

“He no longer remembers who I am....”

She spoke those words just as the bus arrived. She stood up, took a few steps... Then changed her mind, came back to the old man, gently took his hand, and said tenderly:

“Let’s go, Dad.”

Citation:

The students are asked to read the following sentence:

You seem to be going through the hard time. ‘seem to be’ is a verb phrase used to

express an impression or appearance of something. It functions as a single unit to describe a state or quality of a subject.

More examples:

There seems to be a problem with the printer.

She seems to be a very kind person.

The house seems to be empty.

Now, the students are asked to construct sentences of their own using the verb phrase “seem to be”.

Simulation:

- Imagine that you are a leader of the society who wants to collect money from the public for the welfare of the people suffering from dementia. How will you address the members of the public to donate?
- Imagine yourself as the lady protagonist of this story and write how you would react in this situation.
- Imagine that you are the close friend of the young lady who wants to abandon her father. How would you try to change her mind?
- Imagine that you are the chief Minister of your state. What steps would you take to look after such people suffering from dementia?
- Imagine that you are a passer - by who watches the young lady abandoning her father. What would you do in such a situation?

Replication:

Write a different ending to the story.

Write an essay on the feelings of the lady in the story,

Write a review of this short story to be published in a magazine

Rewrite the short story as short play.

Write a poem about the greatness of father.

The following dialogue is an adapted form of an original dialogue found in the facebook. It expresses the hardships of an old lady unable to recognize her own son.

(Mrs. Lakshmi began to forget faces. Her son Raju visited her in care home every morning. One day the following dialogue took place)

Mrs. Lakshmi: Are you, the milk man. who comes late every day?

Raju: No mam. It's me, Raju.

Mrs. Lakshmi: Don't tell lies. Then I think you are the fruit seller. Have you brought the bunch of bananas?

Raju: Mum, I'm your son.

Mrs. Lakshmi: Don't play pranks. Now I am sure that you are the cook. Why don't You bring me a cup of tea?

Raju: Of course. Just a minute, please. (He goes to the kitchen, and returns with a cup of tea) Here it is!

Mrs. Lakshmi: That's nice.

Raju: How is the tea?

Mrs. Lakshmi: Oh! The tea is wonderful.

Raju: But you are the most wonderful mother. (He hugs her) I am your son.

Mrs. Lakshmi: No, you are not my son. He has gone to school.

Citation

“Why don’t you bring me a cup of tea?” a polite way of making a suggestion or request.

Examples:

- “Why don’t you sit down for a while?” (suggestion)
- “Why don’t you call her and say hello?” (advice)
- “Why don’t you bring me a cup of tea?” (friendly request - sounds natural if said warmly),
- If one wants to sound even softer or more polite, he could also say:
- “Could you bring me a cup of tea?”
- “Would you mind making me a cup of tea?”

Now the students are asked to write sentences of their own regarding a polite way of making suggestion or request.

Simulation:

- Imagine that you are the son of a mother suffering from dementia. Write how you would take care of her.
- Imagine that you are a philanthropist. Write how you would help people suffering from dementia.
- Imagine that you are the Prime Minister of your country. What plans would you make to rehabilitate the people suffering from dementia.
- Imagine that you are the neighbour of the young man who ill-treats his mother suffering from dementia. How would you advise him to treat his mother respectfully ?

Replication:

- Rewrite the dialogue in the form of a short story.
- Write a poem depicting the hardships of the people suffering from dementia.
- Interview all the students in the class. Find out how many of them had the experience of meeting people who suffered from dementia. what are their views to take steps to help the afflicted people?
- Talk to four students in your class. What is their opinion regarding the climax of the dialogue.

The following Poem shows the heart breaking moment when a mother with dementia no longer recognizes her son

“You Didn’t Remember My Name, Mum”
You didn’t remember my name, Mum,
though once you whispered it in lullabies.
I stood beside your chair today,
and you smiled - so kindly,
as if I were a stranger passing by.

“It’s me,” I said. “Your son -Daniel.”
You tilted your head, searching through the fog.
“My boy is small,” you murmured,
“he plays beneath the apple tree.”

I took your hand - the same soft hand
that once held mine across the road -
and felt the silence where memory used to
be. (Poem created by ChatGpt)

Citation:

The students are asked to read the following lines from the Poem:

And you smiled so kindly,
As if I were a stranger passing by.

Sentences beginning with “as if” generally, use, one of two main patterns, functioning either as an intersection or as part of a longer more complex sentence structure. When ‘as if’ is used to describe an unreal or imaginary situation, the verb in the ‘as if’ clause often uses the past tense.

Examples:

He acted as if he were a professional chef.
He acts as if he were the manager of the hotel.

Now the students are asked to construct sentences of their own using ‘as if’.

Simulation:

- Imagine that you are the mother suffering from dementia who thinks that her son is a school boy playing under the apple tree. How would you think about the imaginary boy?
- Imagine that you are the son of the mother who is suffering from dementia. What would be your feelings about the old lady?

- Imagine that you are a scientist who discovered some medicine to cure dementia. How will you express your feelings?
- Imagine that you are the neighbour of the lady suffering from dementia. She often comes to your house and calls you as her son. How will you react?

Replication:

- Rewrite the poem in the form of a short story.
- write an essay about the hardships of the people suffering from dementia as well as their children.
- Interview all the students in the class and find out, how many of them like or dislike this poem.
- Write an essay about the disabled people in general.

Comparison and Contrast:

The students are asked to compare the short story “Let’s Go Dad” with the poem “You didn’t Remember My Name Mum” They are asked to find out the similarities and dissimilarities between these two texts. Similarly, they are asked to compare the dialogue with the poem. They may find out parallel views after studying both the texts.

Conclusion:

It is an innovative attempt to make the students to peruse different literary forms carrying similar theme. Importance is given to strengthen the comparative and critical perspectives of the students. This approach effectively addresses the writing task. To sum up, the students would gain the competence in writing on both the rhetorical and syntactic levels. ■

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Reclaiming Indigenous Epistemology through Narrated and Translated Folktales of the Munda Tribe of Odisha

Lingaraj Mahanandia

The Munda tribe of Odisha possesses one of the richest oral storytelling traditions among the Adivasi communities of eastern India. Their folktales form a living repository of indigenous knowledge, shaping cultural identity, social institutions, ecological ethics and spiritual cosmology. This paper analyzes four representative folktales of the Munda community to demonstrate how sociocultural beliefs are encoded in narrative structures and how translation mediates the transmission of tribal epistemology to wider readerships. Drawing on Cultural Translation theory and Symbolic Anthropology, the study shows that translation is not merely a linguistic task but a culturally situated negotiation that preserves memory, reinforces identity and foregrounds indigenous worldviews in contemporary academic discourse. The findings affirm that translating Munda folktales enables the reclamation of tribal knowledge within formal scholarship, aligning oral inheritance with written representation and challenging the historical marginalization of indigenous voices.

Keywords: Munda tribe; Odisha; folktales; cultural translation; indigenous knowledge; sociocultural beliefs; oral tradition; Adivasi literature.

The oral storytelling tradition of the Munda tribe of Odisha is more than an artistic expression; it is a mode of knowledge-making and cultural continuity. Unlike print-based literary cultures, the Munda worldview has been sustained largely through communal narration, where memory, beliefs and moral values are preserved through performance. Yet, because these folktales remain limited to Mundari or local dialects, they are rarely accessed beyond the community. Translation therefore becomes a vital bridge linking indigenous heritage with academic audiences and ensuring that tribal worldviews enter the intellectual record rather than remaining confined to ethnographic spaces. The present study argues that translation is a tool of cultural reclamation that brings recognition to tribal epistemology in a world dominated by mainstream knowledge systems.

Existing scholarship highlights that Adivasi folklore across eastern India embodies cultural identity, cosmology and social ethics (Ekka; Tirkey; Toppo). Research specifically

on the Munda tribe points to the centrality of Singbonga, clan identity, ancestral worship and ecological interdependence (Hasda; Soren). However, previous studies typically document oral narratives rather than analyze how translation itself participates in preserving cultural meaning. On the other hand, Translation Studies scholars such as Bassnett and Venuti emphasize that translation must account for cultural meaning, power relations and representation rather than treating translation as a word-for-word process. Recent scholarship on indigenous literatures further suggests that translation can empower marginalized communities by allowing them to define themselves within written knowledge structures (Mistry; Bhanja). Despite these contributions, there remains a gap in scholarship that integrates folkloristics, anthropology and translation to analyze how Munda folktales circulate as cultural knowledge. This study addresses that gap by approaching Munda oral literature not only as narrative text but also as symbolic representation translated across cultural contexts.

The theoretical lens for this research draws from Cultural Translation (Susan Bassnett) and Symbolic Anthropology (Clifford Geertz). Bassnett's conception highlights that translation involves cultural negotiation, meaning that what is transferred from one language to another is not only lexical content but entire systems of belief and meaning. Geertz's interpretation of culture as a web of symbols assists in decoding the cultural signifiers embedded in the characters, rituals and ecological elements of the folktales. By combining these frameworks, the study demonstrates that narrative motifs — such as clan creation, forest spirits, divine marriage and animal wisdom — encode indigenous epistemology, which translation must convey rather than reduce to universal metaphors.

To illustrate the operation of translation in reclaiming cultural knowledge, four representative folktales of the Munda community are examined. The Origin of the First Munda Clan narrates the birth of clan identities through divine intervention by Singbonga, emphasizing that kinship is sacred rather than biological. Clan exogamy, ancestral duty and collective identity are central cultural principles embedded in this narrative. When translated sensitively, the tale conveys indigenous social organization that resists the individualism of dominant cultural models. A second tale, The Forest Spirit and the Hunter, expresses the animistic worldview in which the forest is not merely a resource but a sentient entity governed by spiritual guardians. Greed is punished while respect for nature is rewarded, encoding ecological ethics into moral instruction. Translating such a tale requires retaining the indigenous cosmology rather than replacing it with metaphorical or secular interpretations. The third folktale, The Marriage of the Thunder God's Daughter, centers on a union between a mortal and a supernatural being, symbolizing negotiation between human and divine spheres. The story foregrounds the sacredness of marriage customs, the role of kinship elders and the gender complementarity seen in tribal society. Translation must retain these cultural nuances rather than reducing the narrative to a romantic legend. The fourth folktale, The Wise Crow and the Greedy Villager, uses an animal character to teach that generosity and humility sustain the community, while greed destroys social harmony. Unlike

individualistic moralities, the Munda ethic is collective, prioritizing community survival over personal gain. Translation that highlights collectivism rather than reducing the narrative to “universal morality” preserves the indigenous value system.

Across these tales, translation becomes a site of cultural resistance. When the translator prioritizes indigenous meaning rather than universalizing or simplifying cultural symbols, translation restores tribal voices to academic discourse and challenges the historic erasure of oral traditions. Instead of extracting the story from its cultural environment, responsible translation allows the cultural logic of the narrative to travel alongside the text. In this sense, translation is not merely the reproduction of content but an assertion of sovereignty over indigenous knowledge.

The discussion of these narratives reveals that Munda oral literature is grounded in cultural identity, ecological respect, ancestral memory, moral ethics and spiritual interconnectedness. These are not peripheral dimensions of the stories but the epistemological foundation upon which Munda society rests. When translation foregrounds this worldview, it becomes a decolonizing act that recognizes tribal models of understanding the human-nature relationship, rather than subordinating them to mainstream frameworks. In doing so, translation contributes to the preservation of oral traditions while positioning indigenous knowledge within formal scholarship.

The study concludes that Munda folktales are crucial vehicles of cultural continuity and that translation plays a decisive role in reclaiming indigenous epistemology. Making these narratives accessible beyond the community ensures that oral traditions do not disappear in the face of modernization and linguistic marginalization. Future research may further strengthen this effort by collecting additional folktales directly through field recordings, producing multilingual translations across Mundari, Odia and English, and developing comparative studies with other Adivasi storytelling traditions of eastern India. Such work will enhance academic understanding while safeguarding cultural memory for future generations, ensuring that tribal voices remain central to conversations on literature, identity and knowledge. ■

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Chief Editor Dr Udayanath Majhi presenting a copy of ROCK PEBBLES September issue to the noted Indian English poet and critic Dr P. Raja at his residence in Puducherry on 21 November.

The Dynamics of Consumer Preference in Cosmetics: A Systematic Examination of Key Determinants.

Reena Kumari

Pawan Garga

This systematic review examines the key determinants that shape brand preference in the cosmetic industry by synthesising insights from existing scholarly literature. Drawing from studies retrieved through major academic sources, including Google Scholar, the review evaluates psychological, economic, and cultural factors that influence consumers' choices of cosmetic brands. The analysis reveals several prominent predictors of brand preference, notably perceived product quality, pricing, packaging aesthetics, brand reputation, promotional strategies, and socio-cultural dynamics. Of these, product quality and brand image consistently emerge as the most influential drivers across the reviewed studies. By consolidating dispersed evidence and highlighting persistent research gaps, this review contributes to a deeper understanding of consumer behaviour in the cosmetics market and offers a foundation for future theoretical and empirical inquiry.

Keywords: Consumer Preference, Cosmetic Industry, Brand Determinants, Perceived Quality, Brand Image

Introduction:

Consumer preferences have become a decisive factor in determining a brand's performance in today's highly competitive marketplace, especially within the dynamic and increasingly personalised cosmetics industry. As noted by Kotler and Keller (2016), brand preference significantly shapes how consumers perceive, choose, and remain loyal to specific cosmetic brands amidst an expanding array of options. Because cosmetic products serve not only functional purposes but also support identity construction, self-expression, and confidence, firms need to understand the underlying drivers of such preferences (Cheong et al., 2020).

Brand preference refers to a consumer's inclination to favour one brand over competing alternatives based on accumulated perceptions, experiences, and emotional associations (Esmailpour & Bahmiary, 2017). This inclination is shaped by multiple influential factors, including perceived product quality, price sensitivity, branding and promotional strategies, cultural norms, and lifestyle orientations (Hanzaee & Andervazh, 2012). In a rapidly expanding global cosmetics market, companies must not only innovate

their products but also align brand offerings with the aspirations and values of their target consumers in order to cultivate preference and long-term loyalty.

Consumer behaviour within the cosmetics sector continues to evolve due to increasing cultural diversity, shifting social expectations, and ongoing technological advancements (Kumar et al., 2021). Insights into these behaviour patterns allow brands to adjust their strategies, remain relevant, and strengthen their position within the market. The rise of social media, influencer-driven promotion, and environmentally responsible consumption has further redefined consumer expectations and brand appeal in this industry (Chatterjee, 2022).

Although earlier studies have explored brand choice in cosmetics, much of the existing research focuses on isolated variables or specific regional contexts, leaving a need for a more integrated understanding of the determinants of consumer preference (Singh & Pandey, 2020). The present study addresses this gap by conducting a systematic review of the available literature to identify the primary factors influencing brand preference in cosmetic products. It also highlights areas that remain underexplored and proposes directions for future research, thereby offering scholars and practitioners deeper insights into the complexities of consumer decision-making in the cosmetics domain.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research approach

This study seeks to identify and analyse the major factors that shape brand preference in the cosmetics industry by conducting an extensive review of existing scholarly literature. The research approach involves systematically locating, evaluating, and synthesising academic studies to gain a consolidated understanding of the determinants influencing consumers' brand choices within the cosmetics sector.

2.2 Data collection

Relevant literature was gathered using Google Scholar, a widely recognised database that hosts peer-reviewed research across multiple disciplines. Search terms such as “*brand preference*,” “*cosmetic products*,” “*consumer behaviour*,” “*factors influencing brand preference*,” and “*cosmetic brand loyalty*” were employed—both individually and in combination—to retrieve a broad set of studies. These keywords ensured the inclusion of diverse contributions related to branding and consumer decisions in cosmetics.

2.3 Inclusion/exclusion criteria

The studies reviewed were required to meet specific inclusion and exclusion guidelines. Given the notable expansion of consumer behaviour research in the cosmetics field during this period, only publications dated between 2000 and 2023 were considered. Selected articles were required to be peer-reviewed, written in English, and directly relevant to the topic. To maintain consistency and academic rigour, book chapters, dissertations, theses, and non-peer-reviewed sources were excluded from the final dataset.

2.4 Data extraction procedure

The initial search produced approximately 1,500 research papers. After applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 1,050 items were removed, leaving 450 studies for preliminary assessment. A detailed screening of the titles and abstracts led to the elimination of an additional 300 papers. Full-text reviews of the remaining articles resulted in the selection of 90 studies. From this set, only those that directly examined factors influencing brand preference in cosmetics were retained, yielding a final sample of thirty relevant publications.

The following sections discuss the principal themes and recurring determinants identified in these selected studies that shape consumer choice of cosmetic brands.

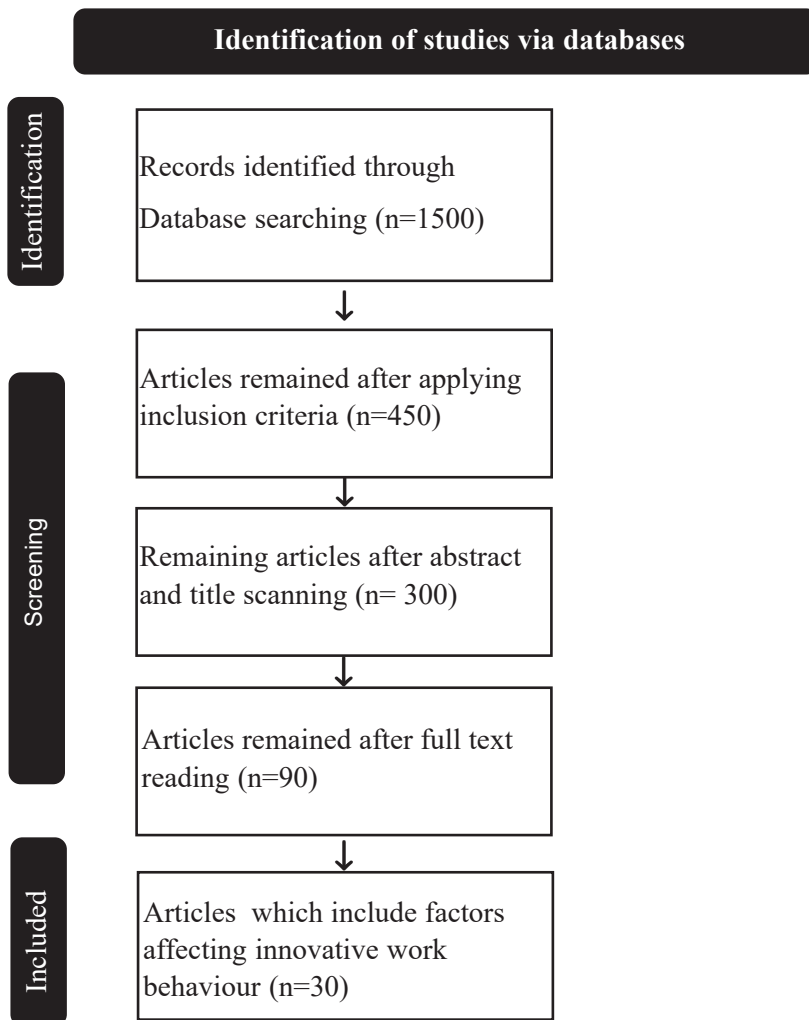


Figure 1. Prisma flow chart visualising the article selection process. Consumer behaviour

Table 1. Factors affecting brand preference in consumer behaviour

Factors	Sources
Product Quality	Aaker (1991); Zeithaml (1988)
Brand Loyalty	Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001); Batra et al. (2012)
Price Sensitivity	Monroe (2003); Sweeney and Soutar (2001)
Packaging and Design	Silayoi and Speece (2007); Kotler and Keller (2016)
Perceived Value	Zeithaml (1988); Sweeney and Soutar (2001)
Consumer Trust in Brand	Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001); Fournier (1998)
Brand Image	Aaker and Keller (1990); Sirgy (1982)
Ethical Concerns	Carrigan and Attalla (2001); Kumar et al. (2021)
Social Media Influence	Smith et al. (2020); Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006)
Advertising and Promotions	Lovelock and Wirtz (2016); Farquhar (1989)
Peer and Celebrity Endorsements	Lee and Johnson (2019); Kim and Seock (2022)
Sustainability and Environmental Impact	Kim and Seock (2022); Ali et al. (2021)
Product Safety and Health Concerns	Zhang et al. (2021); Pradhan and Jena (2019)
Brand Authenticity	Smith et al. (2020); Batra et al. (2012)
Personalization	Solomon (2019); Aaker (1991)
Perceived Innovativeness	Carlucci et al. (2020); Khan et al. (2020)
Emotional Connection to Brand	Fournier (1998); Sirgy (1982)
Product Availability	Lovelock and Wirtz (2016); Parasuraman et al. (1988)
Cultural Values	Halkias et al. (2020); Kotler and Keller (2016)
Word of Mouth	Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006); Smith et al. (2020)
Brand Consistency	Aaker (1991); Fournier (1998)
Perceived Brand Differentiation	Aaker and Keller (1990); Monroe (2003)
Consumer Self-Concept and Identity	Sirgy (1982); Solomon (2019)
Brand Heritage	Kotler and Keller (2016); Solomon (2019)
Peer Group Influence	Bhattacharya and Sen (2003); Ali et al. (2021)
Retailer Reputation	Zeithaml (1988); Parasuraman et al. (1988)

Factors	Sources
Technological Influence	Carlucci et al. (2020); Dulaimi and Hartmann (2006)
Demographic Factors	Lovelock and Wirtz (2016); Solomon (2019)
Brand Communication Strategy	Batra et al. (2012); Farquhar (1989)

Source: Authors' construct

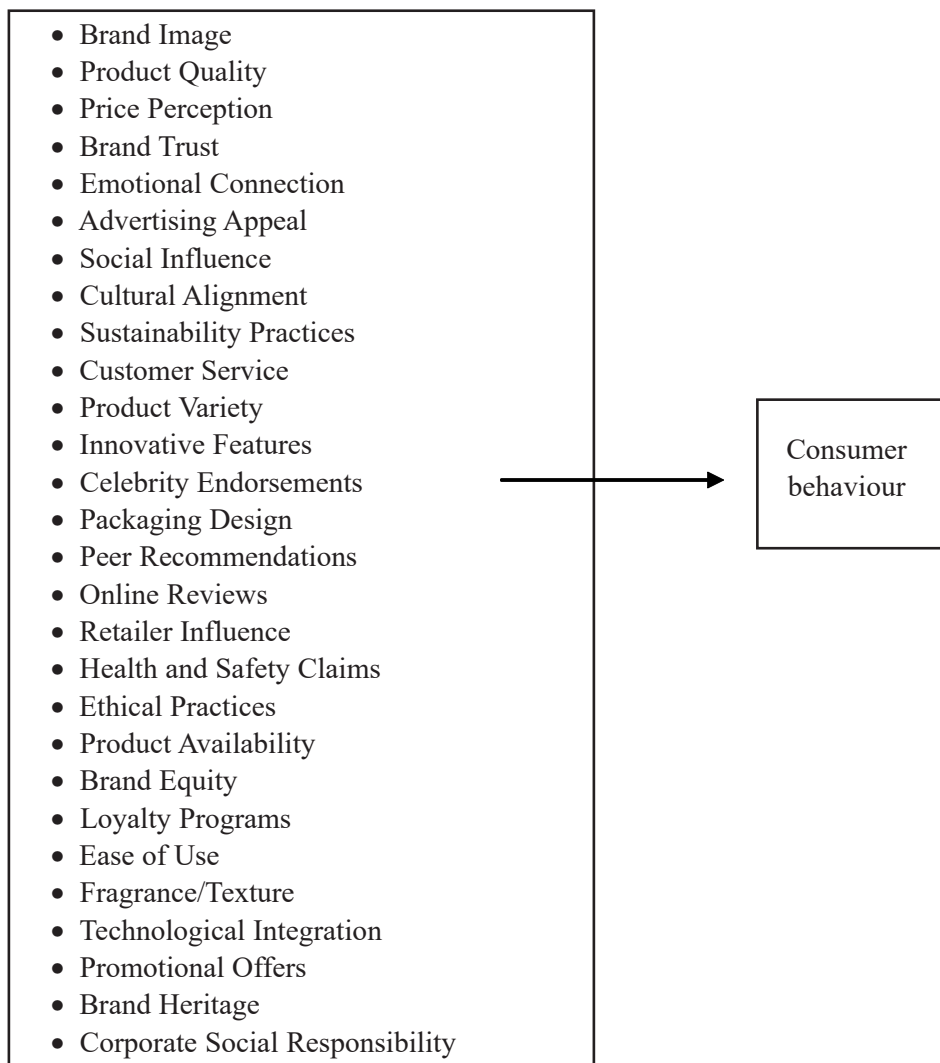


Figure 2 Factors affecting brand preference in consumer behaviour.

3. Factors Affecting Brand Preference in Consumer Behaviour: Brand preference in the cosmetics sector is shaped by an interplay of psychological, social, cultural, and

functional determinants. Consumers' choices are strongly influenced by perceived value, brand image, and product quality, all of which frame how a brand is evaluated in comparison to its competitors (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Individual traits such as lifestyle, emotional attachment, and self-concept also play a vital role, as consumers increasingly seek brands that align with their personal identity and aspirations (Amin & Sobhani, 2021). Additionally, peer recommendations, celebrity endorsements, and social media exposure exert strong social influence, particularly among younger consumers who rely heavily on digital cues (Smith et al., 2020). Ethical considerations—including sustainability, cruelty-free production, and eco-friendly packaging—have further become decisive in shaping brand allegiance (Kim & Seock, 2022). Collectively, these factors reflect the multidimensional nature of consumer behaviour within the cosmetics industry.

Customer Preference and Brand Image: Brand image remains central to shaping customer preferences. A strong and favourable brand image enhances trust, facilitates emotional bonding, and increases the likelihood of repeat purchases (Aaker, 1991). Consumers often associate with brands that reflect their values, aspirations, and social identities. This self-brand alignment influences long-term loyalty and purchasing behaviour (Keller, 2009). Studies further reveal that a positive brand image improves perceptions of quality, dependability, and credibility, thereby strengthening consumer choice (Farquhar, 1989).

Brand Preference and Product Quality: Product quality is a fundamental driver of brand preference, primarily because it builds trust and reinforces positive brand associations. Consumers consistently favour brands perceived as reliable, effective, and consistent in performance (Zeithaml, 1988). High quality not only encourages satisfaction but also promotes repeat purchases. For instance, consumers commonly prefer brands with a reputation for durability and superior performance over those perceived as low-quality (Aaker & Keller, 1990).

Consumer Behaviour and Price Perception: Price perception—how consumers judge a product's value relative to its cost—plays a significant role in shaping brand preference. Brands that offer high value for money are generally more favoured (Monroe, 2003). Consumer sensitivity to price varies; while some are willing to pay a premium for quality, others prioritise affordability. Research shows that even in competitive markets, brands that maintain a positive balance between price and perceived benefits attract more loyal customers (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

Brand Credibility and Emotional Bonding: Brand credibility builds trust and acts as a reliable cue in consumer decision-making. Even when alternatives are available, consumers gravitate towards brands they perceive as trustworthy (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Emotional bonding further reinforces this trust, leading to stronger attachment and advocacy. Brands such as Coca-Cola and Starbucks exemplify how emotional connections create brand champions and long-lasting loyalty (Batra et al., 2012).

Social Influence and Advertising Appeal: Advertising that resonates with consumer aspirations and values enhances brand preference. Emotional advertising—emphasising themes such as belonging, care, or aspiration—has a strong impact on consumer choice (Aaker & Keller, 1990). Social factors also shape behaviour; peer recommendations, online reviews, and word-of-mouth significantly influence purchasing decisions. Consumers tend to prefer brands endorsed by friends, family, or credible online communities (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006).

Sustainable Practices and Cultural Alignment: Consumers increasingly choose brands that align with cultural norms and social values. Brands that reflect environmental consciousness, local cultural identity, or ethical commitments attract consumers who prioritise such values (Halkias et al., 2020). Sustainability efforts—including cruelty-free testing, biodegradable packaging, and ethical sourcing—enhance brand appeal, particularly among environmentally aware segments (Kim & Seock, 2022). For instance, brands like Patagonia enjoy strong preference due to their environmental activism (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001).

Customer Support and Product Selection: Effective customer support enhances satisfaction by resolving issues promptly and respectfully. Positive service experiences lead to stronger loyalty and higher brand preference (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Additionally, a broad product assortment allows brands to cater to diverse preferences and needs. This variety enhances brand attractiveness and encourages repeat purchases (Gupta et al., 2016).

Innovative Design and Features in Packaging: Innovation has become a major factor influencing brand choice. Brands that introduce new features, formulations, or technologies gain a competitive edge by meeting evolving consumer needs (Rogers, 2003). Packaging design also plays a key role: visually appealing, functional, and eco-friendly packaging improves consumer perceptions of quality and brand identity. Research shows that consumers are more likely to choose brands with distinctive and attractive packaging (Silayoi & Speece, 2007).

Online Reviews and Peer Suggestions: With the rise of digital platforms, online reviews and user-generated content significantly inform consumer decisions. Positive reviews increase brand trust and influence preference, especially in cosmetics where product quality is often evaluated through shared experiences (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006). Peer suggestions and social media testimonials further amplify brand credibility and preference (Smith et al., 2020).

Ethical Practices and Health and Safety Claims: Health-conscious consumers prefer brands that offer safe, non-toxic, and health-enhancing products. Companies providing organic or dermatologically tested cosmetics attract this growing segment (Magnusson et al., 2003). Ethical practices such as fair trade sourcing, transparent supply chains, and cruelty-free certifications further elevate consumer trust and preference (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001).

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Loyalty Programmes: CSR initiatives—such as charitable contributions, environmental commitments, and community engagement—improve brand reputation and align with consumers’ ethical expectations (Carroll, 1991). Loyalty programmes, offering exclusive benefits or rewards, foster repeat purchasing and increased engagement. These programmes make consumers feel recognised and valued, thereby strengthening brand preference (Dowling & Uncles, 1997).

Self-Congruity and Value Perception: Self-congruity theory suggests that consumers prefer brands that mirror their own self-image. When a brand’s identity aligns with a consumer’s personality, values, or lifestyle, the likelihood of preference increases (Sirgy, 1982). Perceived value—a balance between perceived benefits and associated costs—also influences preference. Brands offering high functional and emotional value at fair prices attract stronger consumer loyalty (Zeithaml, 1988).

4. Discussion

Factors Influencing Brand Preference for Cosmetic Products: The findings from this systematic review illustrate that brand preference in the cosmetics sector is shaped by a complex combination of psychological motivations, social dynamics, and marketing strategies. Together, these interacting factors demonstrate how multifaceted consumer decision-making is within this industry.

Consumer Trust and Brand Image: Brand image continues to be one of the most decisive drivers of preference in the cosmetic market. Research by Zhou et al. (2020) and Kim et al. (2021) indicates that strong brand imagery enhances credibility and loyalty. When a brand aligns its visual and symbolic identity with consumer values—such as exclusivity, inclusiveness, or environmental consciousness—it becomes more appealing (Keller, 2003). A notable example is Fenty Beauty, which strengthened loyalty by emphasising inclusivity and representation across diverse skin tones (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). Consumers often gravitate towards cosmetic brands viewed as trustworthy because such brands are associated with superior performance, consistent quality, and reliable results (Zeithaml, 1988).

Value Perception and Price Sensitivity: Price sensitivity remains an influential determinant of brand selection, although its effect differs across consumer groups (Batra et al., 2012). Many buyers are willing to pay higher prices when they perceive added value—whether in terms of superior formulation, ethical manufacturing, or innovative features. As noted by Kim and Seock (2022), brands that deliver a compelling value proposition are more successful at securing customer preference. In developing markets, however, price considerations often dominate, and consumers may show lower loyalty due to fluctuating purchasing power (Dube et al., 2010). While discounts and promotions remain widely used, evidence suggests that excessive discounting can weaken long-term brand equity.

Customer Loyalty and Emotional Branding: Emotional engagement has become a powerful component of brand-building in the cosmetics sector, where products are closely

linked to identity and self-expression. Fournier (1998) argues that customers may form deep emotional relationships with brands when they feel understood or represented. Such relationships enhance loyalty and make consumers more receptive to aspirational messaging (Erdogan, 1999). Campaigns by brands like Dove, which centre on authenticity and empowerment, have shown how emotional branding can foster trust and long-term commitment (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001).

Online Reviews and Social Influence: Social influence—particularly through digital platforms—has significantly reshaped how consumers choose cosmetic products. Beauty content creators, peer reviews, and influencer endorsements now serve as essential sources of product information. Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) highlight that online reviews strongly affect purchase decisions, especially among younger consumers who rely heavily on social validation. Endorsements are most effective when influencers are perceived as relatable, credible, and aligned with the brand’s values (Halkias et al., 2020). Brands that strategically collaborate with trusted influencers benefit from greater visibility and strengthened brand preference.

Sustainable Development and Ethical Considerations: Ethical commitments such as cruelty-free testing, recyclable packaging, and sustainable sourcing have become central to brand differentiation. Consumers—especially millennials and Generation Z—are increasingly motivated by environmental and social concerns when selecting cosmetic brands (Kim & Seock, 2022). Companies such as Lush and The Body Shop have capitalised on this shift by integrating sustainability deeply into their brand identity. Certifications, transparent communication, and responsible sourcing practices further reinforce positive consumer perceptions (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001).

Product Presentation and Packaging: Packaging continues to be a major factor influencing consumer choice, particularly in a highly visual product category like cosmetics. According to Silayoi and Speece (2007), packaging functions as both a marketing tool and a cue for perceived product quality. Designs that are aesthetically appealing, functional, or environmentally conscious enhance brand prestige and consumer interest. In saturated markets, innovative packaging—such as refillable containers or multifunctional designs—helps brands stand out and attract attention from consumers seeking both style and practicality.

Consumer Experience and Technological Integration: The integration of digital technology into the purchasing experience has become increasingly influential. Cosmetic brands are now adopting augmented reality features, virtual try-on tools, and personalised recommendation systems to enrich the customer journey (Phua et al., 2020). These innovations reduce uncertainty, improve decision-making, and boost consumer confidence, particularly in online shopping environments where physical product interaction is absent. Studies show that brands offering such interactive and personalised technologies tend to elicit stronger preference and satisfaction.

5. Implications

The review provides significant insights into how various determinants shape consumers' brand preferences within the cosmetics industry. One clear implication is the importance of aligning brand image with consumers' self-identity and aspirations. When customers perceive a brand as an extension of who they are or who they wish to be, their attachment becomes stronger (Choi & Kim, 2020). Emotional engagement is also vital; brand loyalty is often cultivated through storytelling, sensory cues such as fragrance and texture, and consistent brand messaging (Huang et al., 2019).

Product quality remains a decisive factor, particularly in relation to ingredient safety and product performance. Consumers who prioritise health and wellbeing tend to favour brands that communicate efficacy and transparency (Zhang et al., 2021). Sustainability and corporate responsibility further reinforce brand preference, as environmentally aware consumers increasingly gravitate towards brands demonstrating ethical sourcing, cruelty-free practices, and eco-friendly packaging (Nguyen et al., 2022).

Cultural relevance also emerges as an important implication. As highlighted by Ali et al. (2021), brands that align their marketing strategies with local cultural values are more likely to foster stronger connections with regional audiences. Price perception plays an influential role as well: consumers frequently evaluate cosmetic brands by balancing affordability with expectations of quality, often interpreting premium pricing as a signal of superior performance (Mishra & Dash, 2021).

Social influence continues to shape cosmetic choices, with celebrity endorsements, peer recommendations, and digital reviews guiding purchase decisions. Influencers, in particular, significantly enhance brand visibility and trust among younger consumers (Kapoor et al., 2020). Finally, product innovation and technology-enabled solutions—such as personalised skincare or smart beauty devices—help brands attract and retain consumers seeking convenience and novelty (Lee et al., 2021). Understanding these interconnected factors can help cosmetic brands strengthen market competitiveness and respond effectively to diverse consumer needs.

6. Future Research Directions

Several promising areas merit exploration in future investigations of cosmetic brand preference. Longitudinal studies, for instance, could offer deeper insights into how variables such as emotional bonding, sustainable practices, and brand trust influence loyalty over extended periods. Examining demographic variables such as age, gender, and socioeconomic status may also provide clearer segmentation models for understanding variations in brand selection. With digital ecosystems expanding rapidly, future research should consider how emerging technologies—including artificial intelligence, augmented reality, and virtual try-on tools—reshape consumer evaluations and preferences. Digital personalisation and immersive experiences may significantly alter how consumers perceive value and credibility.

Another area requiring attention is the influence of social media influencers, particularly in multicultural contexts. Understanding how authenticity, credibility, and cultural relevance among influencers affect consumer loyalty is essential. Given the increasing demand for ethical consumption, more research is needed to assess how eco-friendly packaging, transparent sourcing, and CSR initiatives influence consumer behaviour across different geographic markets. Similarly, examining how cultural norms and brand heritage interact may provide deeper insights into brand success in diverse societies.

Lastly, future studies could analyse how major disruptions—economic crises, pandemics, or supply chain challenges—reshape consumer priorities. Shifts toward affordability, safety, or health-oriented claims during uncertain times could meaningfully influence brand preference. Exploring these emerging trends will help academics and practitioners better align branding strategies with evolving consumer expectations.

7. Conclusion and Limitations

This study offers a comprehensive evaluation of the factors influencing consumer preference for cosmetic brands. Key variables—such as product quality, emotional attachment, brand image, and sustainable practices—were found to shape consumer attitudes and strengthen loyalty significantly. Social influence, advertising effectiveness, cultural alignment, customer service, and product availability further enhance brand appeal. The growing importance of ethical behaviour and corporate responsibility highlights consumers' increasing preference for brands that align with their moral and environmental values. Despite its contributions, the study has several limitations. First, it relies primarily on existing literature, which may limit the identification of emerging or context-specific factors. Future studies could incorporate primary data collection to validate and expand upon these findings. Second, most reviewed sources were English-language publications, possibly excluding valuable insights from other linguistic contexts; broader inclusion could promote a more global understanding. Third, the study does not fully capture the rapidly changing digital and social media landscape, where consumer behaviours evolve continuously. Future research should examine how technological advancements and shifts in media engagement influence cosmetic brand preference. By addressing these limitations, future work can provide richer insights into consumer behaviour, ultimately supporting practitioners and scholars in designing more effective branding strategies. ■

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The Wretch!

Original in Odia : **Debasish Samantaray***

Translation : Namita Rani Panda**

“Poison her! Let her perish!”

“Strip her dignity and parade her through the streets—let her drown in regret!”

“Throw her into the depths of a dark forest—let the tiger devour her!”

“Let doom be her destiny!”

“Yes, a stain must be erased. Her very presence is a danger—to you, to me, to everyone around.”

The air was filled with a chorus of abuses, each voice more venomous than the last.

What kind of masculinity belongs to a man who cannot spit such venom?

What kind of chastity belongs to a woman who cannot twist her face in scorn and outrage on such occasions?

The words were sharp, cutting through the air like the edge of a sword. A single blow of sword would have been kinder. Yet the unfortunate girl bore it all in silence, for she had been hollowed long ago—reduced to a living corpse long before that moment.

The path of salvation stood quietly before her, extending a silent hand. It did not retreat from the suffering of the unfortunate; instead, it moved gently around them, offering help without any condition.

The girl had been unfortunate all her life. Wherever she went, danger waited with its jaws wide open, ready to devour her. She was made to walk barefoot over fire so that no one else’s feet might burn. And when the flames torched her skin, she was not comforted, but cursed—condemned to turn to ashes.

She would be asked to walk across a river on the cruel condition that the water must not moisten her feet. If she succeeded, another trial would be waiting. If she failed and was swallowed by the depths, the crowd would scream, “She is gone! She is drowned!”

What could she do, in a world where even survival was treated as a crime?
Today she is being auctioned—her chastity, her self-respect, her very conscience.

Everyone had always known there was water inside the earthen pot. Those who desired it drank it in secret, by force, in solitude. Now they wished to see the water without the pot. And so, they began to strike at the pot itself. The water started to flow. But what did they see?

Neither the pot, nor the water.

She had already seeped into the soil, dissolved into the air, and vanished into the vastness of the sky.

“Pooh-pooh!” That single word rang out, as though no other language existed for these ladies and gentlemen—hollowed men and caged women.

In truth, she had died long ago: on the day her father lay burning with fever and she was told,

“Go. You must go. Unless you go, that old doctor will not come. The price of the last medicine is still unpaid.”

If there was any debt, he never came. One had to clear the credit first. Otherwise, he would demand an advance, guessing the illness from mere symptoms, just to ensure the price of the medicine would be paid. If you lived or died, it meant nothing to him. He never bothered.

So, the poor girl went out. Despite all her efforts to hold herself together, the ground beneath her feet seemed to give way. When she could no longer see a clear blue sky above her, she went. She returned with swollen eyes and a pale face; her body smeared with shame and hatred.

So much had happened to her, and yet no one in the family noticed.

In that dark night when a gang of unruly youths pounded on the door and threatened to kill her brother, he woke in terror and collapsed at her feet. “Only you can save me,” he pleaded. “If you don’t go to them, in their rage, they will kill me.”

The stunned family members looked at her expectantly, frozen in fear, as though they were about to be swept away by a raging, swollen river. Darkness pressed in from all sides.

Her brother’s desperate pleas to save his life, the hopeless, innocent eyes of her parents, and the trembling gaze of her younger sister forced her to make a choice. And so, she went.

It took long to quiet the wild, hungry youths. When she finally returned home, dawn had already broken.

For days afterward, only one sound haunted the silent house — the helpless sobbing of someone broken beyond words.

On the days when there were no vegetables or oil to cook, when every container in the kitchen stood empty, when her younger sister's hair lay uncombed and matted, and when her ailing mother failed to hide her longing at the call of the bread vendor, she would quietly slip out of the house.

But before going out, she would search through the old trunk and the cupboards, hoping to find something—anything. Each time, her hands returned empty. Still, she would step outside with a fragile hope, because otherwise the four lives that depended on her would starve to death.

She had grown thick-skinned to it all. She had become accustomed to what could not be seen, to scenes that could not even be imagined.

The sun continued to rise in the east and set in the west with perfect obedience. Night descended upon the earth and quietly gave way to dawn again. Her younger sister, dressed in new clothes, laughed and enjoyed the festivals. Her brother returned home late each night, heavily drunk as always. Her ailing mother drifted deeper into her dreams, and her father stood among the villagers, lost in his boasts.

No one stopped to wonder why the river was drying so quickly, why the flowers withered so fast, or why the air tasted more poisonous than before. No one asked whose sweat and blood were buying them this comfort, this fragile luxury—or who was dying a little every day to keep them alive.

And still, the curses were distinctly audible. The very atmosphere was choked with abhorrence. People were content, convinced that they had fulfilled their duties.

No one could hear the silent lament of the girl who had long turned lifeless, and in her disappointment, she somehow found the strength to go on living. She wished to die — as she did every day — a death from which there would be no return. But she had only one refuge left: to cry. Her tears would not let her die. The more she wept, the more fiercely life pulsed through her veins, and the more deeply she suffered.

The grocer had taken charge of the gathering. He did not want to miss such an opportunity, already nurturing dreams of contesting for the post of Sarpanch in the coming election. Raising his voice, he shouted, “This girl is a disgrace to our locality! She has spoiled the youth. Even married men are being lured away, neglecting their own families because of her!”

Behind him stood a man older than her father, the one the wretch used to call “uncle,” patting the grocer's shoulder and urging him to shout louder—a man who, many times in the darkness, had tried and failed to embrace her.

It is better not to speak of those who clamoured in the commotion. They lacked the

courage to meet the poor girl's eyes. Despite their attempts to hide, they could not; instead, they looked pale and exposed in her presence. Still, they were eager to punish her. To prove their so called superiority, they began to compete with one another.

One voice declared, "Drive her out of the village!"

Another shouted, "No! Take an exemplary action against her, so that no one dares to commit such a 'sin' again!"

A young leaderraised his voice higher than the rest:"This is not enough. Parade her naked along the village. Let her pride be shattered!"

One voice went even further, "Sheshould be tonsured. Push salt and chili powder into her vagina!"

And yet, from within her own family, not a single word rose in her defence. Not one voice stood up to shield her from those who had first created her misery and now sought to claim her as its symbol.

Instead, everyone was busy cleaning their own dark shelves, polishing their masks, and washing their hands clean of a crime that lived quietly in their eyes and loudly in their silence.

The next morning, it was discovered that the wretch was gone. She was searched for everywhere, but all in vain. Every corner of the house, every nook and cranny outside, was searched. Perhaps she had consumed poison in silence. The riverbank was combed—maybe she had thrown herself into its waters, unable to bear the weight of the insults. Even the small manmade forest near the village was not spared; perhaps she had hanged herself from a tree branch, her saree the only witness to her despair.

Help from the police was sought.

The fire brigade joined the search operation along the riverbank and the pond.

Her brother searched tirelessly.

Her father paced anxiously, consumed by worry.

Her younger sister's dreams lay in ruins.

Her mother wept silently, her grief profound.

Even the grocer felt disheartened, his bravado diminished before the void she had left behind. That day, the priest performed penance for the girl and offered prayers in the temple.

The old doctor, the boys of the youth organization, and the village elders looked pale, as if everything in their lives had been stripped away.

Politics erupted. Every party was blamed.

Discussions and analyses followed—questions hung in the air: Why had she been forced to wager her very life?

The voice of protest grew louder than the outrage once raised when a bridge promised to one area was shifted to another.

The family of the girl was accused of betraying the village, of committing an injustice by silently shifting her to some unknown place in the dead of night. The crowd demanded her family to be punished.

Her brother did not hesitate to speak in front of everyone:

“My sister was the only financial support of our family. Your protests and insults forced her to leave this village—and perhaps to take her own life. We demand compensation, from you or the government.”

Neglecting their daily work, people joined the “Save the Wretch” campaign. They praised her, turning her into a symbol. Her father, ailing mother, and the so-called worthless brother were paraded at every meeting. The one most sought after, however, was her younger sister—her dreams shattered the day the wretch disappeared. Compared to other family members, a sister could speak best of her sister. It was believed that her words would touch people’s hearts more deeply.

They were lured and carefully coached in advance on what to say at the meetings. They owed their very existence to the wretch—her struggles and her work had brought them fame, money, and the means to survive.

Posters of the wretch were displayed everywhere. Her image appeared in newspapers and on television, while discussions broadcast her younger sister’s sullen face and heartfelt words about her shattered dreams.

All this attention continued—until another “wretch” was discovered to take her place. ■

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The Fragmented Unity

*Ratikanta Mishra

At the farthestmost point of Death
 On the precipice of Life
 The man forms a God
 or a God-like demon
 in his own image and
 tells something unheard.
 Scribbles some lines
 un-deciphered.

Before the innocence of Death
 soothes the man,
 the audacity of life
 reads aloud the
 horoscope, and
 put the new born child
 in the earthen clay pot
 lying broken in the
 graveyard of his forefathers.

A gust of southwest wind,
 and the dried leaves
 of the banyan tree nearby,
 stoke the flames of the raging fire,
 Where no one else
 other than a/an (in) visible shadow
 chants the hymns of death,
 and also sings the nuanced idioms of life.

A little later
 comes closer to the shadow
 A counter shadow
 of the unborn child, whispers
 to the half-burnt wood
 and the residues of flames
 that death has a life

Life has no death.

A few yards away
 the dead twigs of the tree reminisce
 The cradle is destined
 but the graveyard is chosen. ■

* the poet lives in Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

Multilayer Song

B.S. Tyagi

(1)

As a colorful lusty bird
 came from nowhere
 The tree vibrated with her presence,
 Longingly up and down,
 she looked quite fair,
 Softly she sang with zest and brilliance,
 Filling the air with exciting vibes
 of amorousness,
 That calls her soulmate to enjoy
 inner sweetness.

(2)

O, the April air emitting much love
 and fragrance
 Cupid shoots arrows all around,
 So restless but never loses
 her calm and patience,
 She pours out melody love-bound,
 Such is the wonderous breezy
 spring season,
 The love-sick bird comes here
 to please one.

(3)

Next week I saw her building
 a cozy small nest
 In a leafy tree at the hedge of lawn,
 With putting each straw

she showed real zest,
She labored with brains and brawn,
Her motherhood bursts out
with love boundless,
Melodies flowed free, spontaneous
and flawless.

(4)

The broody bird spent time
in her home sweet
All movements so affectionate!
I wondered at the deep inner colors
of her feat,
Motherly passion; so fortunate!
She hatched her eggs in the warm
and cozy nest,
And drenched herself
in inner joyous awaited fest.

(5)

From dawn to dusk she's as busy as a bee
Rearing the two pink fledglings,
Bringing morsels from far every morning
I see,
She cuddles and kisses nestlings,
Madly she sings and sings
loving the little ones,
I find love personified all the time
she becomes. ■

* the poet lives in Muzaffarnagar, U.P.

In You

* Gajanan Mishra

Within me
I find the world,
Within the world
I am defending myself.

Within me

I keep everything,
And in everything
I see you.

I am what I am
Only in you. ■

* the poet lives in Titilagarh, Odisha.

Pain of the Pen

* Sanjukta Dash

It pains when someone says
Writing poetry is easy enough
It's just like any other hobby or passion
Which is spontaneous
in its flow and action
It hurts when I hear
Poetry can be written
Anytime any where
There is no pause no stop
Once it starts it writes itself
In one go it trickles down
On its own
From the crown to the bottom
Don't know why
It is a task altogether
I sweat I pain I bleed a little
Whenever I grip the pen
I seclude I hide myself
I vanish sometimes in oblivion
But every time I fail miserably
To create that soft sweet subtle image
Which I venture to name 'a poem'
That is why
It's an unexplained metaphor
A feeling beyond all measure
An art hardly compare
For a creator
Poetry is a call of the heart

Which can never be mirrored
So easily
In the canvas of paper. ■

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My Childhood : A Reflection

* **Archana Acharya**

Not exceptional but memorable
was my childhood
Mother wept that day
when declared that
she gave birth to a girl child.
Don't know still I am
whether a girl child
is a curse or a boon.
She repeatedly asked
about my complexion
fair or black
Then she remained silent
when father consoled her
that a girl child
is a blessing
for the whole family
if it is the first issue!
It is propitious
As she is the real epitome
of goddess Lakshmi.
My tiny foot prints
declared my arrival
A new chapter completely
family members rejoiced
arranged a party
father gave me a name
starts with first alphabet
and ends with the same.
It was his dream
that my child would be

unique, special
And always the best
as it is continued till the
end of my career
always assigned roll no one!!
The reminiscence of my childhood
makes me happy always
holding on that foot prints
on the moist sand of time
searching myself again and again.
Eventful, Impressive
was my childhood
morning shows the day
childhood paves the way
Now a days I felt so
standing in front of a mirror
only it was the reflection
of the past I behold ■

* Asst. Prof. of English, Puri Women's
College, Puri, Odisha.

Rainbow

* **Nityananda Dash**

With the shying away of the rain.
peered amidst the clouds,
the resplendent Sun-God,
with shooting arrows of rays,
as the sky-path brimmed with
moistened dust,
an aroma of the wet earth drifted above,
the gleaming rays ravished
the moisture hovered.
To everyone's utter delight
an array of colours,
so beautifully coalesced,
stood against the sun,
so belligerent, a bow,
studded with seven colours

in such coherence and beauty,
a hypnotic spell,
a magnificent sight to behold.
A garland offered in reverence
to the creator.
The wind blew in resonance
to heal the wound of the earth,
fanning the leaves, as the hills and valleys,
motionless, witnessed the glowing sight.
For some moments the earth and the sky
felt the blessings showered upon them.
Seemed as if colourful dreams
were knitted upon deftly.
A sign of hope writ large
on the carpet of the sky
goaded the observer to the land
of serenity and ecstasy.
appeased the turbulent mind.
A balm to the aggrieved soul.
The rainbow illumine the hearts
of the observer through eternity. ■

* the poet lives in Anandapur, Dist-
Keonjhar, Odisha.

Doe will Return

* **Bishnupada Sethi**

The jungle tonight is a silvered bowl,
moon-spilled and awake.
Every leaf drinks light;
Every breath is dew.
A hush so deep it rings
like silence after prayer.
By the waterhole the doe and stag
stand mirrored, nose to nose,
two dark commas in a sentence of light.
Could drift-slow commas
across the moon-
and shadows thicken, then thin again.

From branch and burrow,
from stripe and spot,
the others watch;
monkey, leopard, tiger, lion, mouse-
a congregation without creed,
held in the same spell.
They do not see the men
crouched behind the reeds,
rifles oiled, torches banked,
breath held like a secret.
Love loosens the deer.
They lean, they tremble,
Lost in the small eternity
of each other's eyes.
Moonlight strokes their flanks;
palm shadows sway in a slow dance;
a monkey nips its mate in play;
the pond's skin shivers,
breaking the moon into coins.
Far off, in the camp,
fires lick iron pots.
Spices hiss, Plates wait.
Men speak in low, hungry syllables
of tenderloin, of haunch,
their tongues already tasting
salt and smoke.
Soon.
A single crack will split the night.
The stag will fold, surprised.
The doe will bolt, a white comma erased.
Dark shapes will rise from the bushes,
drag the warm weight home.
Dawn will find the camp asleep,
bellies full, knives dull.
The jungle will stir as always –
birds, breeze, the same old sun.
Only the doe will return,
stepping soft to the water's edge,
searching the blank reflection. ■

* the poet lives in Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

Garlands of Dreamless Life

* **Delwar Hossain**

I do sing the song of life
None pays heed spreading heart
Having furnished false charming
utters words, well done
I dive myself into the waters
of gratification
My untiring efforts to run
towards unknown
goals putting on garlands
of dreamless life. ■

* the poet lives in Dinajpur, Bangladesh.

Tanha

* **Bidyut Bhusan Jena**

On certain nights
the hands of the clock
and the nib of the fountain pen
chime in with a prehistoric rhythm.
Listen to it with attention
and you will know it is Kanthaka
clopping on across the final frontiers
of *trсна*.

And far away in a mythical Shravasti,
dry leaves whisper poetry
under those feet
along an awakened becoming.
And then,
on the other side of your window
on a moonless night,
you hear the crushing of leaves. ■

* Asst. Prof. of English, Christ University,
Bangalore.

Dear Life...with Love..!

* **Goken Geyi**

Dear Life! I know you're also tired
like me..!
I know you're also exhausted like me...!
I'm also tired...very tired
as if my bones are melting...
As if my soul is leaving me..!
As if my heart has been stabbed
thousand times..!
Though we both are tired and exhausted
let's not stop loving..!
Though you make me cry...
though I make you cry...
But dear Life
let's not get bitter and hateful..!
You and I are burdened with pain and tears..!
You suffer as I do...you cry as I do..!
But let us not be lost in pain...!
Let us surrender our tears to Love...!
So that Love could transform
tears into pearl..!
Let us surrender our pain to Love..!
So that Love could transform
Pain into poetry..!
Dear Life...with Love...!
Your friend...your friend
in pain and poetry...! ■

* Asst. Prof. of History, IGG College, Tezu,
Arunachal Pradesh.

When You Come....

Odia: **Dr. Sangeeta Rath** *

Translation: Sukomal Dash

Verdure on barren land flourishes
when you come
Sans Autumn on edge of mind
Kâsh tosses when you come

Mango buds smell untimely
limbs feel excited
Rainbow with *vibgyor* shades
arises when you come

Depart stains of sorrow,
shame, insult from my head
Shines on me a full moon showers rays
when you come

Infer I the unsaid words
from your oblique glance
Poetic verses as your lips express
when you come

Can any effort suppress
Sandal wood's sweet smell
Scatters your arrival
a fragrance when you come

Trickle pearl like tears
from your eyes with a mere jest
Tree of life sways '*Kadamba*'
countless when you come

Wish not to bid farewell
despite fear of disgrace
Often you pretend to be
in race when you come ■

* H.M. Nishamani Govt. High School,
Bargarh, Odisha.

Hide and Seek

Odia - **Sasanka Sekhar Sahoo***
Translation - Dr. Snehaprava Das.**

Faintly I remember
the game of hide and seek
in your womb;
The delicate throb in the navel

the cosmic gesture of union
the early crimson
of an earth born anew
and the sporting light
you lapsing in to oblivion
in your unconscious state
and first cry
at the touch of the primeval earth,
The blurry picture of an prison cell
with doors standing open
when the world lay inert
in a delusive stupor
the storm and lightning outside,
inside your face gleaming
in the feeble lamp light,
the milk dripping from your breasts
and the sobbing desperation
in my mouth to suck at them,
I remember
coming out of sleep in *Gopapura*
and the ocean of milk
in my mouth
I remember how the whole of universe
was captured in the range of your vision
as you looked into
my mouth to scoop out
the earth I stuffed, into it.
the game has reached its end now
the playful flirts and finasse
at the river ghat
in Brindavan
the dulcet charm in the secret bowers
the magic show of pre-designed battles,
everything has come to the finish
The invitation to recline
in the dense blue Siali bowers has arrived,
the faint echo of your call
still rings around
The memory of the throbbing navel,
time to wear a fresh coating
of a finite soul in the infinity,

There is but a little difference
between the bank of Yamuna
and the ocean shore,
I love the game of hide and seek
and it is time for me to return,

You would have got over the pangs
of parting from me
while you still felt my presence
in the range of your closed eyes
in the hushed hours of a lonely night,
and felt the heart ensnared
in the gentle tremors,
When it is the time of my return,
you make eternity shrink
into one single moment
and pick me up to your heart,
and a new era wears wings ■

* the poet lives in Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

** Retd. Prof. of English, staying in
Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

Imperfection Key to Peace!!!

* Anita Goswami

Some life chapters take longer
to be written,
And dreams come slow to be true,
Many promises keep hold to be fulfilled,
Our days end with half smiles
and half hopes,
With feelings yet unexpressed.
Wait! Some hope is still there;
With insuppressible inner spirit,
Life journey is delightful with all odds.
Letting our zeal to stay longer;
Letting our silence to be vocal
to fill the gaps;

Find out! Blooming behind
broken pieces of heart.
Journey is fascinating, not the arrival!
Fascination unfurls,
becoming with true 'self'
Depth in realisation;
hollowness merely knowing the facts.
...desires, dreams, promises, hopes, smiles,
gaps, silences...
all encompassing the circle of 'Peace'
Imperfection is key to peace! ■

* Asst. Prof. of English, Govt. College,
Raigarh, Churu, Rajasthan.

A Silent Ache

(composed in contemplation of the eternal,
fated love between Heathcliff and Catherine in
Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*)

* Nending Butung

Some love arrives on wings
from open skies,
And some awakens deeply from within;
But when the heart its secret truth denies,
Such inward feelings become a quiet sin.
For love that thrives in darkness,
without name,
Will carve its tender scars
beneath the skin;
The wounds unseen,
yet burning all the same,
A silent ache, no outward balm can thin.
Yet still we love,
though fear may veil the light,
Though unhealed memories
stir in the sleep;
For hearts are always pining for the night,
Where promises of warmth
and dreams lie deep.

So let love rise-both disclosed
and concealed-
And may the hidden hurts
at last be healed. ■

* Asst. Prof. in English, R.F. Govt. College,
Changlang, Arunachal Pradesh.

Saree

* **Namita Rani Panda**

The Sillage of a Saree
from a rusty dusty trunk
while rummaging the storeroom
I found amidst old clothes
a neatly folded saree of my mom
More than five decades old
and was fondly worn long
That filled the air with the sillage
of her perfume
flashed back my memory like a classic film
that I lovingly cherish and relive
in my dream

With a sky-blue body and dark blue border
The *aanchal* woven with much care,
unique and rare
Intricate patterns of fish, leaves
and lovely flowers
Not merely a piece of cloth,
though lost her early, our secure shelter

I ran my fingers lovingly
on the finely woven fabric:
As if the song of my life,
each thread being a lyric
I held it tight to my heart
and felt the rhythm of her heartbeat
The sudden spillage of her warmth
was so solacing and sweet
The aromatic air around whispered

my childhood lullabies
I drape myself in the sacred six-yard saree
to replicate her grace
A heavenly bliss, as if engulfed
in her tender embrace
The sillage that refused to vanish
though temporarily filled the emptiness
Intensified the anguish of losing someone
dear whom I forever miss. ■

* poet, story teller & translator. Email :
namitartanipanda506@gmail.com

Last Meeting

* **Shiv Shankar Singh Thakur**

That day she came to me,
a little perplexed,
all tears a bit tensed and worried,
gasping occasionally, face worn;
I tried to pacify her a little,
she didn't speak much,
aye her face and eyes telling,
ah each of her emotions she had;
I could understand the situation
there was nothing much I could do,
I didn't have the courage to ask
what my heart never wanted to;
Yet I dared to ask her the reason
of being disturbed; her silence
spoke every word of her mind
it was perhaps her helplessness;
I long had guessed what she didn't
speak but all I could know was,
perhaps that was our last meeting
that day, we two held each mother's
Hands, rather tightly, sharing the fate
there was a flurry of emotions there
retelling everything she wanted to,
but she couldn't; silence prevailed;

Next, she hurried to go holding tears
in her nectarine eyes, we just hugged
each other for the final time, as she
left, crimson faced, naturally disturbed;
All I could see, she calmly looked at me
before going, she turned twice on the way,
I saw her go holding my breath inside
I lay wondering at what had happened. ■

* Email : sssinghthakur23@gmail.com

In Such a Season

Original Odia- **Senapati Pradyumna Keshari** *
Translation - Santosh Kumar Behera **

Is this the season
which, as soon as, tramples
its feet on soft soil
Drops of sweat appear on the mirror
hanging from the wall !
The endless blue of the sky
like an unquenchable thirst
Stares at the earth
with its mouth wide open !
Dashed against
Rip-roaring hot wind
sweet melody loses its sense !
In such a season
A short road
seems to be a long distance !
The skin of the body
looks like a creamy layer
on a cup of tea.
Nowhere is found
So dear a blue cloud
Sparrows in living memory
are no longer seen.
The audacious sunshine
plunders the laugh and delight
of the garden so joyous.

In a forlorn noon
in the torrential sun
all that you manage to do is
only to talk with your own shadow.
creepers on top of houses
are all dried up and shrunk
like torn out and dirty clothes
of an insane woman
falling by the roadside.
The hopeless raven gets fatigued
throwing pebbles
into the earthen pot
with a palmful of water.
However his beak
lengthened in any manner
can never reach it.
In such a season
nights are without dreams
And carbonaceous are the beds. ■

* the poet lives in Cuttack, Odisha.

** Translator, a retired Prof. of English, lives
in Dharmasala, Jajpur, Odisha.

A Conflict is Brewing

* **Nirmal Roy**

Here the smothering biosphere
seduces the foamy moonlight.
The professional dame
smacks the kisses
onto the lip of the captive night.
I stand by to speculate
the prevailing spores of Eros
in the airy altitude.
Yonder can be heard
a symphony
of the unbridled nature
and the pulse-beat
of the chloroformed cosmos.
Here does reign a dead-silence

but I fear.
The unstirred universe dreamt
a dream of a ceaseless open-fire.
A storm is crystallizing more and more
and a conflict is brewing. ■

* the poet lives in Bishnupur, Bankura,
West Bengal.

Be Real, Not Reel

* Dipika Bhatt

Reel by reel, reel by reel
Is it healthy healing
or just your shrewd deal
Ohh! they befool you
Passing a bitter smile and say
you are under their rule!
They captured your brain
But brain is unique
and should be maintained
They captivate youngsters
Consume their time of progress
No research not a single innovation
Reel makers throwing young generations
in the dustbin of trapped fascination !
Women in reel allure through body
While men never accept
her intellectuality of brain
Body is not for showing off
Show your intellect if you are bold !
Ladies are not material of market
But how and to whom we explain
She through this reel tradition
stamped their hook steps !
Women are the preserver
of any Nation's culture
What if they do not preserve
their own identity?
How can we narrate their brave history
If we have only vulgar reels

preserved in the media's system !
Just for one-like you play unbelievable
and act senselessly
Time is of social media marketing
Then market your ideas and
ignite the universe with enlightenment
Say Nay! and be real, not reel ! ■

* the poet lives in Uttarakhand.

Naughty Spring

* Bina Singh

Is April the cruellest month
Certainly not
In fact, its naughty
Although mischievous,
yet discreetly secretive
Silently captures the icy wind
Giving way to the dusty wind
However, this dust doesn't settle down
It just flows with the blowing wind
Chilling cold replaced
by the soothing heat
That doesn't burn
But it's warmth soothes
Allowing the red currents to flow
Stimulating warmth of love
The frozen ice melts
Arousing the subdued longing
To love and be loved
Blooming buds opening
Spreading the exotic fragrance
Evoking love, the resurging spirit,
to rise
Leading the humanity
to the citadel of ultimate liberation. ■

* the poet lives in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh.

Life under the Drumstick Trees

Moloy Bhattacharya*

I

On the brink of the dingy pond
Among the grove of bamboo
Stand our own drumstick trees
That have grown over the years
From infancy to maturity with risk
Braving the threat of animals.

The lethal eyes to scorn them rise
Two or three in number like
The green children of my father
Who moulds them daily.

II

Dreamy is my life under the trees
Often in the morning go I
And feel life in every branch
An odour in the barks
where flock the hairy caterpillars
In plenty for leafy food and shelter
Sticking to the skins with faith
For a winged freedom, a destiny.

One by one as fingers in tender hand
Snapped the pods by father
Looking them numb with mercy
At the hand defiling their beauty. ■

* Email: moloybhattacharya1@gmail.com

Where Stars Learn your Name

Pratyusha Kumar Sahu*

In the hush of moonlit skies,
your laughter blooms like spring,
A rhythm in my quiet world,
a song I always sing.
Your eyes hold constellations,
stories I've yet to know,
Each glance a gentle whisper,
where silent feelings grow.
You walk like poetry
written on jasmine-scented air,
A thousand verses blooming
in the softness of your care.
Your touch — a sacred promise,
your voice — a temple bell,
In every breath, I find you,
where love and wonder dwell.
We dance through days like lanterns,
glowing in monsoon rain,
Even silence between us hums
a sweet refrain.
You are the calm in chaos,
the fire in my night,
The reason stars feel closer,
the pulse behind my light.
So here's my vow in verses, stitched with
golden thread,
To love you in each moment,
in all the words unsaid.
For you, my heart keeps writing,
in ink that never fades,
A poem that lives forever,
in moonlight and in shades. ■

* the Poet lives in Sarbodaya Nagar, Puri,
Odisha.



आचार्य मनिष र. जोशी
सचिव

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Secretary



सत्यमेव जयते



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सार्वजनिक सूचना

In supersession of the Public Notice dated 28th November 2018 for establishing UGC Consortium for Academic and Research Ethics (UGC- CARE), the Commission, in its 584th meeting held on 3rd October 2024, based on the recommendations of the expert committee, has decided to discontinue UGC-CARE listing of Journals and develop suggestive parameters for choosing peer-reviewed journals by faculty members and students. The suggestive parameters, developed by a group of experts and academicians, are now placed in the public domain for their feedback till **25th February, 2025 at email id: journal@ugc.gov.in.**

The stakeholders, including HEIs, faculty members, researchers, and students, may take note of it.


(मनिष जोशी)

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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.