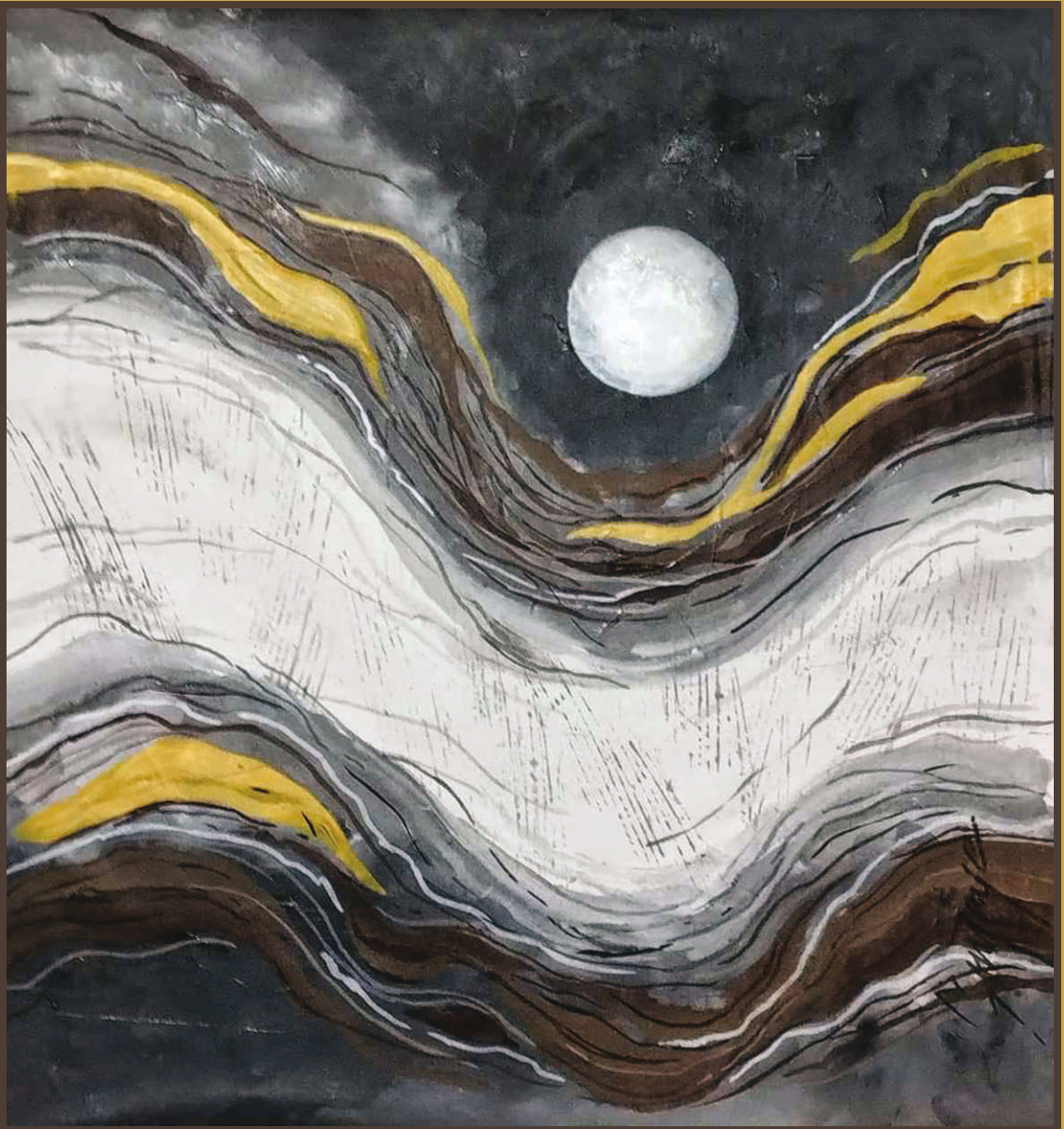


JUNE - 2024 • Vol. XXVIII • No. II

# ROCK PEBBLES

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



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

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(the 1st English Literary Magazine of Odisha)  
A Peer-Reviewed Journal of Arts & Humanities  
UGC - CARE listed vide Sl. No. 307, Gr. I  
June - 2024 \* Vol. XXVIII No. II

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## Design & Layout

Sri Hemanta Kr. Patra, Jajpur Town  
Print-Tech Offset Press, Bhubaneswar

## Cover Art

by Kala Ratn Dr. Sonjaye Maurya  
Title : Chandra Bindu (Attraction)

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about the Journal  
ROCK PEBBLES  
R.N.I. No: 48173/89  
ISSN: 0975-0509, E-ISSN: 2230-8954  
UGC-CARE No. 307 (Gr-I)  
is published monthly.  
Editorial office at - Naranpur,  
Post: Kodandapur, Via: Devidwar  
Dist - JAJPUR, Odisha, India - 755007  
e-mail: rockpebbles2007@rediffmail.com  
rockpebbles2010@gmail.com  
website : www.rockpebblesindia.com

### Subscription Fees

Annual - Rs. 1200/-  
Lifetime - Rs. 10,000/-, (12 years)  
Subscription fees should be deposited through  
NEFT or online in the following SB Accounts of  
ROCK PEBBLES:-  
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for submission of papers:- for January, February  
& March issue - 1st January to 10th January. For  
April, May, June issue - 1st April to 10th April.  
For July August, Sept issue - 1st July to 10th July.  
For October, November, December issue - 1st  
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### Editor Speaks.....

Welcome to the literary realm of *Rock Pebbles* where the echoes of literary excellence reverberate through decades. As guardians of the written word, we stand at the crossroads of imagination and expression curating a tapestry of research articles that transcends boundaries and resonates with the deepest recesses of human soul. Within the pages of our journal, readers are invited to embark on a journey of discovery, where each word is a stepping stone towards enlightenment and understanding. *Rock Pebbles* serves as a sanctuary for the literary voyager, offering refuge amidst the chaos of everyday life. We invite you to join us as we navigate the labyrinth of language, where every turn unveils a new world waiting to be explored.

However, in the vast tapestry of literary brilliance, certain names shimmer with an indelible glow, captivating readers across generations. Among these luminaries, Alice Munro stands as a colossus, her words weaving intricate narratives that delve deep into the human psyche. As we celebrate her unparalleled contribution to the world of letters, it becomes imperative to unravel the profound impact she has had on literature.

Alice Munro's literary journey is a testament to the power of storytelling. Born in Wingham, Ontario, Munro's upbringing in rural Canada profoundly influenced her writing, infusing her tales with an authenticity that resonates with readers worldwide. Munro's mastery lies in her ability to encapsulate the essence of human experience within the confines of short stories. In *The Moons of Jupiter*, *Runaway*, and *Dear Life*, she navigates the intricacies of love, loss, and longing with a deft hand, crafting characters that linger in the reader's mind long after the final page is turned. Through her keen observation and empathy, Munro breathes life into her stories, inviting readers to see themselves reflected in the struggles and triumphs of her protagonists.

The Nobel Prize in Literature, awarded to Alice Munro in 2013, stands as a testament to her enduring legacy. Through her stories, Munro transcends cultural boundaries, offering readers a glimpse into the shared experiences that unite us as human beings. *Rock Pebbles* extends homage to the literary stalwart.

- Editor

## CONTENTS

	Page
<b>Editorial</b>	ii
<b>Criticism - (pp. 05 - 197)</b>	
Negotiating River and Culture: The Mahanadi as a Shaping Force in Lakshminath Bezbaroa's Writings	
<b>Bishnu Charan Dash</b>	05
A Poet's Homecoming: Odia Poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra	
<b>Chittaranjan Misra</b>	12
Cinematic Prism of Tagore's <i>The Home and the World</i> : A Reflection on Satyajit Ray as an Auteur	
<b>Snehlata Tailor</b>	18
Crack of the Whip: Memory and Trauma in Tara Patel's <i>Woman</i>	
<b>Ajay Kumar Shukla</b>	24
The Translator's Dilemma: Navigating Cultural Bridges in Walter Benjamin's <i>The Task of the Translator</i>	
<b>B. Tirupati Rao</b>	29
Jacque Derrida's Thesis on Deconstruction	
<b>Mallikarjun Patil</b>	35
Satyavati: The Woman Hero in <i>Mahabharata</i>	
<b>Kajal Sutradhar</b>	40
Margaret Atwood's <i>Oryx and Crake</i> : An Eco-Dystopic Approach	
<b>Dayanidhi Pradhan</b>	46
Negotiating Women on the Blues and <i>The Argumentative Indian</i>	
<b>Gayatri Goswami</b>	56
Disenchanted Dissent : Studying <i>These Hills Called Home</i> by Temsula Ao	
<b>Vandana Gupta</b>	63
Fragmentation and Beyond: A Trajectory of the Modern Alienation of the Self and Romanticism's Response with Indian Overtones	
<b>S. Lakshmi Menon &amp; B. Venkataramana</b>	72
Characterization in Indian Hindi Web Series: "Exploring Complex Characters in Contemporary Narratives"	
<b>Mustajeeb Khan &amp; Vaibhav Zakde</b>	82
Spiritual Meditation and Transcendental Ethos: Philosophical Underpinnings in the Works of Ram Dass and David Frawley	
<b>Ritesh Kumar Sharma &amp; Rakesh Kumar Pandey</b>	95
The 1960s American Countercultural Movements	
<b>Madhusoodan Kundgol</b>	103
Analyzing the Traditional Gender Roles in Anita Nair's Novel <i>Lessons in Forgetting</i>	
<b>Neelam Mulchandani</b>	107
The Impact of Patriarchy on Man, and Woman: A Study of Jibanananda Das's Short Story <i>Shadow Play</i>	
<b>Tapas Sarkar</b>	115
Exploring the Eco-Critical Lens of Ruskin Bond's Selected Short Stories: Investigating the Intersectionality of Humanity and Nature in the Works of a Himalayan Writer	
<b>Ujjal Ghosh &amp; Sreejani Nayak</b>	122

Assertion of Dignity in Bama's Short Story <i>Old Man and a Buffalo</i>	
<b>P. Jessica Angel Madhurima &amp; Jillella Mercy Vijetha</b>	130
The Role of Erroneous Judgement in Ilango's <i>Silappathikaram</i> and Tagore's <i>The Repayment: A Comparative Study</i>	
<b>S.Valliammai</b>	138
The Contribution of Women Writers during Freedom Struggle in India: An Analytical Study	
<b>Rakesh Singh Paraste</b>	142
Migration, Matrimonial Choices, and Cultural Continuities: A Diasporic Analysis among Indian Girit Women through Peggy Mohan's <i>Jahajin</i>	
<b>Ayesha Zameer &amp; Sumit Kumar Dey</b>	150
Portraits of Masculinity in Heidi Cullinan's <i>Carry the Ocean</i>	
<b>Chisti Das &amp; Soumya Sangita Sahoo</b>	161
A Critical Analysis of Dalit Culture and Female Torture in the Works of Meena Kandasamy	
<b>Ananya Mohakud</b>	170
Beyond Borders: The Evolution of Indo-Caribbean Identity in Shani Mootoo's Literature	
<b>Srishti Yadav</b>	176
Tribal Literary Works in English Translations Analyzed in Light of Global Identity	
<b>Sonu Kumar Mehta</b>	184
Queer Identity in <i>The Mahabharata: An Appraisal</i>	
<b>Subhadarshini Mallick</b>	191
<b>Poetry - (pp. 198 - 204)</b>	
When the Sun goes down - Original in Odia - <b>Nanda Kishore Bal</b>	
Translation - Susanta Kishore Bal	198
Thoughts on Mother's Day - <b>Bishnupada Sethi</b>	198
Woman - <b>Saroj K Padhi</b>	199
Fisherman's Wife - <b>Sulekha Samantaray</b>	199
Loneliness - <b>Anwer Ghani</b>	199
Drops of Peace - <b>Ramachandra Palai</b>	200
Articulation of A Pseudo Love - Original in Odia - <b>Bijay Ray</b>	
Translated by - Himanshu Parida	200
Everything in Dreams - <b>Gajanan Mishra</b>	201
History - <b>Dhrubajyoti Das</b>	201
No Need to Colour - <b>Tanuja Rout</b>	202
Life Travels Further and Farther - <b>Bibhudutta Sahoo</b>	202
from Baby Falak to Nirbhaya - <b>Bharati Nayak</b>	203
A Noble Person - <b>Malati Kumari Natha Sharma</b>	203
Love for Love's Sake - <b>Harihar Mallick</b>	203
The Dove - <b>Satya Sundar Samanta</b>	204
<b>Book Review</b>	205 - 206
<b>Subscription Form</b>	149 & 160

## Negotiating River and Culture: The Mahanadi as a Shaping Force in Lakshminath Bezbaroa's Writings

Bishnu Charan Dash

Culture is, in most part, grounded upon environment and environmental culture as such tends to focus on the study of nature, human engagement with physical environment, environment as context and the influence of nature on environment, civilization and culture. In the hoary past, the primitive man was guided by 'wilderness ethics' that emphasizes harmonious relationship between man and nature. With the march of civilization, this harmony was hampered by the 'social man' and the 'economic man' who, like Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, established himself as a "colonial man" and an independent 'economic man' (*homo-economicus*) constantly exploiting nature for his personal gain thereby affecting environment and culture as well. The 'economic man' blissfully forgets the fact that nature enriches human habitat, and that the elements of nature-climate, soil, vegetation, rivers/rivulets, forests, mountains and forest resources-directly or indirectly shape human activity. At the same time, Nature and environment help promote specific forms of social structure and economy apart from strengthening the belief system, mythic consciousness, religious psyche and cultural self of the society. In this respect, the role of rivers in enriching civilization and culture stands incontrovertible, And none can brush aside the contribution of Mississippi, Nile, Tigris, Euphrates, Thames, Amazon and Congo to the rise and rearing of the Western civilization and culture. River/ river environment as cultural space and spiritual construct has embellished the vast gamut of literature - right from the ancient 'Hymns to Rivers' of *Rig veda* to Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*. Rivers like Ganga, Sindhu, Yamuna, Saraswati, Godabari, Narmada, Kaveri, Ganduki and Chitrotpala have been inextricably tagged to India's spiritual consciousness. The present paper purports to highlight the benign blessings of river as the representative of Nature in general and the miraculous influence of the river Mahanadi on the powerful Assamese writer Sahityarathi Lakshminath Bezbaroa, the man and the writer at Sambalpur,

There is no denying the fact that human civilization, being essentially agriculture-oriented and dependent on water right from its inception, river, civilization and culture are therefore inseparably tagged to each other. And that is precisely the reason why the primitive men gradually left nomadic life and settled down on river banks, and consequently, civilization and culture flourished under the benign blessings of rivers - the reason why river is usually associated, with spirituality and motherhood. The German historian Karl A. Wittfogel defines civilization as 'hydraulic' in that it is dependent on hydro (Greek root) meaning water.

Hydraulic civilizations being water-dependent and rain from the sky being unpredictable and scanty, civilization(s) and culture(s) from hoary past “inevitably developed beside rivers”, and the Egyptian Sumerian, Mesopotamian, Indus Valley and North American civilizations developed by the rivers of Nile, Sindhu and Mississippi vindicate the fact. The ancient man recognized the contribution of rivers with humility and therefore associated them with spirituality and motherhood. The Greek historian Herodotus called Egypt ‘the gift of Nile’, whereas the red Indians spiritually responded to Mississippi as the ‘Ganga’ of America. In Mark Twain’s *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *Huckleberry Finn* and *Life on the Mississippi*, the river Mississippi appears as an extended metaphor - a solid setting, a powerful partaker, actor, and arbiter of divine justice. It’s a very big and powerful river determining the course of human peregrination, a treacherous and capricious dictator who, by its strong and swift current, controls the voyage of Huck and Jim - now separates and then reunites.

The ancient Indians too tended to attribute spiritual significance to all happenings in the world of Nature - flood, storm or drought - and the Vedic gods of rain, water, wind, light and fire were endearingly addressed as father, friend, brother and divine bestower of gifts and such a lovable spiritual relationship also grew around rivers - the greatest benefactress of mankind, In the *Nadi Sukta* of *Rig-Veda* (X. 64, 75) the Vedic poet Sindhuksit invokes nineteen rivers centering round which the vast mosaic of Indian Culture has been formulated with emphasis on several rites, rituals, festivals, folk-beliefs, mythological associations and spiritual significance. Whereas Ganga is envisaged as the mother goddess whose holy water purifies all and washes away all sins, Sindhu, Saraju and Saraswati have been described as rivers with strong currents and powerful waves; and river Saraswati is invoked as a resourceful mother (*annavati*) the benefactress of mankind (*kalyani*), reservoir of knowledge and the mother of all river-mothers. (*Ambi tame nadi tame Devitame Saraswati: Rgveda*; II, 41.16) However, the Rgvedic hymn has no place for Brahmputra and Mahanadi, both of which find mention in *The Mahabharata* (*Sabha Parva*, 30. 31-32; *Bhisma Parva*, 9) as ‘*Louhitya*’ and ‘*Chitrotpala*’ respectively.

With its fount in the wild mountains of the Bastar district in Madhya Pradesh from where it flows through the plains of Chhatisgarh down to Sambalpur and its neighbouring district Sonepur, the Mahanadi pursues a tortuous course among ridges and rocky crags towards the range of the Eastern Ghats (Orissan Hills) by crossing which it reaches Baud and Cuttack and finally falls into the Bay of Bengal. Like Ganga, Sindhu, Saraswati and Brahmputra, the Mahanadi is recognized as Chitrotpala, a sacred river, in the *Mahabharata* (*MBH, Bhisma Parva*, Canto IX). Popular legends of West Orissa run that its holy waters have enriched several shrines of Sakti and Siva among which the temples of Sambaleswari, (Sambalpur). Swapneswar, Bimaleswar (*Huma*), Ghantalei (*Chiplima*). Lankeswari, Sureswari, Khambeswari, Subarnameru Siva, Rameswar, Kosaleswar, Mahakaleswar and Kapileswar (all at Sonepur) stand prominent. It is also believed that king Anangabhima Deva II (1211-1238 A.D.) constructed several Siva temples on the bank of the Mahanadi at the instruction of the Lord and finally took a holy dip in the river to wash away his sins and



to cure his leprosy. The spiritual power and sacred significance of the great river is candidly recognized by Srimanta Sankaradeva of Assam in the 'Uresha Khanda' of his *Kirtana Ghosa*.

“Acchanta tirtha Mahanadi nama/  
Lokara karia papa upanta  
Dakshina sagaraka bahijanta”  
(There is a shrine (tirtha) Mahanadi by name,  
That washes away all the sins of men”)

Sahityarathi Lakshminath Bezbarua, the pioneer of modern Assamese literature, often compared with Charles Dickens and Fakirmohan Senapati, too recognizes the sacred significance of the Mahanadi in not less than two of his articles written under the titles 'My Hunting' (*Mor Mrigaya*), and 'UI Haflu' contributed to 'Asam Banti' (1<sup>st</sup> Issue, 1938). He reproduces Sankaradeva's above laudable lines from 'Kirtan' in 'My Hunting't in the context of his hunting trips on the banks of the Mahanadi, and the river becomes all along a spiritual construct for him. Born on a full moon night at Ahatguri of Nagaon in the bosom of the Brahmaputra and nourished by the waters of Dikhau and Ganga during his childhood and youth, the Mahanadi fed Bezbaroa's matured mind at Sambalpur. He built his own house on the bank of the Mahanadi at the Kacheri Road and used to swim in her water as a continuation of his childhood habit, and his mind and heart were always concentrated on the sylvan surrounding and the river environment at Sambalpur. Far away from the madding crowd and the sophisticated go of life in Calcutta, Bezbaroa nourished his creative sensibility in the lap of Mahanadi and in the midst of dense forests and sinuous hills. The murmuring flow of the Mahanadi, the easy sweep of the forest wind, the songs of the innocent tribals - Kolhs, Kondhs, Gonds and Mundas - all exercised an irresistible sway over his mind and heart. The river was, as it were, his spiritual mentor teaching him all along a vital lesson that peace and pleasure could be sought even in the little and nameless objects of nature - plants, insects, flowers, pebbles, rocks and tiny song birds. As the river flows down by his compound, quite often Bezbaroa used to stroll on its bank with his grandson Swarup Kumar and granddaughter Ritha - the children of his daughter Aruna. While familiarizing them with the names of birds and flowers, the grandfather too made them inquisitive and sensitive to the wonders of nature and the many-sided glory of God's creation. The Wordsworthian trinity of Man, Nature and God constitutes the core of the romantic aesthetics of Bezbaroa, At the same time, his silken sympathy for the rustics and tribals living in the foot hills, his serene mind, pure heart, love of quietude in Nature, his broadmindedness and humanitarian sympathy - are all veritable blessings of the great river and the conducive environment that reared his creative imagination to produce some of his matured works like 'Mor Mrigaya', 'Ratan Munda', 'Dasmantar', 'Barichowa', 'Bhaira'. 'Kanya' and his sensitive "letters" edited by Prof. Maheswar Neog under the title '*Patralekha*'. It is in the scenic beauty and quiet of the garden he staged on the bank of the Mahanadi that the Sahityarathi used to experience almost Coleridgean sense of blissful solitude, imaginative flight and strange forgetfulness. While emphasizing the inviolable relationship between the poet, poetry and Nature, Bezbaroa

states in 'Kavita' ('Poetry') that poetry is the lady of the poet's imagination colourfully studded with the beauty of Nature:

“Prakritir kamanar soundarya ranjita  
Kavita kalpanamayi kavir vanchhita” (“Kavita”).

It is in the lap of Mahanadi and its sylvan environ that Bezbaroa nourished his cultural self - his aesthetics of gardening and hunting, his love of music and running of Musical Association, his sporting spirit (at Mahanadi Club and Bengali Club) and his involvement with acting and staging plays like Valmiki Pratibha of Rabindranath Tagore in the Victoria Memorial Hall of Sambalpur.

In the first place, the river nourished his meditative mood and divine desire for laying out 'garden' that symbolizes purity, innocence, beauty, perennial freshness and everlasting glory of the world of Nature. Strongly reminiscent of Biblical garden ('Genesis') as well as of the classical, medieval and Renaissance aesthetics of gardening embodying various nuances of 'fine art', 'divine art' and 'utilitarian art'. Whether or not Bezbaroa imbibed the spirit of classical, medieval and Renaissance aesthetics of gardening altogether is open for debate and further investigation. But one thing is certain that 'gardening was an 'incurable passion' for him, wherever he stayed - be it Howrah or Sambalpur or Jharsuguda - and behind his passion for 'gardening', one can fairly locate the benign blessing and uncanny influence of Nature represented by river and river environment. His daughter Dipika confirms this fact: "Papa's garden was a piece with his life, The garden he staged on the bank of Mahanadi in fact lays bare several aspects of Bezbaroa's personality - his tenacity and patience, ingenuity and industry, his romantic mind and constitutional humour, his optimistic outlook of life and finally his faith in divine dispensation. As a piece of Nature, his garden by the Mahanadi taught him how to enjoy the bliss of solitude and forget the fever and the fret of suffering mankind in the grip of World War(s), Bezbaroa would often while away an hour or two in his garden with a cheroot in his hand and experience like Wordsworth a 'blessed mood' in a state of tranquility in which he could see a fairy coming out of the rings of smoke. The fairy is none but the baby of his creative imagination - which he used to conceive in the scenic beauty and quiet of his garden. Had there been no river and nature (garden), It is no exaggeration to say, the readers would have been deprived of Bezbaroa's writings and several letters written from Sambalpur wherein his mind and heart are mostly fixed on his garden and the sylvan surrounding of Sambalpur. In his letters written to his wife, daughters and friends, published under the title "Patralekha" and edited by

Prof. Maheswar Neog, the Sahityarathi evinces his realistic, romantic, utilitarian and humanitarian interests, reactions and responses. Bezbaroa too subscribes to the concept of hydraulic civilization which grows by the benign blessings of river and this is evident from his candid expression that without the water of Mahanadi his beautiful garden' would have withered away. In a letter to his daughter Aruna (No. 121), he talks about his painstaking

effort to sink a deep well and then connect it underground with Mahanadi so that it doesn't dry up even in the peak of summer. With large variety of flowers, fruits and vegetables like mango, guava, plum, citrus, lemon, orange, lychee, carrot, peas, beet, cauliflower, red flowers and edible leaves, his garden represents the proverbial Eden Garden on the earth. In another letter to Aruna, herself a lover of flowers, (No. 104), he writes: "What a wonderful garden loaded and studded with flowers! It's as if the twinkling stars have come down to sit on the flower plants."

River and natural surrounding not only enriched his creative, spiritual and romantic sensibility, but also provided a strong impetus for depicting the pristine purity, innocence and simplicity of the tribals - Kolhs, Mundas and Gonds- and in this respect he Imbibes Wordsworth's idealization of 'peasantry' and 'common men' which is in fact a logical ramification of Rousseau's concept of 'Noble savage' and 'Natural Man'. The characters of Sadananda and the old gardener in "Barichowa", of Bhaira in "Bhaira", of Dasmantar in "Dasmantar" and his grandmother in "Dasamantar", of Ratan and Jumuri in "Ratan Munda", of the old beggar at Shasan Railway station in "Maganiar Buddha", and of the Kolh lover and beloved in "Kanya" have been drawn from the natural environment of Sambalpur. Strongly reminiscent of Wordsworth's solitary reaper, Lucy, Michael, the Cumberland beggar, Simon Lee, the idiot boy and leech gatherer, these "natural men" of Bezbaroa are far away from pride and pretension, fraud and deceit, cruelty and wickedness, exploitation and oppression which bedevils humanity today. Sadananda, the young gardner in 'Barichowa', is whole-heartedly devoted to Bezbaroa, whereas Bhaira, his gardener at Jharsuguda is extremely innocent and industrious. Like Wordsworth's Lucy and the Scottish highland lass in "The Solitary Reaper", Ratan - Jumuri, and the lover - beloved in "Kanya", are born in the lap of Nature and finally die in the lap of Nature without being contaminated by the complexities of modern civilization. Through these characters, Bezbaroa teaches lessons of purity and innocence, dedicated action and self-sacrifice without pride and pretense, jealousy and envy. Here, it is pertinent to observe that behind his art of characterization, lies the benign influence of the river Mahanadi and the river environment with which Bezbaroa had been totally immersed and engrossed. His Bhaira is a man of action (a karma yogi) and the very fact that he is heard of hearing is a blessing in disguise. When he sets to work in the garden at Jharsuguda, he forgets food and water and he is Bezbaroa's 'naturalman' through whom the Sahityarathi teaches us the vital lesson that 'Nature' shapes our mind in a pure way and that civilization hammers at that process of making humanity 'pure' and 'natural'.

Besides Mahanadi, Bezbaroa's mind and eyes are often fixed on the river island of Hirakud which is about eight miles away from Sambalpur. Very much like Majuli on the Brahmaputra, Hirakud - the mound (kud) ok diamond (hira) - is associated with another significant aspect of Orissan culture - diamond business - which reminds us of the cultural past of Sambalpur and Hirakud in relation to Mahanadi. It is at Hirakud that the powerful current of river Mahanadi has been slowed down, as a result of which dusts of diamond and

gold constitute a thick layer. And in the past, people of a particular caste called 'jhara' were especially engaged to dig out diamond to the pleasure of the kings and the local chieftains.

The successors of these people have now taken to other means of livelihood, but Hiraakud's association with diamond business/culture has been admittedly acknowledged in history right from the travelling accounts of Huensang and Gibbon through the rule of the Chauhan kings till the British rule. For instances, Lord Clive sent one T. Mott in 1766 A.D. to the court of two Chauhan rulers - Abhaya Singh and Ajit Singh - to collect diamond to the pleasure of the British high command ('Sambalpur in 1766'), and similarly Tavernier conceded that Sambalpur was full of resources because of the trade in diamond with China, Persia, and Burma apart from different cities/towns in India. L.S.S. Omalley (Sambalpur District Gazetteer) maintains that the famous 'Kohinoor diamond' was found at Hiraakud on the bosom of Mahanadi and that apart from diamond, the river was also a reservoir of emerald, carbuncle, amethyst, corneil, topas and spatik. Interestingly, in 2nd century A.D. Tollemy describes that Sambalaka (Sambalpur) is a land of diamond and to him Mahanadi, called 'manad,' was the veritable medium for trade and cultural transaction. Historical background of diamond business at Sambalpur through the river route of Mahanadi can be correlated with the diamond episode in Bezbaroa's *'My Hunting'*. Bezbaroa mentions that on one occasion he had to stay in the inspection bungalow of Dhama, a place situated some fifteen miles away from Sambalpur, where he met a person possessing a piece of uncut diamond which was found by his father at Hiraakud. The 'piece of uncut diamond' reminds us of the fact that the local people who dug out diamonds from the bosom of the river Mahanadi used to sell them to customers on the market day thereby adding to their financial strength.

Mahanadi and Hiraakud occupied a secured place in Bezbaroa's consciousness and his acquaintance with very many places, people, sights and sounds surrounding the river and the river-island alternately enrich both the 'conscious' and the 'subconscious' levels of his mind. Just as his garden on the bank of Mahanadi enriched his romantic mind, his love of nature and his humanitarian self, his frequent hunting trips to the forests on the banks of the river in the company of his Sambalpur associates like Nilamani Senapati and Manabhanjan Bohidar brings to the fore his heroic ardour, passion for fearless adventure into nature, utilitarian outlook, psychology, readiness to study wild animals and the strategy for group chasing (*khedâ-shikar*). Mahandi facilitated Bezbaroa to become a perfect shikari, and in his *'My hunting'* (1930) and several letters written to friends and family members from Sambalpur, the Sahityarathi has evinced his keen interest in hunting as an art which is evident from his critical analysis and observation on various forests he frequented including those of Jujumura, Jamra, Ghisamura, Ladladi and Meghpal. For instance, his hunting trip to the forest of Jamara on the bank of Mahanadi involves the strategy of group-chasing which is still prevalent among the aboriginal inhabitants of the hilly areas. In *'My hunting'*, the writer presents a delightful description of the hot pursuit of beat-hunting - readiness of the hunters on three hunting platforms (machans) on the one hand and some sixty enthusiastic beaters beating the bushes and chasing the wild animals on the other. His graphic description

of the pathetic sound of wounded animals bespeaks Bezbaroa's humanitarian heart and sympathy, whereas his utilitarian outlook also comes to the fore when the meat and skin of wild animals are used for consumption and self pleasure. For instance, in one of his letters to Jatindranath Duarah, this humble hunter of Sambalpur writes: "I am a vagrant dweller of forests; I do see wild flowers and animals and can't pluck them. Before relishing their beauty, I hammer at them with a sharp axe, Demons laugh at my work, and gods shed tears." Be it utilitarian, sadistic or aesthetic, Mahanadi and its natural environment have enriched Bezbaroa's mind and heart in very many ways - now as a writer, a gardener and then as a hunter and finally a man of culture. As a man of culture Bezbaroa assimilated himself into the larger spectrum of Orissan Culture and regularly crossed the river Mahanadi to enjoy the festival of Sandal - paste (Chandan Jatra) at Chaurpur which is situated on the other side of river Mahanadi.

Thus, Mahanadi plays prominent role in shaping Bezbaroa's mind and heart - as a gardener, a hunter, a lover of nature, a man of spiritual thoughts and a sensitive human being endowed with silken human sympathy. Though creative genius (*pratibha*) is an extraordinary inborn power, one can't deny the environmental influence that shapes and facilitates the writer's creative imagination. The role of Nature, Culture, Man and Society should therefore be treated not in isolation, but in conjunction with one another. ■

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# A Poet's Homecoming: Odia Poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra

Chittaranjan Misra

Jayanta Mahapatra (1928 – 2023) is a bilingual poet who has earned international reputation for his writing in English. His choosing of English as the medium is due to his familiarity with the language that came to him first through English medium educational background. Even though this led him to share the privilege of the power of a world medium he stayed rooted in his cultural ground. Odia too was an attractive medium that came to him as inheritance, a 'genetic make-up' inspiring exploration. Though Jayanta Mahapatra started writing in Odia at a late-stage in the early 90's he had a sense of fulfillment through the publication of eight anthologies of his Odia poems. It was like a homecoming for him, a better way of asserting his Odia identity.

**Keywords:** Bilingualism, Odia identity, writing in English, Translation, Self-reflexivity, Marginalized

Post liberation writing has resulted in considerable bulk of literary output in English and non-English languages in India. While English writings/books are open to English knowing elites in the country and abroad (including Indian diaspora) the writing in so-called vernacular languages are limited as far as their circulation among readers is concerned. The key to a greater prospect of reaching out to an international body of readers lie in writing in English. India's non-English language authors either translate their originals into English or wait for somebody to do the translation for them. Salman Rushdie analyses: "...there has long been a genuine problem of translation in India – not only to English but between the vernacular languages – and it is possible that good writers have been ill served by their translator's inadequacies. Now-a-days, however, such bodies as the Indian Academy of Letters (the Sahitya Academy), UNESCO, and Indian publishers themselves have been putting substantial resources into the creation of better translation, and the problem, while not eradicated, is certainly much diminished." (Rushdie 1997:54)

Against this problematic scene a healthy emergence of bilingualism can be traced as countermeasure. The creative upsurge has cut across many languages including English in search of authenticity and identity. Jayanta Mahapatra is a bilingual poet who has earned

international reputation for his writing in English. His choosing of English as the medium is due to his familiarity with the language that came to him first through English medium educational background. Even though this led him to share the privilege of the power of a world medium he stayed rooted in his cultural ground. Odia too was an attractive medium that came to him as inheritance, a 'genetic make-up' inspiring exploration. Though Jayanta Mahapatra started writing in Odia at a late-stage in the early 90's he had a sense of fulfillment. It was like a homecoming for him, a better way of asserting his Odia identity.

In the first collection of his Odia poetry entitled *Bali* that came out in 1993 he clarifies his position through a note in the beginning. He reveals his longing for his roots, for Odisha, for the land of his birth. He asserts that his Odia identity is no way annulled by the fact that he has been writing in English. In Mahapatra there is no exile and return themes as we find in Ramanujan and Parthasarathy. He has been rooted to his own native place and native traditions all along while writing a language already nativized. As a translator of many contemporary Odia poems into English Mahapatra had achieved familiarity with Odia diction and rhythm. In 1973 his English translation of Soubhagya Mishra, a major Odia poet was published entitled *Counter-measure*. Mahapatra had translated Jadunath Ds Mahapatra's *Wings of the Past* (1976) and Sitakanta Mahapatra's *Song of Kubja and Other Poems* (1981).

Mahapatra's first collection of Odia poetry, for that matter, is not a sudden decision of homecoming. Maybe by shaping the Odia word order on his English anvil he offered some difference for which the homecoming seems uneasy. Instead of using the usual sequence of subject, object and verb very often he twists a line in a subject, verb and object pattern. This patterning can be seen as an influence of his English habit.

After *Bali* he has published a number of poetry collections including *KahibiGotieKatha* (1995), *Baya Raja* (1997), *TikieChhai* (2001), *Chali* (2006), *JadibaGapatie* (2008), *AauDasati* (2019) and *Jhanji* (2023). A reader who comes across his Odia works without any familiarity of his English writing can appreciate his subtle and mature handling of themes without any bias. One should not approach his Odia poems with a load of an image of a great Indian English poet behind the texts. Poems in *Bali* is marked by a precision in expression. They have their appeal as indices of lived reality than structures of intellectual riddles. The consciousness of time is the major theme of the anthology. The title poem suggests how construction of meaning takes place at the cost of sacrifices made. Moments are treated as signifiers of transcendental obliteration. The inexorable process of decay claiming dissolution of all moments of love and beauty in lives of individuals, all glory of historical achievements in the life of the mass, all forms of beauty through differences of seasons have a trail of endless affliction in human consciousness. The poems in this maiden anthology seek through metaphysical musing an ideal zero gravity zone – a liberation from the gravitational pull of the burdens of mental torments. The pursuit of meaning is like a martyrdom, a coming to terms with mortality. On the whole the poems in the volume offer an empathetic understanding of life, transcending ethnic and cultural divides.

The second collection of his Odia poetry came out in 1995. By the time he had published many of these poems in reputed Odia journals. The book is dedicated to village women of the state who like a bed of ever sprouting grass symbolize an inexhaustible source of life. In a letter to another bilingual writer and critic Dr. Madhusudan Pati Mahapatra wrote:

“I realized painfully that my Odia is inadequate; yet I wish to write in my own language, and reach out to my neighbor, the man in the street. Am I wrong... *KahibiGotie Katha* is my second collection, and I feel I have been honest about myself.”

Honesty is the hallmark of his Odia poetry that distinguishes his works from many other contemporary writers. By honesty in this context, one may witness his references to lived experience in his expression, marked by openness almost confessional at times. This results in a word order free from artificial extension of same thoughts through repetitions. He builds verbal structures around characters and situations selected from Odishan contexts but plant them against an international backdrop. For example, in the poem ‘Ichha’ (Desire), while speaking about a naked beggar boy at Kapilash, a picnic spot and a hill range that enshrines the temple of Lord Shiva, he brings in the fierce hunger of Ethiopia and Somalia. The irony is built up by the way these images are laced together. The reader comes home to an awareness of television as a picnic site. Images of miseries displayed on celluloid or screen gather an insulation around them as they are subjected to the exclusive order of the fun site. The poem about a day in the life of an M.P. depicts the schedule of the M.P., his ambition and hypocrisy. His dream is the dream of power – as incredible as of being able to walk on water. As an individual he not only precipitates his own drowning but as a representative of people he accelerates the process of withering of democracy. These are hinted metaphorically. Mahapatra does not explain but suggests through metaphors. While dealing with social issues or expressing intense musing on nature of human existence in general he tries to employ the same technique – exploiting the significance of words through metaphors and images for evoking subtle feelings. When he wants to talk about profound grief that fills the world he offers a metaphor – the silenced heart of morning holding the withered night jasmines.

The third collection of his Odia poems came out in 1997. It is marked by an ease, a mature grip over Odia rhythms compared to that of the earlier anthologies. The title of the book *Baya Raja* (The Mad King) signifies the irrational dictates of the unknowable despot. Both the first and the last poems are entitled “Baya Raja”. While the first poem tries to depict the identity of the tyrant the last poem constructs a collage of impressions regarding the sovereign frenzy of the wandering mind. The vagabond, the despot called mind carries the caravan of perceptions away from the worldly planes in the efforts of transcending death and suffering.

This collection contains the themes of self-reflexivity with a focus on the distrust of language and the very act of writing. The poem “Sabdara Sima” (The Frontiers of Words) is a poem on the very act of making a poem. The poem mirrors itself bearing a critique of



the art and craft of writing poetry. “Who knows what poetry is made of?”, the poet asks and implicates the answers with conspiracies of ideologies and hidden agenda of discourse that run through different phases of history. One can never be a poet by merely structuring words, by arranging fuel to words to burn the darkness of innumerable nights. In the poem “Gapa” (Fiction), Mahapatra reflects on how stories are written. He speaks of stories that are never written; the stories die as soon as they are born. Theoretically speaking, Mahapatra tries to locate the spots of erasure not easily visible in our discourse. He thinks of the subaltern, the marginalized, the working-class people whose stories are never foregrounded in our mainstream narratives. News items of rape, murder, warfare are referred to in his poems. But the contexts of the items get deconstructed as Mahapatra installs them against alternative backgrounds. Ultimately through a play of polarities he seems to generalize in favor of universal values.

In a poem (32<sup>nd</sup> poem in the anthology) he says how the lines of his poem stumble and turn lame. They stumble against the raped girl of Sarajevo with bullet wound, the wronged Amina Bibi of Kashmir, the age-old poverty of India. The poet appears to declare that he distorts the symmetry of his poem allowing the lines to lame and limp, inflicting pain of expiation unto him rather than searching for the surrogates to lay the blame on. In the poem he asks; How long we’ll put the blame on the British? The poem itself is very effective and the lines are not lame; they walk perfectly with their communicative potential.

The other anthologies manifest Mahapatra’s confidence at handling Odia language in poetry thus forging a diction and style bearing his signature. In the collection *Tikie Chhai* there are poems hinting at his political stand. He sharpens his indignation in many poems against communal violence and social injustice. In the poem “Khela”, he laments the death of the Australian missionary Graham Staines and his two sons who were burnt alive in their station wagon by right wing extremists in Manoharpur, Keonjhar in 1999. He says in the last stanza how the slogan “Jai Shri Ram” of that night of Manoharpur continues to lash the back of Odisha even now. In the poem “Bagha” (Tiger) in this collection the poet metaphorically relocates the source of the wild roar coming from the reading of scriptures. The roaring doesn’t come from the wild animals but from the sites of rape, murder and displacement. In another poem (Kabita Prati) he laments the death of soldiers brutally killed at Kargil and remembers their parents watching colorful flowers and bodies of their sons carefully draped in tricolor. The poet writes about winter evening at Kalahandi blanketed in a starving darkness. He is acutely aware of the miseries of people. In the poem “Ninada” he writes:

Hunger growls in someone’s belly  
The sky of Odisha sits still  
In the open beak of a crow.

Yet in the same anthology he writes a poem titled “Semiti Kichhi Munde inahin Kabi” where the accountability of a poet is in question. One can make sense of the power and helplessness

of the poet by reading this poem. One gets the idea that a poet on occasions creates monsters of words out of griefs of others. He does not assure others with false promises like a political leader. A poet only releases the dark shadows from his own body to the outside. He only listens to the unfathomable depths of silence. The fear that he frees from his own dreams revisit him again and again. He can play the role of God, hidden behind words and can burn a fake galaxy on a piece of paper. This reminds one of what Jayanta Mahapatra had asked in one of his essays: “Who will cry the cry of the dropping leaf? Who will whisper the whisper of the summer breeze? The politician or the poet? (Mahapatra 1992:43)

In the next anthology *Chali* he reiterates the same sense of loss and the tenacity of sorrows. For him “A grief lives on for years/Even in the skull of a forgotten poem.”. (Bhai bahira katha) He looks at history and future searching for rainbow in a burnt sky. He visualizes the course of history ever ablaze by warring religions. The poem “Ashoka” in this collection is a reminder of this. The poet imagines Ashoka flanked by two worlds; one that we see as a normal sight and the other we are afraid to. The poem tries to unmask peace which intensifies the darkness of endless nights. The horror of the carnage renders the celebration of victory futile.

The last collection *Jhanji* (Summer Wind) was published last year. On August 8, Jayanta Mahapatra released his last poetry book on his hospital bed. On 27<sup>th</sup> of the same month, he was gone forever. This collection of forty-nine Odia poems is about miseries and hope in the life of people and his personal life. The poems explore the condition of the common people of Odisha and the constituents of his own identity as a poet and a conscientious citizen. In the poem “Identity” he asserts that he is “not imprisoned by any narrative.” He discovers his own self as one who is ever elusive, trying to share an abandoned terrain with others in vain. A man who roams about with a sense of failure garnering courage from flowers that bloom without fear. He could pass for a starving dog, an aggressive ox, a helpless hand, a failed man with a voter card in folded palms, someone who has failed to order his life as desired by his parents. Yet all these thoughts haunt him as stories about him told by others. He is not caged by any single story, nor by a thousand stories spun around him.

Yet grief strikes him which is unpredictable. In the poem “Barsa” (Rains) he says that it does not come as a consequence or an immediate reaction to the death of his only son or Saroja, his caretaker or of a friend. It does not come with the news of a woman called Rani who is raped and murdered. Suddenly it seizes you like a pain in the neck the moment you get up from sleep or while you are eating your fond fried fish. It pierces you like the arrow shot by a ‘Banda’ tribal piercing the dusk of heart.

Poetry confers him the power to brave it all, endure and transcend with a greater understanding of silence that shrouds everything. The last poem of this last anthology is entitled “This Poem Empowers Silence”. The condensed expression of silence is amazingly layered. It speaks about how silence levels everything; confers equality to all. It could be

the silence that engulfed all affected by Corona virus. That silence is the terminal silence, death, the end of all stories. The poet quotes a line from Li Po: “We sit together, the mountain and I, till the mountain only is left.” The ways we use silence are varied. It’s like the comfort one gets from the silence that lies between the lines of a poem. Mahapatra’s poems abound in shaping silence that needs to be understood in philosophical and social contexts.

Jayanta Mahapatra has not used English and Odia for two different purposes. We cannot avoid the debate whether his Odia poems reflect the same competence that he has achieved through his English works. “A poem makes me see...in all directions, like a sieve, and I am almost relieved at that all important thought.”, he said in the context of his English poetry. The same is applicable to his Odia poetry too. Mahapatra’s Odia poetry seems to be a prolonged self-searching and that makes him a true inheritor of the Odia tradition. ■

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# Cinematic Prism of Tagore's *The Home and the World* : A Reflection on Satyajit Ray as an Auteur

Snehlata Tailor

In the opulent Indian Cinema, Satyajit Ray occupies a unique place. His auteurship has been crucial in positioning the authenticity of Indian cinema at the world cinematic horizon. He received glorification for his inimitable insights into the subtlety of cinematic art. Ray's intrinsic proclivity and intuitive grasp on the Bengal's literary aesthetics always enriched his auteurship. The Mise-en Scene of his films mirrors the same literary inspiration. His films have sought substance from the writings of legendary Bengali writers including Rabindranath Tagore and Bibhutibhushan. The present paper highlights as to how Tagore's concern for inclusive nationalism in *Ghare Baire* (1916)- translated as *the Home and the World* -is reflected in Ray's film (1984) as his Aesthetics and Humanistic discernment through cinematic craftsmanship without making any compromise between film and fiction.

**Keywords:** Cinema, Freedom struggle, Home, Nationalist, Swadeshi, World.

## Introduction:

Satyajit Ray (1921-1992), with a rich and remarkable oeuvre of both Cinematic and literary accomplishments, continues to fascinate and inspire young minds in the twenty-first century. He was the first filmmaker from India whose Cinematic capabilities were admired and acknowledged in the West at a time when very few people in the world hold mastery over the art of cinema. It is worth admiration how Satyajit Ray with an unprecedented and insightful approach to films received eminence amongst world's best filmmakers of that time like Robert Flaherty, Jean Renoir, and Akira Kuasova etc. His vast experience in the field of art certainly helped him in molding himself to be an excellent auteur. Satyajit Ray's upbringing in a family of writers provided him an insight to look at human life with the eyes of an artist. His learning in the field of art enriched his imaginative faculties which he could use for his films as well. His ardent interest in the films took him to be one of the founding members of the Calcutta Film Society. His affinities with this Society provided him a good exposure to world cinema and thus paved the foundation for his long journey as a film director. Being a curious and voracious reader of film journals, he could get a good knowledge of films made in a variety of languages i. e. French, Japanese, German. Satyajit's acquaintance with Jean Renoir, famous French film director whom he acknowledged as his

‘Cinematic Guru’, happened during 1948-49 when Renoir was staying in Calcutta for the shooting of his film *the River*. The Italian neorealist movement in films had a great influence on Satyajit which could be witnessed in his first film venture *Pather Panchali*. Responding in an interview, he enumerated the influences on him as a filmmaker. He reflected that Bibhutibhushan influenced him very much with his realistic depiction of innocent village life in *the Apu Trilogy*. He expressed that he was so deeply moved by the book that he decided to make it into a film. Another prominent influence on Satyajit was Rabindra Nath Tagore whose fusion of the eastern and western cultures and ideology impressed him as an artist. His reading of film journals by famous western filmmakers also enhanced his knowledge in the field. Describing the influence of Western film concepts he avers:

A film as a purely technological medium of expression developed in the West. The concept of an art form existing in time is a western concept, not an Indian one. So, in order to understand cinema as a medium, it helps if one is familiar with the West and Western art forms. A Bengali folk artist or a primitive artist will not be able to understand the cinema as an art form. Someone who has had a Western education is definitely at an advantage(24).

Besides, Jean Renoir’s urge to concentrate on Indian realities in Indian cinema also had a huge impression on Satyajit’s perspective in filmmaking. Although Ray’s early apprenticeship was not in Indian cinema as it was not as rich as the Western cinema, yet his learning from watching Hollywood films taught him as he said ‘not only what to do but what to not do’. Satyajit directed 36 films comprising 29 feature films, 5 documentaries and 2 short films. He has numerous awards and honours both National and internationals to his credit including India’s highest civilian award “the *Bharat Ratna* in 1992. His popular films include *Pather Panchali*, *the Game of Chess*, *Aparajita*, *Nayak*, *the Home and the World* and so on. His films are humanistic in approach. He always focuses on the beauty of individuality of each character. His effortful distance from politics and any ideology make him popular among common people. Ray has always made his films with the awareness of the social responsibilities which the task of filmmaking entails. As Chandak Sengupta comments: Ray continues to be portrayed as the gentle humanist, a superlative purveyor of nuance and emotional depth but an artist whose ideological position is of no great importance (16).

Satyajit’s most of the films are inspiration and adaptations of popular Bengali literary writings. Frequently, he returns to the works of his favorites, Bibhutibhushan and Rabindranath Tagore for the screenplay of his films. In contemporary times of fast moving life when people find it tedious to read any literary classics, adaptation of the classics into films is proving to be a good alternative. Though filmmakers have been making film based on the stories of popular novels and plays since the popularization of cinema as a source of entertainment, yet in the present scenario these film texts are immensely capturing the attention of young minds who have proclivity towards literary texts. If the young generations today desire to acquaint themselves with the writings of the Nobel Laureate Rabindra Nath Tagore, Satyajit Ray’s films could be a great help. Andrew Robinson rightly puts:

More than half a century later Tagore and Ray are indissolubly bound. If non-Bengalis know Tagore at all today, it is mainly by virtue of Ray's interpretations of him on film, and it is also true that those who suspect Tagore of lacking in substance tend to dismiss Ray as slight too (60).

### ***Home and the World*(1984)- a Cinematic Prism:**

In many films like *Charulata*, *the Home and the World*, *Three Daughters*, *the Goddess* etc. Ray has sought substance from Tagore's writings. Not only Tagore's stories but also his influence in the art of paintings is a great inspiration in the task of filmmaking for Satyajit Ray. In 1984 Satyajit Ray made a film on Tagore's much acclaimed novel *The Home and the World* (*Ghar Baire*). The novel was written in 1916. It captures the crucial period of Indian freedom struggle when the *Swadeshi* movement was becoming popular against the backdrop of the partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon in 1905. In the novel, Tagore's focus is rather on the justification of his critique of the radical nationalist propaganda in the light of the negative impact of *swadeshi* movement on the lives of poor Bengali peasants especially Muslims. The novel has highlighted how the *swadeshi* movement was also destroying communal harmony in the same spirit as the *Bang Bhangon* the basis of religion. Here, Tagore is concerned more on moralising on the means of achieving true freedom. As Gautam Kundu contends about the novel:

Tagore's *The Home and the World* boldly argues that an exclusionary nationalism that imposes on the masses an elitist solution to the problems of colonial rule, political freedom, and a class-based, majoritarian idea of nationhood was unworkable, and Tagore offers his own perspective on India's anti-colonial struggle: "consensual nationalism" (the phrase is Ashish Nandy's(55-56).

In the novel three characters Nikhil, Sandeep and Bimala represent three different perspectives in the intricacies of the early twentieth century Indian political scenario. The dichotomy of the home and the world symbolising the inner and outer conflict both at the level of an individual and as a proud citizen of a nation marks the quintessence of the novel. All these three characters experience a constant pull and conflict between their inner self and the outer world. To have harmony between the two is the challenge for them. The novel portrays how in the process of positioning themselves in the new realities of both the home and the world these characters have to lose their true self.

As a filmmaker it was a challenging task for Satyajit Ray to adapt the story to the demands of a film as it needs to be necessarily more about characters than the politically loaded discourse on nationalism and liberalism. Unlike the novel, Ray has used only one narrative voice in the film that is Bimala's. The idea behind choosing Bimala as the narrator might be the complexity of her character being a woman. Though some traces of the inner conflict in the film *The Home and the world* can be traced from Ray's earlier film *Charulata*. Like the character of Charulata, Bimala also has to face shame and guilt for her assertion of individual freedom under the mammoth burden of traditions. Reflecting on the theme of this dilemma in Ray's films Steve Vineberg comments:

You could say that the tragedy of most of Ray's characters lies in their inability to reconcile home and the world, and that he sees in them the collective tragedy of a nation hauled into the twentieth century (the 'World') with all the attendant traditions of a slower, more graceful life ('home') still clinging to their backs (33).

The film opens with a visual of fire with the long shot of camera, and then the voice of Bimala is audible with the narration "I have passed through the fire. What was impure in me has been burned to ashes. What remains I dedicate to him, to the man who accepted all my failings in the depths of his stricken heart. Now I know there is no one else like him".  
Devastated Bimala

appears on the screen vocalising her tragic fall due to the impurity which could only be purified through the passing in fire as it has the capacity to burn her sins and impurities. The film narration is set in the flashback happenings of events in Bimala's life. By beginning the story with the tragic end, the entire focus has been shifted about the how and why of the story. Like the novel, the action of the film takes place in rural Bengal against the backdrop of the tension prevailing due to Britisher's 'divide and rule policy'. In opposition to this policy, Indian nationalists came with the *swadeshi* movement having a motto to revive the belief in one's nation and its resources. Bimala narrates how in the home of an elite Bengali family, she enjoys all the comforts as the adorable wife of Nikhil, the owner of a large estate in Sukhsayar. Besides the couple, Bimala's sister in law also lives with them in the large mansion. The character of the widowed sister in law stands in a big contrast with the character of Bimala who is always busy folding her colourful sarees, and dressing in fashionable clothes. But ironically, at the end, Bimala too finds herself garbed in the same colourless white saree.

Nikhil who stands as a liberal Hindu with modern and progressive ideas wants her wife to come out of the traditional confines. He wishes to mould her into a wife who has the capacity to face the world. In order to enable her for the same he hires an English governess Ms. Gilby who trains Bimala in English manners, language, singing, playing piano, history, geography. He also persuades Bimala to meet his friend Sandip who is a popular leader of *Swadeshi* movement. Nikhil's character in the film has been portrayed as a liberal humanist who believes in constructive *swadeshi* cause. His ideology is quite opposite to Sandip's radical nationalism. But as soon as Bimala gets the chance to come out from the inner confines of home, it is not Nikhil but Sandip who becomes the object of her fascination. Sandip's first emergence has a charismatic effect on Bimala. She is easily convinced by Sandip's nationalist views and *Swadeshi* cause. The character of Sandip in the film is more humanised than that of the novel. He harbours a natural attraction towards Bimala who in his eyes is an exceptional woman as she has her own mind. Sandip calls her the queen bee and sets her on the high pedestal of worshipping as a goddess. Although he has a motive of convincing his friend Nikhil to support him by banning foreign goods in his estate through Bimala, yet his passion for Bimala becomes a higher force for him.

The character of Bimala in the film has been portrayed in a tragic light. She hangs like a pendulum between the two opposite forces of Sandip(world) and Nikhil (home). She feels concerned about Sandip's *swadeshi* cause and tries her best to support him when he asks her for money. But she too feels sexually attracted towards him and doesn't want him to leave the place. She is also conscious of Nikhil's goodness in letting her do what she wishes, and so feels bound to reciprocate this goodness. But, once she meets Amulya who reveals the true state of things conducted by Sandip in the name of Swadeshi, the charm is broken. She realises her mistake. She could foresee the danger looming in Nikhil's estate. Now she struggles to reassert her position as Nikhil's wife. She had already crossed the boundaries. She is aware of the fact that she has lost the right of a wife too. Though she returns to her confines not to ever go back in the outer world but her spirit is encumbered with guilt and regret. She is not the same Bimala who once left the inner confines. She is incapacitated and degenerated. That is why when Nikhil left the house to be engulfed by the fire of communal riots in his estate, she was not able to stop him. She accepts her misfortune and expresses her distress when she says, "I knew I would be punished". She is called a witch and is blamed for Nikhil's death. She remains silent when her sister-in-law asks her why she has sent Nikhil amid such danger. The film comes at the verge where it started. The long shot of fire at a far away distance is shown again. Now it becomes clear that the fire was burning in the estate of Nikhil. This fire of communal riots consumed Nikhil who sacrificed his life for bringing harmony. The tragic procession of people carrying Nikhil's body and then the quick shots revealing Bimala's transformation into a closely cropped haired widow mirror the tragic irony in Bimala's life. The film ends with the visual of Bimala sitting at the corner of the home, emotionless, colourless and devastated due to the happenings of the outer world. Bimala represents the irony that in the passionate flight of asserting her individuality away from her husband and home into the outer world, she is left with just a corner in the home where she will no longer be allowed to live a normal life but a widow. Her identity remains suspended at the end. The restlessness of her existence at the 'home' (Ghare) with even more intense traditional boundaries and the unease with the outer 'world' (Baire) of her time reveals the dilemma. Ray's attempt in revealing the dilemma with visual concreteness is admirable. Gautam Kundu rightly comments in this context:

Clearly, Ray puts the perspective of his (and India's) present on the representation of the past to a greater degree than does most conventional history. Such transformations are in the best tradition of cinematic adaptations: one serious artist interpreting another without slavish imitation. It is in such transformations, too, that the tropic dimensions of the film surface, and so ironically does its pessimism(63).

**Conclusion:** Ray's microscopic observance of ironies in human life makes his films both realistic and literary in Chekhovian fashion. His characters seem effortless and very true to life as it could retain the spirit of the original novel to a great extent. The film highlights the



dilemmas of gender, love, politics and modernity through the character portrayal of Nikhil, Bimala and Sandip. Satyajit's auteurship in choosing actors, mise-en scene, soundscapes and handling camera shots according to the demand is par excellence. The film like the novel itself, with the focus on the universal dilemmas discussed in detail above, continues to remain relevant in contemporary scenarios. Ray's humanist approach to cinema whilerendering the universal dilemmasjustifies his craftsmanshipthat goes beyond any time frame. Cinema as an art definitely has the capacity to appeal to the audience beyond time and space as it deals with the projection of various true dimensions of human life. Satyajit Ray as a unique auteur of Indian cinema could always be looked up to in order to find the true spirit of Cinema. As an artist and a talented auteur, Satyajit Ray continues to inspire India's cinematic aspiration. ■

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# Crack of the Whip: Memory and Trauma in Tara Patel's *Woman*

Ajay Kumar Shukla

Tara Patel's poem "Woman" examines the enduring effects of past experiences on the psyche of women, with a focus on themes of memory and drama. This research paper highlights the significance of the "crack of the whip", a phrase used in the poem as a central motif, analysing how it serves as a powerful metaphor for the trauma inflicted upon women by societal pressures and gender norms. Through a feminist perspective, the paper examines how memories of past traumas shape the woman's identity. The paper also tries to focus on a woman's journey from victim to Victor, highlighting the interplay between memory, pain, perseverance and resilience. This paper aims to investigate how women's lives are still affected by their past experiences by examining the intricacies of trauma and memory in the poem "Woman". The paper also deals with the strength and resilience of a woman in the face of challenges and adversity.

**Keywords:** Trauma, Memory, Identity, Empowerment, Gender, feminism,

Eunice De Souza, one of the most prominent voices of Indian English poetry compiled the representative poems of significant women poets in her anthology entitled *Nine Indian Women Poets: An Anthology*. This anthology includes poems that are technically rich, humorous, emotional, and witty. A general introduction and critical evaluations of each poet are included in the book for a better understanding of their poems. Prominent poets like Kamala Das, Mamta Kalia, Melanie Silgado, Eunice de Souza, Imtiaz Dharker, Smita Agarwal, Sujata Bhatt, and Charmayne D'Souza are part of this anthology. Tara Patel is also one of those nine poets whose poems are anthologised in this book. Though she is not a prolific writer and has not produced too much, even then she could create her own space in the group of famous Indian English women poets. She is one such strong voice of women's poetry which belongs to the period of what we may call the post-modernist phase of Indian English poetry. Tara Patel was born in 1949. She received her early schooling in Gujarat before moving to Malaysia, where she lived for a considerable amount of time—20 years, to be exact—before arriving in Mumbai, where she began writing and working as a freelance journalist. She was also acquainted with Nissim Ezekiel who not only supported

but also appreciated her efforts. She is a poet, a columnist and a freelance journalist. In 1992, the publication of her sole collection, *Single Woman*, occurred. In her Poems, she attacks the world of men. Tara Patel also speaks in an open language devoid of any nuance or ambiguity. Tara writes and speaks openly and honestly about the body- the woman's body. Some of the important themes which are seen in the poetry of Tara Patel are agonising experiences of women, alienation, despair and existential crisis, love, and relationship, challenge to the traditional norms, sexual frustrations, unemployment, Love and loss, longing and yearning, memory and nostalgia, conflict within selves, expectation versus reality, desire versus social compulsions, critique of male domination, and longing for companionship.

TS Eliot in his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" says that "the man who suffers is different from the mind which creates". Giving a bit of twist to this line Panicker and Chandraka in their article say that the woman who suffers and the mind which creates are so closely identified here in the poetry of Tara Patel that the theoretical tools of literary criticism are no longer relevant. What she has to say is said without disguise or deception. As mentioned earlier Eunice D'Souza compiled the poems of the important women poets in her collection entitled *Nine Indian Women Poets: An Anthology*. Some of the famous poems of Tara Patel, which are collected in this anthology are "Woman", "Request", "InBombay", "Mother", "In a Working Women's Hostel", and "Now and then". She beautifully deals with the theme of alienation in "Now and Then". Let us take an example "You want to talk to someone because silence is a kind of suicide." ("Now and then"). Her *Single Woman* is a challenge to the constructed nature of society. "I cannot live like you, mother, maintain the status quo. I've moved out of square one. I cannot be a dutiful daughter." ("Mother"). Longing for love and companionship can be seen in the poem "Request"

But because I'm pining for an old pleasure,  
Have lunch with me one of these days.  
I miss you most when I'm eating alone("Request")

In "Woman," Tara Patel delves into the complex feelings and experiences associated with being a woman in the world. The poem vividly captures the struggles, strength, persistence, and inner conflicts faced by the female protagonist as she passes through life's challenges. The poem opens with the powerful imagery of a woman's life being compared to the "crack of a whip". This metaphor establishes the tone for the rest of the poem, highlighting the harsh realities and unpleasant experiences that the woman lives through. As the idea develops, Patel delves into the woman's memories of past traumas, represented by the "thick, distorted welt" left behind by the whip. The welt is a raised mark on the skin produced by the blow of a whip. Despite the severe pains inflicted upon her, the woman persona does not want to be passive. Like Sarita, the central character of the *Dark holds no terrors* by Shashi Deshpande, she rebels against her oppressions. She turns her face to the whips and transforms her pain into a source of power, energy, strength and empowerment. The poem depicts the picture of a new woman who is ready to overcome the difficulties and emerges as an irrepressible figure not to be affected by the past traumas, instead, she chooses to carve out

her way of life. Throughout the poem, Patel addresses themes of memory, trauma, perseverance, and empowerment, providing readers with a poignant reflection on women's experiences in society. "Woman" is a powerful reminder of the strength and perseverance inherent in the female experience, especially in the face of adversity.

Let us now try to understand the poem in detail to evaluate the theme of memory and trauma in a better manner. In the opening stanza of the poem the poet metaphorically compares a woman's life to the "crack of a whip", representing the pain, anguish and oppression she faces. The woman learns to evade the whip, symbolising her attempts to pass through and resist societal pressures. However, the "thick, distorted welt of her memory" suggests that past traumas continue to haunt her, affecting her present experiences. The woman recalls the lessons she gained from her previous experiences of pain, suffering, misery and persecution. Despite her previous attempts to evade the whip, she soon rebels against it and confronts it directly. The imagery of pain becoming "a river in flood wreaking vengeance" shows the woman's transformation from a passive victim to a powerful agent of change. The woman seeks shelter and liberation by running away from repressive societal mores. She imagines living as an "escaped convict" or a "refugee," which symbolises her desire to break free from oppressive norms. The reference to living as a "yogi in the wilderness of civilization" suggests her pursuit of inner peace and spiritual fulfilment. Despite the scars of her past, represented by the "thick, distorted welt of her memory," she dreams of a life untouched by pain and oppression. The speaker contrasts the innocence and vulnerability of the woman's physical appearance with the harsh realities of her inner turmoil. The phrase "Baby-smooth skin" conjures up images of innocence and youth, implying that the woman's outward appearance is deceptive in the sense that it conceals the agony and suffering she has experienced.

"Woman" depicts trauma in a vivid and evocative manner, with the "crack of the whip" serving as a striking symbol of the woman's anguish, pain and oppression. This metaphorical representation of trauma appears throughout the poem, revealing the woman's physical, emotional, and psychic traumas. Image of the whip used in the poem is symbolic of the brutality and inhuman behaviour a woman faces in her life. As the poem moves, Patel delves deeper into the woman's experiences of pain and oppression, using powerful and evocative language to convey the emotional and psychological impact of trauma. Lines such as "She learns to dodge it as it whistles around her" and "sometimes it lands on the thick, distorted welt of her memory" depict a vivid picture of the woman's struggle to endure the trauma inflicted upon her. The lines suggest that the woman has internalized the pain and oppression she has experienced, carrying the scars of her past with her wherever she goes. Throughout the poem the emotional and psychological impact of trauma on the woman's psyche is palpable. Patel explores the woman's inner turmoil and conflict, depicting her as a resilient figure who does not want to be defined by her past traumas. Despite the pain and oppression she has endured, the woman rebels against her oppressors, turning her face to the whip and transforming her pain into a source of

strength and empowerment. Patel's portrayal of trauma in "Woman" is poignant and powerful, offering readers a glimpse into the profound impact of past experiences on the female psyche. Through vivid imagery and lyrical language, Patel conveys the depth of the woman's suffering. Patel celebrates the woman's fortitude, of the poem and also enhance the theme of memory and trauma. As stated earlier Metaphor is the strong figure of speech used at the beginning of the poem in the line "crack of the whip" which symbolises the pain and oppression experienced by a woman. Vivid imagery is employed throughout the poem to evoke powerful mental images. For example "whip whistling around the woman" and "the thick, distorted welt of her memory". The literary device of symbolism is also very effectively used. "The whip and the thick welt of memory" serve as symbols of trauma and its lasting impact on the woman's psyche. 'whip' becomes symbolic of the instrument of authority in the hands of patriarchy used to beat women into compliance. A woman's struggle against the whip has also been described in the poem. In that case, we can say that inanimate objects are given life so we have Personification here. There are certain hyperbolic expressions in the poem. For example, phrases like "pain became a river in flood wreaking vengeance" are used to highlight the magnitude of the woman's suffering. We have also the use of Assonance in the poem. The repetition of vowel sounds within words or phrases can create a musical or rhythmic effect. For example, the repetition of the "o" sound in the line "thick, distorted welt of her memory" contributes to the poem's auditory texture. Enjambment has also been used in the poem. The continuation of a sentence or phrase across multiple lines of poetry without a pause can create a sense of flow or urgency. Enjambment may be used strategically to maintain momentum or build suspense in the poem. Parallelism is a literary device which refers to the use of similar grammatical structures, phrases, or patterns to convey related ideas or themes. It involves presenting ideas in a balanced or symmetrical manner, often using repetition for more emphasis or clarity. In this poem, parallelism is employed when the speaker describes the woman's options for escaping her circumstances.

"She ran away to live as an escaped convict, or a refugee, or a yogi in the wilderness of civilization." In these lines, the parallel structure is evident in the repetition of the phrase "or a" followed by different nouns ("escaped convict," "refugee," "yogi"). This repetition creates a musical pattern and shows the various paths the woman might take in her search for freedom. Each option is presented in a similar format, highlighting the woman's agency and the breadth of possibilities available to her.

In conclusion, It can be stated that Tara Patel's poem "Woman" offers a poignant exploration of memory, trauma, and the search for freedom. Through evocative imagery, effective metaphors, and remarkable use of literary devices, Patel depicts a vivid portrait of a woman's struggle to overcome the scars of her past and assert her personality. Giving the full credit to Sashidesh Pande it can be said that the dark does not hold terror for her. Throughout the poem, the crack of the whip serves as a powerful symbol of the pain and oppression

experienced by the woman, while the “thick, distorted welt of memory” symbolises the lasting impact of her past traumas. These images highlight the complex interplay between memory and trauma, shaping the woman’s identity, influencing her actions, and ultimately boosting her quest for liberation. Memory, in particular, emerges as a central theme in the poem, shaping the woman’s understanding of freedom and influencing her journey towards empowerment. Through her memories of past traumas, the woman comes to realize what freedom means. Tara Patel skilfully captures the resilience and strength of the human spirit, offering readers a poignant meditation on the enduring quest for freedom in the face of adversity. Through the journey of the woman, the poet reminds us of the transformative power of persistence, resilience, determination, and self-determination, leaving a lasting impression on readers and inviting further reflection on the complexities of memory, trauma, and liberation in the lives of women. ■

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# The Translator's Dilemma: Navigating Cultural Bridges in Walter Benjamin's *The Task of the Translator*

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*It is the task of the translator to release in his own language that pure language that is under the spell of another, to liberate the language imprisoned in a work in his re-creation of that work - Walter Benjamin*

Walter Benjamin, a German critic and essayist, wrote a significant essay in 1923 called "The Task of the Translator." In this essay, he explored the complexities of translation, looking beyond just language to include philosophy and culture.

Benjamin talked about the challenge translators' face in balancing faithfulness to the original text and allowing the translation to have its own identity. He acknowledged that translations inevitably entail a degree of loss since certain aspects of the original, intricately connected to its language and culture may lack direct equivalents in the translated text.

He also saw language as a living thing that evolves over time. Translations, according to Benjamin, shouldn't be rigid but should adapt to changes in language and culture. He viewed the relationship between the original and its translations as a continuous chain within a broader cultural and historical context.

Benjamin introduced the idea of the "afterlife" of a work, suggesting that a translation can capture the essence of the original in ways the original might not. This dynamic relationship adds to the ongoing life of the work and allows for new ways of understanding and interpretation.

According to Benjamin, being a translator is more than just transferring meaning; it involves mediating between different languages and cultures, navigating the tensions between staying true to the original and creatively transforming it for a successful translation.

He also talked about the "aura" of a work, the unique presence it has in its original form. Translators, he argued, must try to preserve or recreate this aura in the translated work, which requires a deep understanding of both the source and target languages and cultures.

“The Task of the Translator” remains a crucial piece in translation theory, sparking discussions about what translation involves, the complex relationship between languages and cultures, and the important role of translators as connectors of different worlds.

In the beginning of his essay, Benjamin makes a bold statement: “No poem is meant for the reader, no picture for the beholder, no symphony for the audience.” What he’s saying is that art isn’t just about delivering a message; it’s more about the art itself. This sets the stage for his main point about translation.

Traditionally, debates about translation focused on being faithful either to the original or to the target readers. Should the translation stick closely to the original, even if it might seem strange in the target language, or should it be adjusted to suit the target readers, possibly changing the author’s original style? Benjamin offers a different perspective. He shifts our attention from the idea that translation is all about conveying specific meanings. Instead, he suggests that translation is more about trying to capture the pure essence of the language itself.

Benjamin is saying that translation goes beyond just passing on ideas. It’s an attempt to reach a form of language that’s pure and true. This idea challenges the conventional views on translation, adding a new dimension to the discussion. It’s not just about fidelity to the original or catering to the target audience; it’s about the very nature of language and how it can be expressed across different cultures. In *The Task of the Translator* Benjamin says:

*In the appreciation of a work of art or an art form, consideration of the receiver never proves fruitful. Not only is any reference to a particular public or its representatives misleading, but even the concept of an “ideal” receiver is detrimental in the theoretical consideration of art, since all it posits is the existence and nature of man as such. Art, in the same way, posits man’s physical and spiritual existence, but in none of its works is it concerned with his attentiveness. No poem is intended for the reader; no picture for the beholder; no symphony for the audience.*

(Benjamin 2002: 253)

In his *The Task of the Translator* Benjamin explores whether translations are meant for people who don’t understand the original language. They suggest that the reason for translating something is to share it with those who can’t understand the original. The author argues that the original work and its translation often have different significance in the world of art. Normally when a literary work communicates, it doesn’t say much to those who understand it well. Its main quality isn’t about passing on information but something deeper, often seen as mysterious or poetic. The author believes that a translator can only capture this essence if they are, in a sense, a poet themselves.

The author also discusses a common issue with bad translations, where the translator focuses too much on trying to communicate and ends up losing the essential, unspoken part



of the work. They emphasize that translation is a form, and to understand it, you need to go back to the original work. The laws of translation are found within the original, and the crucial question is whether a work is truly translatable. This can mean either finding a suitable translator or if the nature of the work allows for translation. In a way, the author is exploring the purpose of translation—whether it’s mainly for those who don’t know the original language. They argue that the real essence of a literary work often goes beyond direct communication and that a good translation requires a deep understanding of the poetic or mysterious aspects of the original.

Benjamin discusses the concept of translatability, suggesting that certain works have a quality that makes them suitable for translation. This doesn’t mean these works must be translated, but rather, their significance becomes apparent through their translatability. Translations, even if excellent, don’t directly impact the original’s significance. He introduces the idea that translations emerge after the original work’s creation, forming part of its continued existence.

Benjamin says that the life of works of art, including translations, is like the afterlife of living creatures. They want us to think about this idea objectively, not metaphorically. The author stresses that great works have a history, starting from earlier models, being created in the artist’s time and continuing to exist in the following generations, sometimes becoming famous. He explores the relationship between life and purposiveness in translation. Many argue that translation serves the purpose of expressing the inherent connection of languages. While a translation can’t reveal this hidden relationship, it can represent it in an embryonic or intensive form.

Benjamin challenges the traditional theory of translation, asserting that translations demonstrate the kinship of languages more profoundly than the similarity between two literary works. Some argue that the essence of changes in language and meaning lies in the life of language and its works, not solely in the subjectivity of posterity. Benjamin highlights the unique role of translation in overseeing the maturing process of the original language and the birth of its own. The kinship of languages, shown in translations, is not about vague resemblance but the suprahistorical unity of intentions, referred to as “pure language.” This pure language emerges when all languages’ intentions complement one another, despite differences in the way they convey meaning. Translation, in this context, continually tests the growth of languages and their hidden meanings. Benjamin says:

*Where should one look to show the kinship of two languages, setting aside any historical connection? Certainly not in the similarity between works of literature or in the words they use. Rather, all suprahistorical kinship between languages consists in this: in every one of them as a whole, one and the same thing is meant. Yet this one thing is achievable not by any single language but only by the totality of their intentions supplementing one another: the pure language. Whereas all individual elements of foreign languages-words, sentences, associations-are*

*mutually exclusive, these languages supplement one another in their intentions. This law is one of the fundamental principles in the philosophy of language, but to understand it precisely we must draw a distinction, in the concept of “intention,” between what is meant and the way of meaning it.*

(Benjamin 2002: 256-257)

Benjamin talks about the uniqueness of translation compared to the work of a poet. Some suggest that while a poet’s focus is on specific aspects of language, a translator’s task is to capture the overall intention that produces an echo of the original in the target language. Unlike a literary work, a translation stands on the outskirts of the language *forest*, calling out to capture the essence of the original work in a foreign language.

The intention of a translator is seen as derivative, ultimate, and ideational, driven by the motif of integrating multiple languages into one true language. This true language is not a means for individual sentences or literary works to directly communicate but serves as a place where languages themselves, with their unique ways of meaning, come together and reconcile.

Benjamin posits that if there is a language of truth—a silent repository of ultimate secrets sought by all thought—it is hidden in translations. The philosophical genius yearns for a language manifested in translations, a language that embodies perfection and is concealed within them. He explores how translation differs from poetry. They argue that while a poet focuses on specific linguistic aspects, a translator’s task is to capture the overall intention of the original work in a foreign language. Translations, in their essence, contribute to the integration of languages into a true language and hold the potential for revealing a language of truth. Berman, Antoine says:

*In Benjamin’s eyes ‘The Task of the Translator’ was part of a greater whole, a metaphysics of language in which translation would occupy a pivotal position – more so than in conventional philosophies of language. To a certain extent ‘translation’ would come to replace ‘communication’, a notion that Benjamin spurned.*

(Berman, 2018: 30)

Benjamin surveys the challenges of translating by examining the traditional concepts of fidelity and freedom in translation. Fidelity, or faithfulness to the original, is often at odds with the freedom to convey the intended meaning in a translated work. He suggests that fidelity in translation faces difficulties in fully reproducing the poetic significance of the original. While bad translations may take too much liberty, a real translation is considered transparent, allowing the pure language to shine on the original. He says:

*Fidelity and freedom in translation have traditionally been regarded as conflicting tendencies. This deeper interpretation of the one apparently does not serve to*

*reconcile the two; in fact, it seems to deny the other all justification. For what does freedom refer to, if not to the reproduction of the sense, which must thereby give up its lawgiving role? Only if the sense of a linguistic creation may be equated with that of the information it conveys does some ultimate, decisive element remain beyond all communication-quite close and yet infinitely remote, concealed or distinguishable, fragmented or powerful. In all language and linguistic creations, there remains in addition to what can be conveyed something that cannot be communicated; depending on the context in which it appears, it is something that symbolizes or something symbolized.*

(Berman, 260-261)

The concept of freedom in translation is discussed in terms of its impact on the pure language. Translation is seen as a way to release the pure language that exists in exile among foreign tongues, freeing it from the confines of a specific work. The author notes that great translators like Luther and Holderlin have expanded the boundaries of their own language through translation.

Benjamin emphasizes the importance of fidelity for conveying the sense of the original while highlighting the value of freedom in liberating the pure language embedded in a work. The role of the translator is compared to a tangent touching a circle lightly, establishing the course of fidelity in the freedom of linguistic expression. Here Benjamin quotes Rudolf Pannwitz, who stresses the need for translators to allow their language to be profoundly influenced by the foreign tongue, transforming and deepening it in the process.

The author discusses the translatability of works based on their language quality and distinctiveness. The higher the quality, the more translatable a work is, even if its meaning is briefly touched upon. Originals remain translatable, while translations can become untranslatable due to the loose attachment of meaning.

Holderlin's translations of Sophocles are cited as examples where the harmony of languages is so profound that sense is touched by language like an aeolian harp touched by the wind. Holderlin's translations, especially from Sophocles, are prototypes of their form, subject to the danger that expanded and modified language may enclose the translator in silence.

Benjamin mentions that Holderlin's translations from Sophocles were his last work, where meaning plunges into the depths of language. However, there is a stop or limitation, particularly in Holy Writ, where meaning no longer acts as the watershed for language. In such cases, translation serves the interest of languages and demands confidence in translating literally while maintaining freedom in the shape of an interlinear version. Benjamin concludes his article by stating, "all great texts contain their potential translation between the lines". ■

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# Jacque Derrida's Thesis on Deconstruction

Mallikarjun Patil

Man is endowed with language. That language has made him learn and be social/intellectual. There are three stages in man's social evolution. The first was tribal life; the second monarchical; and the third socialist-democratic. People now cannot think of a selfish ideology though Islam misleads its followers or the white people still think that Nordic race is more intelligent of all the races. The present article present Jacques Derrida's views on deconstruction.

## Introduction

Of all the critical theories, classical theories dominated by Aristotle gave a thought to right thinking. Aristotle thought of structures behind anything – a table or an idea of family. So there is a modern theory called structuralism. It is said, "Structuralism is (was) a movement of thought affecting a number of intellectual disciplines, including anthropology, philosophy, history and literary criticism." (*Cambridge Guide* 1075) Since Derrida began his career as a structuralist, this foreground knowledge is necessary. Structuralists made use of linguistics, specially Saussure's findings about sign, binary oppositions, Levi-Strauss's application of it in Anthropology, Barthes' application of it too. So the underlying idea is that all human performances presuppose a system of differential relations. The famous structuralists are Tzvetan Todorov, A.J. Greimas, Jeant Genette, Roman Jakobson, Jonathan Culler and others. Wikipedia observes that,

Post-structuralism is a term for philosophical and literary forms of theory that both build upon and reject ideas established by structuralism, the intellectual project that preceded it. Although post-structuralists all present different critiques of structuralism, common themes among them include the rejection of the self-sufficiency of structuralism, as well as an interrogation of the binary oppositions that constitute its structures. Accordingly, post-structuralism discards the idea of interpreting media (or the world) within the pre-established, socially constructed structures.(Wikipedia Structuralism 1)

A post-structuralist critique, then, might suggest that in order to build meaning out of such an interpretation, one must (falsely) assume that the definitions of these signs are

both valid and fixed, and that the author employing structuralist theory is somehow above and apart from these structures. They are describing so as to be able to wholly appreciate them.

The important post-structuralists are Jacques Derrida, Roland Borthes, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze and others.

The term Deconstruction is part of post-structuralist theory. Derrida became post-structuralist later. Deconstruction refers to approaches to understanding the relationship between text and meaning. Derrida who originated it turned away from Platonism's ideas of true forms and essences which take precedence over appearances, instead of considering the constantly changing complex function of language, making static and idealist ideas of it inadequate. Derrida places emphasis on the appearance of language in both speech and writing. He suggests that essence is to be found in its appearance. Deconstruction argues that language and the things like truth and justice are complex, unstable and difficult to determine. Language is fluid, or unstable.

Deconstruction as a theory is applied to the fields of literature, law, anthropology, history, architecture and arts. M.H. Abrams and Harpham thinks,

Deconstruction designates a theory and practice of reading the question and claims to subvert/undermine the assumptions that the system of language is based on grounds that are adequate to establish the boundaries, the coherence or unity, and the determinate meanings of a literary text. (Abrams 80)

Jacques Derrida's various works speak of deconstruction. His work *Of Grammatology* introduced his possible notions of deconstruction. So did his works *Difference, Speech and Phenomena* and *Writing and Difference*. Derrida presented his paper "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences" at a seminar at John Hopkins' University, USA on 21<sup>st</sup> October 1966. Both Roland Barthes and Michael Facoult were witnesses to that. He published the essay as the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter of his book *Writing and Difference* later. Though the lecture intended to popularize structuralism, it was cited as the starting point for post-structuralism. The conference was about "The Language of Criticism and the Sciences of Man" (18-21 Oct 1966). The conference was arranged by Rene Girard and Richard Macksey, and funded by Ford Foundation. The others who attended the conference were Paul de man, Jean Hyppolite, and Jacques Lucan. Derrida's essay was first published in English in 1970 in the volume *The Structuralist Controversy*.

Derrida begins his essay "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" with the statement that "Perhaps something has occurred in the history of the concept of structure that could be called an event." (Derrida, "Structure", 292).

The concept of structure is as old as episteme (western science). This structure is referred to have a center (presence, a fixed origin). This center orients, balances and organizes

the structure. All structures are organized ones. But this organizing principle of the structure limits the freeplay of the structure. In that case of a fixed origin, the substitution is impossible. Change is forbidden. However, the center is unique. The classical thought believed that the center is within the structure and outside it. This is said paradoxically. The center is at the center of the totality or totality has its center elsewhere. Derrida thinks the center is not the center. The concept of centered structure is in fact the concept of a freeplay based on a fundamental ground. It is like speaking of the origin as the end. So change is the law of nature. Change can be repetition, substitution, transformation and permutation. This change is identified as presence. Derrida observes:

If this is so, the whole history of the concept of structure, before the rupture I spoke of, must be thought of as a series of substitutions of center for center, as a linked chain of determinations of the center. Successively, and in a regulated fashion, the center receives different forms or names. The history of metaphysics, like the history of the West, is the history of these metaphors and metonymies. Its matrix, – if you will pardon me for demonstrating so little and for being so elliptical in order to bring me more quickly to my principal theme – is the determination of being as presence in all the senses of this world. It would be possible to show that all the names related to fundamentals, to principles, or to the center have always designated the constant of a presence – *eldos, arche, telos, energeia, ousia* (essence, existence, substance, subject) *aletheia*, transcendentality, consciousness, or conscience, God, man, and so forth. (Derrida 296)

Change is the law of nature. Change occurs as things (seemingly permanent) get displaced or substituted over the course of time. There is no fixed origin for the structure, accordingly. So we can think that there is no fixed center; it has no natural locus. But this center is an ever changing function in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions come into play. So the absence of a fixed center leads to continuous discourse. Derrida puts it thus: “The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the interplay of signification *ad infinitum*.” (Derrida 297)

Frederick Nietzsche a critic of metaphysics; Freud, a critic of self-presence; Martin Heidegger of ontology and others noted this rupture as an event. This circle is unique. They speak of the history of metaphysics and its deconstruction. Derrida states,

That there is no transcendental or privileged signified and that the domain or the interplay of signification henceforth has no limit. For the signification ‘sign’ has always been comprehended and determined, in its sense, as a sign of, signifier referring to a signified, signifier different from its signified. If one erases the radical difference between signifier and signified, it is the word ‘signifier’ itself which ought to be abandoned as a metaphysical concept. When Levi-Strauss says in the preface to *The Raw and the Cooked*

that he has “sought to transcend the opposition between the sensible and the intelligible by placing (himself) from the very beginning at the level of signs,” the necessity, the force, and the legitimacy of his act cannot make us forget that the concept of the sign cannot in itself surpass or bypass this opposition between the sensible and the intelligible. The concept of the sign is determined by this opposition: through and throughout the totality of its history and by its system. (Derrida 296)

Then Derrida surveys the human sciences such as ethnology as decentring came about. The history of metaphysics and its concepts were dislocated, driven from its locus, and forced to stop considering itself as the culture of reference. This is political, economic and technical. Claud Levi-Strauss was the first theorist to apply deconstruction in mythology. Derrida refers to Levi-Strauss’s concepts of Nature-Culture which are binaries. The opposition is dissolved through by something called the scandal. Derrida introduces Levi-Strauss in order to show how deconstruction works in philosophy. He studies his anthropology and myth. Levi-Strauss analysed the relationships between elements of cultural systems such as mythology. Derrida treats structures as free-floating (playing) sets of relationships. Why should structuralist hold on to center? He thinks a newer and freer thinking about structures will emerge.

By this Derrida questioned the assumptions of the western philosophical tradition and culture. He called this attitude as deconstruction. It is a radicalization of a certain spirit of Marxism. Derrida has read most of the western thinkers from Plato to Rousseau, and found that they uncritically allowed metaphorical deep models. This disturbed some people’s language and conscience. This flawed human knowledge created binary oppositions. Deconstruction is a critique of such western metaphysics.

Derrida who did his masters dissertation on Edmund Husserl spoke of the limits of phenomenology. In his presentation on this at John Hopkins’ Derrida did not speak much of structuralism though the conference was on structuralism. He spoke rather against it. The American audience called him post-structuralist, and hence the label. Once the proceedings appeared in 1970, the book was called *Structuralist Controversy*. He made friendship with Paul de Man who later worked in the field of deconstruction. But Derrida had a mixed relationship with Jacques Lucan.

Derrida’s later vision of life is reflected in *Speech and Phenomena Of Grammatology* and *Writing and Difference*. He was indebted to both Husserl and Heidegger. Derrida bothered about ‘what’s meaning?’, its historical relationships, voice as a value of presence, presence of meaning to consciousness, self-presence. He speaks of the other as opposed to the same. He referred to Husserl, Heidegger, Hegel, Foucault, Descartes, Battelle, Levi-Strauss, Freud, Artaud and others. Does western metaphysics originate meaning? Philosophical enterprise is logocentric, taking us back to Judaism and Hellenism. There are also certain prejudices in western culture (for example such binaries as sacred / profane). He thinks binaries are



dangerous (Saussure also believed in binaries) as they are imposed on reality, limiting virtues and excellence. Deconstruction exposes these hierarchies and categories.

Gradually Derrida became one of the most influential Western theorists. His work took an ethical turn in the 1990's. Deconstruction influenced aesthetics, literature and criticism, sociology, history, law, psychoanalysis, theology, feminism, gay and lesbian studies and politics. Geoffrey Hartman, Helene Cixous, Julia Kristeva, are a few of them influenced by him. ■

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# Satyavati: The Woman Hero in *Mahabharata*

Kajal Sutradhar

In *Mahabharata*, we see the greatest heroes who are still remembered for their *kirtior* fame. Along with the legendary heroes, there are some unforgettable women characters who are not only the mother of heroes, wife of heroes or the daughter of heroes but also the great power of femininity who took the decisions, continued the lineage of the Kuru dynasty by showing the appropriate path and serve as the great reservoir of emotional strength. There are so many heroic women characters in *Mahabharata* like Gandhari, Kunti, Draupadi, Savitri, Damayanti, Shakuntala but my objective in this paper is to discuss the character of Satyavati who may occupy very little narrative place in comparison with other major women characters, her crucial role in the *Adiparvan* is perhaps the base of the entire story of the great epic. Usually considered as scheming woman with extensive ambition, I think her character is significantly different from other women characters for two reasons. Firstly, she is the mother of Vyasa, composer of the great epic and she had two other royal sons Vichitravirya and Citrangada. Secondly, as the royal wife of Shantanu, she employed a great skill and intelligence to continue the royal dynasty and all her activities and decisions have a great influence upon the inevitable flow of future events. Finally, all her life can be finely analysed as the model of *pravritti* and *nivritti* dharma which are the basis of *Mahabharata*. Satyavati engages herself in the different activities to continue the royal dynasty and it is the same woman who renounces the entire authoritativeness at the end of *Adiparvan* and takes refuge in the forest along with her daughters-in-law Amba and Ambalika to enjoy *Vanaprasthya*.

Keywords: femininity, renunciation, *pravritti*, *nivritti*, religion.

The great epic *Mahabharata* records the sagas of magnificent kings, warriors and great victory. Amidst the celebration of masculine greatness, a very limited space is given to the women characters although they are integrally attached to the great narrative. They remain on the margins and they become active only in the patriarchal perspective. Amidst so many powerful women characters, Satyavati attracts our attention for her crucial role in the *Adiparvan*. First, she is the mother of Dvaipayana Vyasa, the author of the great epic, as the mother of Vichitravirya, and the royal queen who plays vital role for the continuation of the great royal dynasty after the death of her sons. Besides, through her great intelligence and foresightedness, Satyavati becomes example of the earliest woman character as an

individual- who lives on her own conditions. Her character is significantly different from other women characters as being a woman of fisherman community, she becomes the main guiding force of Hastinapur and at the same time, she ignores the unfair demands of man and society and she lives a life of her own.

George M. Williams in his *Handbook of Hindu Mythology* describes Satyavati's story "quite interesting, as well as complicated because of all the nested elements. She was born of a fish who had been cursed, given to a king but returned because of her smell. Named three times, and impregnated by a sage, who gave her a famous child but returned her virginity." (262)

The name of Satyavati's mother is Adrika who was a nymph. She had been turned into a fish by the curse of a *brahmin*. One day, the semen of the great sage *Uparicaravasu* fell in the river Ganga and having swallowing it, Adrika became pregnant. Later, she was caught by a fisherman who found one boy and one girl in the stomach of the fish. The fisherman accepted the boy and returned back the girl for her repellant odor of fish coming out of her body. The queer smell of fish brought her name *Matsyagandha*. The fisherman also named her *Kali* because she was very much dark-complexioned.

It is true that compared with other women characters in *Mahabharata*, a very little space has been given to Satyavati. She occupies little space in the grand narrative in comparison to Gandhari, Kunti and Draupadi. Yet we never call her minor character for two reasons. Firstly, she is the mother of the author-character Vyasa and secondly, she has employed a great intelligence and presence of mind by taking the major decision of *niyoga* which helps to continue the lineage of Kuru dynasty.

Although, Satyavati had a high-born origin, she was brought up by the low-caste Dasaraja who belonged to the fisher-folk. Being a *sudra*, she becomes the main guiding spirit of Hastinapur and her surreptitious sexual union with the great sage *Parashara* who bore him the son Vyasa has a vital role for her future control over the political situation of Hastinapur. In the description of Vaisampayana in the *Adiparvan*, she is not only exceptionally beautiful but also possesses every quality of womanhood. She ferried people across the river Yamuna in her father's boat. Such a beautiful ferrying girl attracts the attention of even ascetics and risis. In such circumstances, she met risi Parasara who was a pilgrim and on his first sight, he became desirous of that beautiful fisher-girl. When the sage wanted to know about her parentage, she informed that, since her father had no son, she had to ferry thousands of people. Professor Sinjini Bandopadhyay in her *Satyavati in Mahabharata in Women in Ancient India: Myriad Voice* rightly points out how being a woman she reversed the gender-role prescribed by society. She rightly analyses:

For the twenty first century reader she seems to be aware of the fact that being a woman she is doing a man's work; for ferrying people one needs immense physical strength. (Many later visual representations of Satyavati have immortalized this aspect of her character – of a beautiful woman rowing a boat). ( Bandopadhyay 72).

Being a seer, Parasara seeks a son through his union with Satyavati and this son will play vital role in the continuation and protection of the great Kuru lineage. When the sage advances towards her for union, Satyavati says that it is impossible for her to be united as the other holy men of the other side of river may witness them. Then the great ascetic has created a mist through her *yogic* power. After their union, Satyavati asks a straight and logical question – how will she go back to her father after losing her virginity? Thus, Satyavati equates her individual problems with the social problems. In fact, it is well-known fact that when it is the question of woman’s sexuality, it does not remain individual and subjective, rather it becomes a social issue. Parasara grants Satyavati the boon to get back her virginity again and in the second boon, she wanted to remove the repellant odor of her body. Vyasa is conceived, born and grows into adulthood on the same day. He begs departure from his mother by saying that he would come to her whenever she thought of her. We will see later that, Vyasa has kept his words and whenever there is any crisis in Kuru dynasty, Vyasa appears with unfailing solution.

Later, Shantanu, the king of Kuru dynasty is captured by the beauty of this fisher-girl and Satyavati’s father told him that he would give her daughter to him only when her son is appointed the future king of Hastinapur. Although, Satyavati understands that her father is doing immense injustice with king Shantanu who has son Devabrata – the natural heir of Hastinapur, she remains silent at her father’s proposal and she has to undergo a great remorse for her silence. King Shantanu is so enamored by the beauty of Satyavati that he does not hesitate to deprive his elder son and he agrees with the proposal of the fisher-man. We see in the epic that Devabarata, the son of Ganga, eventually realizes the wish of his father and he determines for life-long celibacy. Nothing can break his oath and hence he is known as *Bhishma* in *Mahabharata*. Significantly, after the death of Shantanu, Satyavati rules Hastinapur with the sagacious suggestions of Bhishma. After the premature death of Chitrangada, Vichitravirya becomes the king of Hastinapur. It is Bhishma who abducts Amba, Ambika and Ambalika – the three princesses of Kashi for Vichitravirya. All these actions are carried on by Bhishma by the order of Satyavati. Later, when Hastinapur faces a deep crisis after the death of Vichitravirya, Satyavati takes the decision of *niyoga*-to appoint her first son Vyasa to impregnate her daughters-in-laws. She may seem shrewd and scheming for such decision but if we consider the situation from broad spectrum, her decision is wise so far the welfare of state and entire humanity is concerned.

Actually, Satyavati requests Bhishma first to be the king of Hastinapur and to bring heirs on his sisters-in-law. Bhishma repeatedly utters his reluctance as he long ago renounces his right for throne and he is vowed for life-long celibacy. Satyavati seems a great diplomat in her discussion with Bhishma where, concealing the pain of death of son, she is much more concerned to take crucial decision for the futurity of Hastinapur. In the language of Arti Dhand, this decision of summoning Vyasa to impregnate her two daughters-in-law is the seminal point from which the whole narrative of the great epic is given rise to another dimension. To make her daughters-in-laws understand, Satyavati shows her utmost cunning

and sheer intelligence. She explains to them that this system of *niyoga* is quite appropriate and legitimate. The responsibility to restore the Kuru dynasty is up to them and Satyawati imposes her decision upon Ambika and Ambalika. In the epic, we see this system of *niyoga* brings terrible effect for the women. Arti Dhand has rightly pointed out that the choice of partners is made by the authoritative others. She continues “The women function as passive instruments for the will of husbands and affinal kin and are primarily viewed as the means for the patriarchal family to achieve its own ends.”

For Ambika and Ambalika, Satyawati is that authoritative figure whose ultimate target is to bring forth the heir of Kuru dynasty and she is never worried about the psychological trauma of her daughters-in-laws. She even suppresses the conditions of Vyasa that both Ambika and Ambalika should bear his looks, his smell and his garb. Satyawati knows that telling of this truth may create a sort of resistance from the part of her daughters-in-law. As a result, Ambika closes her eyes seeing the matted hair and fiery eyes of Vyasa and this incident gives birth to a son Dhritarastra who is born-blind. Satyawati is upset as a blind son cannot be the future king. Then Satyawati exhorts Ambalika to be united with Vyasa and she, too, becomes pale seeing the appearance of the great sage. As a result, a pale son Pandu is born. Satyawati is still desirous for another son and this time, a beautiful *dasi* is sent to him and a great son Vidura is born, comes to be known as the brother of Dhritarastra and Pandu. Eventually, Vidura will be known as extremely religious and the son of *Dharma* like Yudhishtira.

The epic *Mahabharata* is full of various anecdotes. We see that Pandu is initiated to the throne of Hastinapur and soon he renounces all his royal happiness by taking refuge in the forest with his two wives Kunti and Madri. There, he receives five divine sons through the mantras of Kunti but for the curse of sage Kindama, he died at the time of sexual union with Madri. Kunti returns Hastinapur and the dead bodies of Pandu and Madri are laid in front of Satyawati. She is so grief-stricken that she falls on the ground. The last time we see Satyawati when Vyasa appears before her mother when Pandu is dead. Vyasa realizes that his mother has undergone many sufferings. She has to bear the death of her husband Shantanu and her sons Chitrangada and Vichitravirya. The royal lineage of Hastinapur is active only through the grace of the ascetic-son Vyasa. Dhritarastra ascends the throne of Hastinapur and though his blind indulgence, Duryodhana becomes insolent day by day. So, Vyasa realized that it was the right moment of renouncement from all worldly ties. He tells his mother that the happiness is over from the world and now more terrible things will happen now. Now she should spend the final phase of her life through meditation in the forest. Taking permission from Bhishma, she goes to Badrikashram along with her two daughters-in-law Ambika and Ambalika. Sinjini Bandopadhyay has rightly pointed out that the epic poet has granted a beautiful passage for Satyawati and this passage is off-quoted for its exploration of eternal truth and lyrical exuberance.

In the language of Sinjini Bandopadhyay,

It is in words of great lyric beauty that prophecies are told to her before she leaves Hastinapur and the epic poet grants her a rare moment, not granted to any other woman character except Draupadi, which can be called an epic moment where she, along with the readers/listeners find a clear relationship between past, present and future.

Amalaka kâlâ%/pratyupasthita-dâruGâ%/  
œa%œa%pâpîyadîvasa%/p[thvi gatayauvanâ/  
bahumâyâsamâkirGo/nânâdocasamâkulah/  
luptadharmakriyâcaro/ghora% kâlo bhavicyati/  
Gaccha teamyogaâsthâya/yuktâ vasa tapovane/ (I, 119,6-8)

Noted Bengali critic Nrisinghaprasad Bhaduri in his analytical discussion on Satyavati in *MohabharaterAshtadoshi* has pointed out how the character of Satyavati can be a supreme example *pravritti* and *nivritti* dharma - the two streams of our life and these are manifested in the actions of the great epic. It is *pravritti* which exhorts an individual to do all the activities in life. On the other hand, *Nivritti* dharma teaches an individual to renounce the world which is full of vices. Through the initiation of *guru*, the seed of redemption is sown into his or her mind so that he or she can get ultimate liberation - *moksha*. Bhaduri has pointed out that it is Vyasa who assumes the role of *guru* in her mother's life. The seer Vyasa sees in the mirror of futurity that for the unfair attitudes of the *Kauravas*, the world will come to an end. More Satyavati will remain there, more she will witness the terrible degeneration and destruction of her own clan. So, Vyasa proposes Satyavati to go to his own hermitage where she will practice austerity. Satyavati abides by her son's words and leaving behind the endless royal conspiracy of Hastinapur she begins to spend her life in the quiet forest and one day, she leaves from this unhappy world.

In chapter two entitled *Nivritti Dharma* the Search for the Highest of her Woman as Fire, Woman as Sage, Arti Dhand has argued that it may seem that *nivritti* dharma is practiced by the male personalities in *Mahabharata*, there are ample evidences how women emaciate themselves by *vanaprashthya* style. She says:

In some cases, it appears that elderly widowed women retreated into the forest even on their own, without spouse. This is the case with the generation of Kaurava women preceding Kunti and Gandhari. Satyavati, Ambika, and Ambalika all set out together to retire to the forest. (82)

After a survey on the women ascetics like Pingala, Kunigargya, Sandili and Sulabha the writer has pointed out that, there were numerous women active in *nivritti* preoccupations. Although it appears that the final goal or *moksah* is only the prerogative of the male personalities, the *Mahabharata* shows that liberation is equally available for men and women. It speaks that whether a person belongs to a low origin or is a woman who desires to follow *dharma* by following the yogic path of equanimity, they will certainly achieve the final goal. Even the supreme lord Srikrishna declares in the *Gita* that even people of low origin, women and *sudras* go to the highest goal if they rely on the Supreme. Thus, Arti Dhand concludes:

In all varieties of *nivritti dharma*, issues of sex, caste, and other markers of social consequences are of no account. Beings qualify for, moksha in all of these methods by the earnestness of their efforts, not by birth. (93).

So, Satyavati stands as an epic woman possessing imperishable glory and myriad incidents of her life has made her character multi-dimensional. From a mere girl of fisher community, she becomes the royal queen of Hastinapur and her sheer intelligence allows the continuation of Kuru lineage through the custom of *niyoga*. Kevin McGrath in his discussion of the women characters in *Mahabharata* in his *Stri Women in Epic Mahabharata* analyses “If there is one epithet that can be ascribed to these women heroes, it is grief: *duhkha* or *soka*. How they override this emotion of vast sorrow supplies the field for their heroism. It is as if suffering is a great reservoir of emotional strength and verbal conception, and from this flows their many-potent words. (McGrath 116). These words can be equally applied to Satyavati who is grief -stricken by the incidents of her life. She can be a great example performing both *pravritti* and *nivritti dharma* described in the epic. Living amidst the royal happiness, she leaves the palace along with her two daughters-in-law to live a life of austerity in the forest. Analyzing from all these perspectives, she can be given the epithet of woman hero for her unique and exceptional way of life. ■

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# Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*: An Eco-Dystopic Approach

Dayanidhi Pradhan

This heuristic research paper presents an in-depth study of Margaret Atwood's Speculative fiction, *Oryx and Crake* in the context of Ecocriticism and dystopic vision. In fact, Atwood's keen interest in Science and Politics has motivated her to create both fictional and non-fictional works dealing with varied themes including culture, gender, religion and myth, climate change, ecological disruption and power of politics, etc. Atwood's literary oeuvre is vast. In fact, Margaret Atwood has, directly or indirectly harped on many subjects akin to each other. Moreover, in the present paper, some bold attempts have been made towards revealing Atwood's deep ecological concerns. Simultaneously, it also projects her dystopian vision handled with superb artistic skill. *Oryx and Crake* deals with the tale of an arrogant scientist who is very keen to replace humanity with a genetically engineered human race of his own creation. The novel also embodies a nightmarish vision of global holocaust brought about by human encroachment into nature by means of science and technology.

Margaret Atwood is a dominant and internationally-acclaimed Canadian English writer. Over the course of her long and prolific career, she has authored more than fifty books which include fiction, poetry and literary criticism. However, Atwood remains best known for her novels. It is significant that Atwood has won numerous awards and honors including the most prestigious Booker prize twice, Governor General's Award, etc. Several of her novels including *Oryx and Crake* (2003) and *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) have become best sellers not only in America, but also in other English-speaking countries. They have arrested the attention of new generation of readers.

Ecocritical discourse is essentially grounded upon holistic study of man, nature, environmental condition and its application to the study of literary texts. Moreover, Ecocriticism or Green criticism is one of the most recent inter disciplinary fields to have emerged in literary and cultural studies.

**Keywords:** Eco-criticism, dystopic, humanity, science, technology.

The gamut of Margaret Atwood's fictional and non-fictional works encompasses a



variety of themes including gender and identity, religion and myth, the power of language, climate change and power of politics and the danger of scientific advancement. Atwood's keen interest in speculative fiction resurfaced in 2003 with the publication of *Oryx and Crake* which was also a final list for the prestigious Man-Booker Prize. As with *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), she sets *Oryx and Crake* in a near-future dystopia that resembles our own in many disturbing ways. *Oryx and Crake* takes place sometimes near the end of the twenty-first century, in the aftermath of a catastrophic pandemic that has killed most of the world's population, leaving only a handful of scattered survivors. The novel moves back and forth between the post-apocalyptic present and the pre-apocalyptic past in order to explain how the global catastrophe came about. Just as she did in *The Handmaid's Tale*, Atwood uses speculative fiction to direct the readers' attention to important contemporary issues, such as the moral implications of genetic research and the dangers of corporate tyranny. In 2005, Atwood said that she does at times write social science fiction, and that *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Oryx and Crake* can be designated as such. Both of these novels are acclaimed as dystopian fiction. It is significant that dystopian novels usually share the theme that technology is dehumanizing and will prove to be our ruin if technological advancement continues uncontrolled.

Margaret Atwood repeatedly makes observations regarding relationships of humans to animals in her creative works. Hui-chuan chang puts his remarks, "A large portion of the dystopia, Atwood creates in *Oryx and Crake* rests upon the genetic modification and alternation of animals and humans, resulting in hybrids such as Pigoons, Rakunks, Wolvogs and Crakers, which function to raise questions on the limits of ethics of science and technology, as well as questions on what it means to be human." (Tamkang Review, P. 86)

It is pertinent to explicate the novel under discussion in the light of ecocritical perspective and dystopic vision as revealed by Atwood with the best of her artistic skill. Ecocriticism or Green criticism is one of most recent inter-disciplinary fields to have emerged in the Literary and cultural studies. Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Both terms, 'Ecocriticism' and 'Green Studies' are used to denote a critical approach which began in the USA in the late 1980s, and in the UK in the early 1990s. The signs of Ecocriticism, as a literary concept, were first seen in America in the late 1970s, at the meetings of Western Literature Association. Some critics trace its beginning to William Rueckert's essay in 1978, "*Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism*". This critical field was earlier known as 'the study of nature writing'. But it was Cheryll Glotfelty, who initiated this critical approach as a lasting movement. Ecocritical discourse is essentially grounded upon a holistic study of man, nature, environmental condition and its application to the study of literature. Thus, Ecocriticism refers to the study of natural environment in the literary texts.

Moreover, Ecocriticism expands the notion of the world that signifies the entire eco-sphere connecting everything with anything else. It originates in bio-social context of unrestricted capitalism, excessive exploitation of nature and environmental hazards. In fact, environmental

crises or catastrophes are a result of human alienation from the natural world. These crises have been brought about by ceaseless pursuit of science and technology that fails to recognize the interconnection of man and nature. It is, now, a truism to say that mankind is truculently committing ecocide, making the planet inhospitable for life of any kind.

In this paper, some bold attempts have been made towards revealing Atwood's deep environmental affiliations. Indeed, Margaret Atwood is an idealist and moralist at heart who has perceptive awareness of the anomalies of our global civilization. Global civilization has two-fold cult of money and machine, and cult of intellect or reason. We are blind to the scientific evolution of emotional and sensual life on the altar of materialistic rationalism. Consequently, life has become mechanical and ugly, and is robbed of all its vital interest. Brian Stableford rightly observes:

Dystopian novels share the theme that technology is dehumanizing and will prove to be our ruin if technological advancement continues uncontrolled. Dystopianism involves a government, an organization or a company that exercises tremendous influence on everyday life of people ..... science and technology though intellectually stimulating are not savior of mankind.

*(The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction, P. 52)*

Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003), the first novel in the Maddaddm trilogy, depicts a post-apocalyptic landscape where humanity has gone all extinct by the dissemination of a man-made virus, referred to in the narrative of the "flood". It presents a tale of grim future which brings out the dystopic vision that man and nature are two different entities in the scenerio. Moreover, the plot of the fiction focuses on a post-apocalyptic character, "**Snowman**" living near a group of primitive humanoids whom he calls crackers. Snowman, whose original name is Jimmy is the protagonist and the story is told from his perspective. Snowman, the last human on earth attempts to survive in a biologically and ecologically hostile environment. The novel produces a fractured narrative that allows Atwood to critique current sociopolitical, ecotopianism and capitalist science. It may be argued that an eco-posthuman study of Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003) provides an alternative utopian perspective on what is generally considered to be a dystopian text. Because, the novel vocalises regarding the bleak future of humanity, nature and technology. The novel, *Oryx and Crake* was published in the year 2003, the year of fiftieth anniversary of Crick and Watson's discovery of the structure of DNA and also the year when the entire human genome was sequenced. Moreover, it belongs to the tradition of dystopian fiction which also includes Orwell's *1984* and *Animal Farm*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and H.G. Wells's *The Time Machine*. In fact, M. Bosco aptly observes, "*Oryx and Crake* reveals the dystopian impulse to shake the readers into an awareness of dangerous trends in our present world, envisioning a dark future in which science and global capitalism will have displaced any sense of moral agency in daily life". (*The Apocalyptic Imagination in Oryx and Crake*, PP.156-171).

Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, portrays a devastated post-apocalyptic wasteland where humanity has gone all extinct by the dissemination of a man-made virus, referred to in the narrative of the "flood". Moreover, the plot of the fiction focuses on a post-apocalyptic character called Jimmy who adopts the pseudonym, 'snowman' in the post-disaster world surviving near a crowd of primitive humanoids whom he calls crakers. In fact, the central protagonist, Jimmy introduces the readers to the post-apocalyptic landscape and the pre-apocalyptic society (which is a satirical extension of the postmodern) via a narrative that tells from two chronological perspectives as to the story of humanity's demise. Snowman, as the last human being on earth tries his best to survive in a biologically and ecologically uncongenial environment.

It is significant that the post-plague society portrayed in the novel is stripped off everything except genetically engineered human race and other hybridized species. Snowman inhabits a desolate landscape of abandoned buildings and rotting corpses, home to genetically hybridized animal-mutants and the children of crake (or crakers), a group of artificially engineered hominids. Jayne Glover aptly remarks, "As the narrative proceeds, shuttling the reader back and forth between the present and the past, it is revealed that Crake, Jimmy's friend and a scientific genius, created the crakers, and, in 'a supreme act of bioterrorism' has destroyed humanity by designing and disseminating a deadly virus under the guise of a new birth control pill, called BlyssPluss." (*Human Nature: Ecological Philosophy* in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*). He also inoculated Jimmy against the virus so that there would be someone left behind to take care of the crakers, a species designed to inherit the earth following humanity's tragic demise. Atwood delineates the physical deformity of Jimmy or Snowman, "The Abominable snowman – existing and not existing, flickering at the edges of blizzards, ape like man or man like ape, stealthy, elusive, known only through rumours and through its backward-pointing footprints." (*Oryx and Crake*, P. 101). Though living amidst the world of fauna and flora, he feels absolutely dejected and lonely, and longs for a human companion. As a relic from a bygone age, he does not belong to here. He says, "Now I am alone", he shouts aloud, "All alone. Alone on a wide sea." (*Oryx and Crake*, P. 10). He finds, emptiness all around, "Everything is so empty. Water, sand, sky, trees, fragments of past time. No body to hear me." (P. 11) Narrating the story of his past life, snowman attempts to recall his previous world and the events leading to the inevitable devastation brought about by man's interference with nature. J. Brooks Bouson rightly writes that Atwood "voices a deep fear that has long plagued western society and that has found expression, over time, in utopian hopes and their related dystopian fears: that scientific advances will lead not to a progressive utopian future, but instead will result in humanity's reversion to a savage dystopian (Margaret Atwood's *The Year of the Flood*, Journal of commonwealth literature, P. 16)."

The novelist, indubitably, fascinates our attention towards the current trends in scientific research and explores a futuristic world, where science is fueled by capitalistic interest. In her speculative fiction, *Oryx and Crake*, Margaret Atwood follows emerging

global capitalism to its possible ends. As a response to our own world, her novel provides us with an opportunity to examine our global state and conceivable destiny. The result is the discovery of globalized society dominated by transnational corporations determined to control the population for their benefits. These corporations are reliant on the production of myths to convince consumer to buy their product of sex, beauty and youth. In Atwood's world, everything is available for a price. These corporations are reliant on the production of myths, perpetuated by various media sources, infuse people with desires and ideals that hugely benefit corporations. From this revelation in a fictional work, we can better understand the risks of globalization in our own world. Indeed, Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* in many ways reveals the impact of corporation and technology as modern systems of surveillance: the hypnotic and programming effects of the television and later on computer, the invention of artificial images, the creation of idealistic virtual world, the adoption of false needs with attractive advertisements, all smoothly convert the publics' method of thought and control their mind. *Oryx and Crake* reveals the power in the capitalist society. Ultimately, the shift focuses on who utilizes power in capitalist system, which power is strongly connected with technological advances, particularly in the productions and the dissemination of information. The order of this new world is something quite similar to Michel Foucault's depiction of panopticon society. Foucault (1995) argues, like the prison in panopticon dungeon, the citizen is seen but does not see, "he is object of information, never the subject of communication" (*Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, P. 105). Here, in *Oryx and Crake* individuals are observed either directly or indirectly, but are totally incapable of seeing the "reality" of their situation.

The novel recounts the scientific experiments of a group of rebel scientists led by Crake. Crake is rather a mad scientist who believes the best way to save humanity is first to wipe it out in toto. Crake with ceaseless experiments, is able to genetically modify the human race, giving birth to new species of human beings, "results of seven years of intensive trial and error research" (P. 303). It is remarkable that the new species of human beings who are sane, well-balanced and fit for survival in the post-apocalyptic world are created to replace the selfish, hypothetical, opportunistic and money-oriented people. They are branch of 'hormone robots' (166).

*Oryx and Crake* is clearly inserted in this subversive intertextual game, as Atwood brings in, reformulates and challenges traditional narratives and tropes. The most obvious of Atwood's literary and rhetorical adaptations is that of the creation story of **Genesis**, a foundational narrative in Western Christian culture. In the novel, snowman appropriates the myth of creation in order to give the Crakes their own original story:

"What part would you like to hear tonight?" he says, "In the beginning", prompts a voice. They're fond of repetition, they learn things by heart. "In the beginning, there was chaos", he says. "Show us chaos, please, oh snowman!" (*Oryx and Crake*, P. 102)

It is remarkable that, in the novel, Snowman appropriates the theme of the creational narrative in **Genesis**, blending fiction and historical fact to provide the crakers with a foundation for their identity. In this story, Crake appears as a deity-like entity who has created the present world out of the chaos of the preflood landscape solely for the crakers, “his children” formed in his human image (P. 103). At the same time, this appropriation is also rhetorical, as Snowman recovers and recycles some of the features of biblical narrative mode.

Margaret Atwood’s replication of this episode of Western Christian mythology seems to function, then, as a way of challenging humanist and religious conceptions of the individual, of calling into question a definition of human in opposition to the nonhuman animal. The crakers named after the creator (Crake) are genetically engineered to be better than present human beings.

The strange world, Crake brings into existence, is filled with other genetically transformed creatures such as ‘pioks’, ‘bobkittens’, ‘rukunks’ and ‘wolvogs’. The fanciful world reflects the powers of the arrogant scientist who is the mastermind of new paradise. As a matter of fact, Crake, as a scientist, believes in neither God nor Nature (P. 206). His genetic manipulation is designed to obliterate humanity along with its artificiality, hypocrisy and cruelty. As a dystopic narrative, *Oryx and Crake* underlines the collapse of civilization arising from modern mechanization of nature. Here, the novelist warns the readers about the disastrous consequences of the excessive exploitation of natural resources. There is also an oblique reference to the fact that the catastrophic change in climate may precipitate us towards the apocalypse that **Nostradamus** had predicted in the sixteenth century. The issues such as animal abuse in the name of scientific study and depletion of natural resources are highlighted in the novel. A group of rebels find out a virus that wipes the civilization off the face of the earth. This tragic event is called “waterless flood” (P. 389) referring to Noah’s flood story. Crake’s goal is to assist in the complete demolition of the human race in order to create a new world without crime, violence or fear.

It is noteworthy that Atwood is critical of man’s abuse of nature resulting in human separation from his environment. Pigeon project aims to create pigs that can produce and reproduce human organs, “that would transplant smoothly and avoid rejection” (P. 122). It will serve as organ banks for the people.

Throughout the novel, Atwood brings in other literary texts from the western canon with a similar intent. Her use of title of Milton’s epic poem and other respelling of “paradise” to “paradice” are an intentionally ironic linguistic and thematic play in the Christian narrative of the **Fall of Man**, mediated by and reformulated through the scope of English literary tradition. Paradise in the novel is equated with the lab where Crake produces the humanoid hybrids. This compound seems completely isolated from its surrounding environment, its high security level and Crake’s paranoid desire for secrecy making it a pristine and almost impenetrable fortress. Nobody comes in or out without Crake’s authorization. This lab also evokes images of the biblical **Garden of Eden**, as Jimmy/snowman first encounters the

crakers playing in an artificial – itself already subversive turn on the biblical natural garden – green landscape, naked, but not self-conscious, he notes, as Adam and Eve had not been before they had seen.

The seemingly idyllic facade of this “garden”, however, hides a darker purpose, as it is later revealed that Crake had been simultaneously working on the virus that ultimately wipes out most of the world’s human population. In this context, the changed spelling “paradice” reveals an ironic subversion of the Christian and literary trope of the garden: the fertility and perfection awarded to the crakers comes at a heavy price, the death of humanity. Adam and Eve’s expulsion from the Garden is echoed in Jimmy and craker’s departure from the paradise dome, only their departure is not only an involuntary punishment, but a means of survival, as the lab and the craker’s green home are no longer sustainable environments. Whereas, the Bible frames Adam and Eve’s departure from the Garden as a banishment into exile, Crake actually meant for his new humans, ‘crakers’ to leave paradise. Furthermore, instead of seeking redemption of their own souls, as the Christian tradition calls for, Crake intended for his new humans to be the agents of redemption. That is, he wanted them to go out and redeem the world stained by human civilization. Thus, the full significance of the name paradice therefore stems from the way it both echoes and revises biblical tradition.

At the same time, Atwood plays with the trope of the “last man” in the post-flood section of her narrative, placing snowman as the protagonist and sole human survivor of the apocalyptic event. Snowman’s presence as the “last man” seems Nietzsche’s philosophical concept of *der Letzt Mensch*. Maria Aline Seabra Ferreira observes, Nietzsche’s “last man” arises out of western society’s resignation to seeking only comfort, security and lack of higher aspirations, which results in a stagnant world where “everybody wants the same thing, everybody is the same” (“*The Übermensch* in the laboratory: Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake*” PP.141-156)

In Atwood’s dystopia, the biotech companies control the world so as to fulfil the requirement of the society. Man ravages his environment in order to provide foodstuff to the overgrowing population. In his effort to better the world, he poisons and makes his environment hostile to all the creatures.

Consequently, mankind must face environmental predicaments such as global warming, pollution, social inequalities, depletion of natural sources, etc. in a world ruled by technocrats and capitalists. It can, undoubtedly be said that humanity today is doomed to account for our “vanity, lust, greed, arrogance, war, contagious diseases, over population leading to environmental degradation and poor nutrition.” (P. 293)

It is much interesting to note here that the marketing strategies of the pharmaceutical companies highlight the dehumanizing effect of man’s lust for money. These companies invest diseases as well as their cure. The more diseases they create, the more money they earn. The novelist aptly writes; “The best diseases from a business point of view, said Crake

would be those that for maximum profit the patient should either get well or die just before all of his money runs out. It's fine calculation." (P. 211)

The novel renders a faithful picture of consumerist decadence in a high-tech world which is doomed to buy one man's megalomaniac project. The novelist's concerns are most definitely relevant and are seen in situations such as anthrax scare.

The novelist depicts that, material advancement brought about by science and technology has deepened the gulf between the rich and poor. The Elites who have comfortable jobs with the pharmaceutical companies live in healthy, high guarded compounds. On the contrary, those who are not affiliated to such companies live in the disease-infested pleeblands. It is no wonder that the inhabitants of the pleeblands lead a moribund and degenerate life. Both affluence and poverty have damaging impact on human relationship. Indeed, human ties are weakened. Flow of natural love and affection is obstructed. Parents sell their children for money. Atwood candidly writes; "People get married and give birth to children to be sold in their turn, sold or thrown into the river, to float away to the sea, because there was so much food to go round" (PP. 116-117).

Atwood is a great visionary. She personally believes that literature, the heart of humanities, can be equated with ethics. In a broad sense, literature that connects humanities to humanity is a key component to survival of humanity. Literature describes what is at the core of humanity and hence has the power to keep the scientist in control. Hence, protecting humanities is same as protecting humanity. The pinnacle of scientific and technological achievement is most terrifying and hazardous to nature as well as mankind. In a way our desire to preserve human race and our intrinsic humanity is also implicit in the novel.

In fact, *Oryx and Crake* projects a world where there is no sign for salvation of humanity. It offers criticism of mechanistic approach to nature and the current cult of evaluating nature on the basis of its mutual utility to mankind. The novelist is opposed to man's separation from nature as higher entity arising from the pursuit of science and technology for material advancement. It is very unfortunate that nature as a divine mother is replaced by nature as a machine designed to serve mankind. The novel depicts the possible disastrous consequences of the materialization of the mother earth through the description of a kind of future existence which bears a close affinity with our own world. *Oryx and Crake* points out the fact that science and technology are grossly misused in the hands of power-monger politicians. Here, in the context, the world portrayed in the two narratives of the past, one told by 'Snowman' and the other by 'Crake' indicate the bleak vision of the future.

The end of the civilization is narrated in a tragic tone. The novelist finally declares, "the novel ends as it begins at Zero hour'." "Zero hour, Snowman thinks. Time to go" (P. 374). Of course, the hints of optimism about the possibility of a better world is also implicit in the dystopic structure of the novel. Crake tries to erase human tendencies, but he is doomed to fail. At the end of the novel, a group of people with strong ecological concerns

known as gardeners appear. These people believe in living in harmony with nature and reject everything that is artificial. They are brave to stand against materialistic, oppressive and hypocritical society. The gardeners, and not the crackers should be considered as the future of mankind.

Thus, the novel communicates the message that man must acknowledge that he is a part of nature and should behave accordingly. The health and happiness of mankind depends on the inter-connectedness, and harmony of man and environment. It is very sad and unfortunate that crony capitalism, scientific and technological advancement of modern man, too much greed for money and growing consumerist culture are driving us towards our perdition. Mankind, today has crossed all limits. Consequences, would be disastrous if the abuse of nature continues and nature is not allowed to regenerate itself. ■

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# Negotiating Women on the Blues and *The Argumentative Indian*

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Amartya Sen's *The Argumentative Indian* is an insightful book focusing on the traditions and pluralism of Indian culture. It sheds light on the Indian tradition and culture in an argumentative way broadly talking about Indian Democracy, Secular Politics and the Inequalities of Class, Caste, Community and Gender with a noble intention of rising to a crescendo of peace and prosperity of our nation. Here, in this Research Paper, this humble intention of welfarist impulse of Amartya Sen has been channelized to ponder over deciphering a way out for the perennial issue of women's subjugation in patriarchy leading towards a meaningful space and emancipation.

If advocating on behalf of women and women's issues may be termed as feminism, then that is the way out to challenge patriarchy by the womenfolk in general who are on the blues perennially. 'The personal is political' is an assertion bubbling in the air at the time of second wave of feminism articulating rallying depravity, injustices and suppression done towards female in patriarchy leading certain section of educated female to depression who has been succumbed to stagnancy thereby on the blues. Man and Woman are the two aspects of society, but one aspect is always subordinated and subjugated and that subordination, and subjugation always has been accepted as normal set pattern in patriarchal society—that aspect is nothing but the female section of the society. They are oppressed, suppressed, exploited and marginalised allowing (!) a narrow space only in the periphery. In patriarchal set-up women are always expected to behave with tolerance, endurance, patience, submissiveness etc. playing different roles such as ideal wife, ideal mother and an excellent home-maker. Thus, lots of traditional roles throw a female to the four walls of a house from which it becomes very difficult to come out for her to the outer space or public domain. So, this research paper is an attempt to work on the assumption that Male dominance is a perpetual issue from time immemorial in our society leading female to utter dissatisfaction and depression and it hurls women on the blues where the welfarist intention expressed by a significant economist namely Amartya Sen may posit and postulate a way out in this regard.

Amartya Sen who has been awarded Nobel Prize for Economics in the year 1998 for his significant contribution towards welfare economics also reflects his insightful concern to the female section of the society which provides ample justification of space for the women folk. So, in this research paper, it is intended to highlight on the issue of the secondary status of a female in patriarchy leading to dissatisfaction and depression and also endeavoured to bring out the pathway acknowledging and also acclaiming the role of an economist with welfare motif creating a meaningful space for the women in society. Because, his humanitarian approach to economics has been crucial to the development of several aspects of gender analysis and the present paper outlines the range and usefulness of his particular book *The Argumentative Indian* for gender analysis exploring implicit assumptions concentrating on the analysis of the particular part characterizing the issue. Further, primarily Analytical Method consulting primary and secondary sources has been adopted here for discussion and analysing the argument.

Amartya Sen's *The Argumentative Indian*, comprised of sixteen books bears the testimony of his intellectual rigour with persuasive skill shedding light on various issues like economics and welfare, history and heritage, culture and communication, identity and gender in Indian context. Diverse issues of society have been synthesized and narrated in an interesting manner eventually leading to 'welfare' of the nation with the eye of an "involved Indian citizen" (Sen xvii). The part one entitled 'Voice and Heterodoxy' consists of four books sequentially 'The Argumentative Indian', 'Inequality, Instability and Voice', 'India: Large and Small', 'The Diaspora and the World'. Part Two entitled Culture and Communication includes four books— 'Tagore and His India', 'Our Culture, Their Culture', 'Indian Traditions and the Western Imagination', 'China and India'. Part Three i.e. 'Politics and Protest' is divided into four books like 'Tryst with Destiny', 'Class in India', 'Women and Men', 'India and the bomb'. The Fourth part touches on various aspects with the following headings 'The Reach of Reason', 'Secularism and Its Discontents', 'India through Its Calendars', 'The Indian Identity'. As this paper is intended to explore the discriminatory space of women and how this issue has been probed into in *The Argumentative Indian*, so, it is concentrated on the analysis of book eleven entitled 'Women and Men' under the part of 'Politics and Protest'. On the verge of any discussion on gender perspective, it would be justified if what the author Amartya Sen talks about in the preface of the book regarding the Third part is quite relevant:

Part-III is concerned with the politics of deprivation (poverty, class and caste divisions, gender inequality) and with the precariousness of human security in the subcontinent as a result of the development of nuclear weapons in India and Pakistan, Essays 9—12 investigate what has happened and is happening right now, and what issues can appropriately be taken up for critical examination. (Sen xv)

While analysing the issue of space of female in the light of Amartya Sen's thoughtful opinion expressed in *The Argumentative Indian*, it would be judicious to trace an oppressive

narrative to articulate and justify 'women on the blues' firstly from Indian context. In this regard one prominent, frequently cited example is *Manusmriti* which also illuminates the dark context of racial discrimination associated with it for which it was burnt by Ambedkar. In *Manusmriti*, reflection of inequality of women as a result of male-created ideology overtly evidenced:

IX,3 The father protects the woman during childhood, the husband during her youth and the man/son during her old age. Woman does not deserve freedom. (Manu)

IX, 6. ...even weak husbands must strive to guard their wives. (Manu)

Genesis reiterates the same truth by projecting the character of Eve as made from "a supernumerary bone of Adam". Even classical thinker like Aristotle also regards women as inferior to men. Aristotle in his work *Politics* states 'as regards the sexes, the male is by nature superior and the female inferior, the male ruler and the female subject'. Thus, Aristotle declared men's supremacy over female and talked about the differences of male and female—"men and women naturally differed both physically and mentally." He claimed that women are "more mischievous, less simple, more impulsive ... more compassionate ... more easily moved to tears .... more void of shame or self-respect, more difficult to rouse to action" than men. Thus, begins the 'Sexual Politics' in a power structured relationship where females are always controlled by males. So, it is a relationship of 'dominance and sub-ordinance' not equality and in such a situation 'right' of women remains as 'far cry'. Thus, a narrative of depravity of women folk is apparently visible from the historical, socio-cultural context irrespective of space where she belongs to.

But serious thinking about this issue of Women's status began in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Mary Wollstonecraft had dealt with the issue of women's position in her book *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) which had been regarded as the first great feminist treatise. Wollstonecraft preached that intellect would always govern and sought "to persuade women to endeavour to acquire strength, both of mind and body,..." Thus, she pleaded for the equality of opportunity for women based upon the equality of value. She said that women should try to be strong in both mind and body as because women are not simply the sexual being but rational human being. Education will give them the awareness of discrimination and sense of judgement with which they can progress. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, consciousness regarding the issue of women's relegated position got its momentum and intensity. John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1869) addressed the problems of women in an elaborated manner. Mill tried to establish the fact that the subjection of women really hindered the further progress of human race; because, it kept the society deprived of the use of the talent of half of its members. He observes the entire issue of women's space in a patriarchal society from utilitarian point of view which is always linked to the welfare drive. As per utilitarian concept, for the welfare of a society is dependent on the happiness of all i.e. both male and female. Germaine Greer in her *The Female Eunuch* discloses the

same history of discrimination more explicitly through subjugation of female in the name of gender:

The reformers will lament that the image of womanhood is cheapened by the advocacy of delinquency, so that women are being drawn further away from the real centres of power. (Greer25)

So, the whole history of evolution of women's right reminds us some moments of struggle, delineates some moments of transition from awareness to consciousness building up a trajectory of progress out of a history of oppression and depravity thereby diminishing the intensity of the women on the blues. However, women were not granted voting rights until the Act of 1918, which enfranchised all men over twenty-one and women over thirty. But it was in the year 1928, women's status was somewhat raised by the Equal Franchise Act.

Some other texts exemplifying a counter narrative where the issue of women's emancipation addressed and articulated in a more pronounced way were— Virginia Woolf's "*A Room of One's Own*", Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics*, Elaine Showalter's *Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness* Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* etc. *Beauvoir's The Second Sex* is regarded as a feminist manifesto where she rebelled against the androcentric customs and conventions which captivated woman in a secondary position. She advocates the very truth of the female existence—feminine and masculine represents social constructs... Patterns of Sexuality and behaviour ...imposed by cultural and social norms. Thus, various texts in various phases articulated the struggle, depravity, oppression of the very existence of female self as a necessary attribute of history and tradition.

But the grave world of evolution of this issue has been transformed into something brighter surpassing the old outlook; from a different and unique 'gaze' the whole issue of women has been evaluated by a renowned economist of India—Amartya Sen. Amartya Sen has contributed immensely to India dealing with considerable social issues with welfarist intention. His significant books include *Development as Freedom* focusing on the fact that Development is not merely Economy and Money but Freedom of Choice as well; *The Idea of Justice* where he delves deeper into the concept of just or fair going beyond the traditional concept and talks about social equity.; *Poverty and Famines* explores the causes and remedies of famines in an insightful way; *On Ethics and Economics*- intersection of Ethics and Economics how ethics should guide economic decisions for the progress of a society; *The Argumentative Indian*, collection of sixteen essays—vital role of debate and discussion for a democratic secular governance, balanced analysis of cultural and relevant societal issues.; *Identity and Violence*— he pleads for a society beyond violence, beyond destructive conflict...a transformative vision for the betterment of society ; *Home in the World*—a memoir portraying poignant story of life dedicated to humanity, identity through the lens of his diverse experiences across cultures dealing with inequality, identity, resources, values and

development, development economics, women's autonomy along with health improvement for the poor, larger issues like democratic freedom being an integral part of development etc. In his landmark book *The Argumentative Indian* deals with layers of history, of identities that constitutes society, it goes back to the past, talks about Medieval India, Buddhism, Islam in India; Calendar, Communities, philosophical tradition, many traditions and eventually consensus building through argumentation. Thus, it includes various discourses part of Indian History, Indian Philosophy; he also interprets Gender Inequality particularly relating to "well-being" and "agency".

In part three 'Politics and Protest' in the 'Tryst with Destiny' section he began recalling the "thrilling moment" of India's independence then discussed poverty and social opportunity, political voice and social opportunity, the use of voice and ended with the assertion: "A much more vigorous and vocal use of democratic participation can do much more in India than it has already achieved." (Sen 203) While talking about class in India, Sen highlighted on "diverse disparities" as the sources of inequalities in society.:

... class is not the only source of inequality, and interest in class as a source of disparity has to be placed within a bigger picture that includes other divisive influences: gender, caste, region, community and so on. For example, inequality between women and men is also a major contributor to inequality. This source of inequality used to be fairly comprehensively neglected in India even a few decades ago, and in this neglect the single-minded concern with class did play a role. (Sen 205)

Then he went on tracing the colour of inequality regarding gender issue in India:

South Asian countries have a terrible record in gender inequality, which is manifest in the unusual morbidity and mortality rates of women, compared with what is seen in regions that do not neglect women's health care and nutrition so badly. (Sen 207)

Amartya Sen devoted a considerable space in discussing women and inequality in part-II entitled 'Women and Men' of the afore stated book which was based on the text for the Sunanda Bhandare Memorial Lecture delivered in Delhi titled 'The Nature and Consequences of Gender Inequality' on November 14, 2001. At the very outset he made a very substantial remark regarding gender disparity:

Gender disparity is, in fact, not one affliction but a multitude of problems. Sometimes different asymmetries are quite unrelated to each other. Indeed, there may be no significant inequality in one sphere but a great deal of inequality in another. (Sen 220)

Further, he said that gender inequality of one type begets gender inequality of other kinds and wanted to relate the issue to the distinction between two features of human life—Well-being and Agency. Amartya Sen defines:

The agency aspect refers to the pursuit of goals and objectives that a person has reason to value and advance, whether or not they are connected with the person's own well-being. (Sen 221).

He comprehensively explains how women's contribution and association with feminist movement focuses on the "welfarist" tendency of woman and how their involvement itself marked and added a positive dimension in the history of evolution of woman. He also highlighted the fact that how "narrow welfarist" tendency has incorporated and emphasised the active role of woman as 'agent' in "doing things, assessing priorities, scrutinizing values, formulating policies, and carrying out programmes." (Sen 222) Thus, in the process women were remained not simply a passive recipient but an active promoters and facilitators of social transformation influencing the lives and well-being of everyone irrespective of gender, age etc.

Thus throughout this chapter Amartya Sen comprehensively discussed on women's agency and well-being under the following headings: Interconnections and Reach; Distinct Faces of Gender Inequality, Survival Inequality, Natality Inequality and Indian Divide, Unequal Facilities, Ownership Inequality, Unequal Sharing of Household benefits and Chores, Domestic Violence and Physical Victimization, Free Agency and the Role of Critical Scrutiny, Inequality within Families as Cooperative Conflicts, Women's Agency and Survival of Children, Emancipation, Agency and Fertility Reduction, Gender Inequality and Adult Diseases. He put emphasis on the active agency of women who cannot ignore the well-being aspect for which she would risk and go beyond any kind of impediments coming on the way. So, according to Sen enhancing well-being of women is dependent on the agency of women themselves. He discussed the wide range of variations between the different faces of gender inequality. Moreover, he pondered over with example of South Asian countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh how basic facilities are also asymmetrically distributed besides education and schooling depriving women of opportunities leading to an apparent deprivation. Throughout the discussion in such a way, he dealt with meticulously on the different faces of inequalities and focuses on the fact that both the aspects agency and well-being have interconnections though they have distinct identity. He further contended that the new broadening of focus as a result of women's movement and literature places women as an instrument of social change.

Amartya Sen arguably defines how there are extensive interconnections between the agency aspect and the well-being aspect of women's lives. Because the active agency of women would consider rectifying any impediments come on the way of well-being of women. Thus, in the process, besides the interconnections between them the agency role goes beyond "the promotion of self welfare." (Sen 223) Women as an active agent of change personify an extraordinary and substantial role transforming their own lives, the lives of other women, men, children and everyone. Amartya Sen with his unique outlook, broadened the role of women, highlighting the substantial part of their lives with his extraordinary insight describes women as "harbingers of major social change, in making the world a more liveable place" (Sen

223). In the real sense of the term, society may gear up with full vigour if one can utilize, recognize the power of women's enlightened and constructive agency to uplift the lives of all human being.

Thus, Amartya Sen regarded gender inequality not merely as a woman's deprivation, but as a "far reaching societal impairment". The innovative and unique focus of Amartya Sen on the issue of the 'position' of women from women's well-being to women's agency illuminates a different dimension to women's status more explicitly to the 'rights' pointing out a very dignified, substantial and crucial role in society. Further, how Sen tackled the issue of gender and its treatment added an innovative dimension to older concerns of the issue. 'Personal is political' which completely submerged the lives of the women hurling them to the pitfalls of bottom, Amartya Sen's pathway brought forth a ray of hope towards the women on the blues. ■

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# Disenchanted Dissent : Studying *These Hills Called Home* by Temsula Ao

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The politics of representation in postcolonial literature entails an ‘enchanted solidarity’ with the anti-colonial, anti-establishment liberation movements. This paper focuses on select stories from the anthology, *These Hills Called Home: Stories from the War Zone*, by Temsula Ao and attempts to explore how these stories steer clear of politicising or sensationalising the conflict. Ao intervenes into the unilateral ethnocentric discourse by incorporating voices of dissent, discontentment and disillusionment with its jingoistic politics. The stories represent alternative literature of resistance as the narratives resist the impulse of unquestioning valorisation and idealization of the ethnic movement for political autonomy. The paper seeks to study these alternative narratives which fracture the exclusivist discourse of (hyper)nationalism. Attempts are made to identify various motifs and tropes which expose the contradictions inherent in homogenising, self-glorifying discourses of power through the methodologies of critical analyses and comparative study against extant literary theories on the subject. It studies the stories as objective chronicles of the anguished past of the Naga community which rupture the conventional fiction/non-fiction binary. Her narratives redefine the socio-political discourse on the Naga region as these present a multilateral, nuanced and comprehensive perspective on the politics of resistance and violence.

**Keywords:** Ambivalence, Contradictions, Dehumanisation, Dissent, Violent insurgency

**Introduction:** The politics of representation in postcolonial literature entails an ‘enchanted solidarity’ with the anti-colonial, anti-establishment liberation movements (Schulze-Engler:20). The armed response by the insurgent groups to the excessive violence by the state power gets empathetically represented as redemptive justice. Slovajiek exposes the inadequacies of such limited representations by critiquing the concept of ‘divine violence’ proposed by Walter Benjamin (iek 2008: 199). iek presents a critique of the norms that construct socially acceptable violence by theorising the distinction between the ‘subjective’ and ‘objective’ violence. Subjective violence, according to iek, is represented as a ‘brutal exposition of violence’ carried out by an identifiable subject. Subjective violence, however,

eclipses the objective forms of violence, which •iek defines as, ‘the more subtle forms of coercion that sustain relations of domination and exploitation’ (9).

Temsula Ao’s stories reflect alternative representation of the contested Naga space by eschewing ideological allegiance to both the nationalist and sub-nationalist discourses and critiquing the ‘subjective’ and ‘objective’ forms of violence that this entail. Her narratives steer clear of the ‘enchanted[literary] solidarity’ as these point to the systemic and ideological ruptures inherent in both the discourses. Ao intervenes into these unilateral discourses by incorporating voices of dissent, discontentment and disillusionment with the jingoistic (counter)insurgency politics. Kailash C. Baral identifies disenchantment with hyper-nationalist politics as one of the major thematic concerns of the literature from the Northeast in his essay, “Articulating Marginality – Across the genre, in the emerging literatures from Northeast. The common man in Northeast is painfully caught in the mayhem of violence produced by unending militancy, inter-ethnic feuds and the oppressive measures of the state’ (10).

The ethnocentric insurgent imaginary constructs, a monolithic discourse of resistance stands out as oppositional, reactionary and antithetical to the mainstream nationalist discourse. The contemporary discourse of insurgency tends to ignore the ideological and organisational fractures which undermine its liberationist intent and potential. The redemptive purpose of sub-regional insurgency gets compromised by its extremist measures and actions which undercut the potential of the movement from within. Sanjib Baruah, while highlighting the complex predicament of the common civilians, writes- ‘Civilians-----whether innocent or in league with insurgents---bear the brunt of the violence let loose when the state’s security forces try to control militant separatists. Civilians are also victims of violence by militants’(xii). Temsula Ao addresses a range of issues raised by the ethnic politics and etches into greater relief the contradictions that characterise the ethnic Naga movement. Instead of taking sides, Ao exposes the criminal acts of cruelty of both, the militant sub-nationalists and the armed state forces, wreaking havoc on ordinary men and women.

Temsula Ao’s stories represent alternate literature of resistance as these tales resist the impulse of unquestioning valorisation and idealization of the ethnic movement for political autonomy. Her narratives redefine the socio-political discourse on the Naga region as these present a multilateral, nuanced and comprehensive perspective on the politics of violence and resistance. Through fictional tales, the stories engage into authentic portrayal of the socio-political turmoil characterising the Naga community during the decades following the Independence of India. Ao convincingly inscribes the contemporary political, social and economic reality of the region and presents these as important causative factors behind political unrest spanning decades. In the editors’ note to the *Dancing Earth: Anthology of Contemporary Poetry from the Northeast*, Robin S. Ngangom and Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih outline the common ground among the writers from the region- ‘...they find common ground in chronicling their subjective realities and the predicament of their people...the consequence of contemporary events, violence especially’ (xi). Mamang Dai

endorses the authenticity and organicity of the narratives which spring from the cotemporary realities of the strife-torn region- ‘It must be owned that all our home states are totally changed from what they once were. Today the stories emerging from this region are more about bloodshed and killings. This is an area that provokes thought and debate today... Yes, there is writing about bullets and guns and death and betrayal. It can hardly be otherwise, when we are confronted with changes that bring such terror and anguish’ (5).

*These Hills Called Home*, subtitled as ‘*Stories from the War Zone*,’ is a collection of eclectic stories some of which share common thematic concerns. This paper focuses on select stories from the anthology and attempts to explore how these stories steer clear of politicising or sensationalising the conflict. The paper seeks to study the alternative narratives which fracture the lopsided discourse of (hyper)nationalism. It studies the stories as objective chronicles of the anguished past of the Naga community which rupture the conventional fiction/non-fiction binary. The ethno-nationalist politics romanticises the armed conflict, but Ao’s fictional narratives, on the contrary, seem to rue the social, cultural, moral ravages the continual war has wrought upon the community. In these stories the politics of nationalism versus sub-nationalism has been put under scanner by focussing on individual lives of the victims and survivors of the guerrilla warfare.

The story, “The Curfew Man,” underlines the subtle ways through which the agency of the individual subaltern gets compromised under the ideology of violent resistance to nationalism. The ordinary natives get caught in the crossfire of operations and clashes between two opposing forces.

The night curfew was still on because these were troubled times for all in the land. Everything had been plunged into a state of hostility between two warring armies; the one overground labelling the other as rebels fighting against the state and the other, operating from their underground hide-outs and calling the Indian army illegal occupiers of sovereign Naga territories. Caught between the two, it was the innocent villagers and those living in small townships who had to bear the brunt of the many restrictions imposed on their lives(34).

The night curfew was an imposition on the people’s lives restricting their social activities. It is employed by the state agency as a tool to oppress, harass and exploit. People carrying sick to hospitals were subjected to humiliating searches, which, sometimes led to fatal delays. The recalcitrant got abused, threatened and occasionally shot dead. Their killing would be misreported as ‘death in encounter’ of underground rebels (34).

The night curfew is a trope of shady work carried out during the dark hours in the war-torn region. It signifies the grey area between the government forces and the so-called ‘freedom fighters,’ a time-zone when the informers lurked around to spy on the relatives, family members and sympathizers of ‘rebels.’ The story lays bare the layers of complex structures existing between the apparent binary of government versus rebels. The reluctance

and ambivalence of Satemba towards his recruitment as an informer signify the attempts of common people to negotiate the complexities of the power-tussle. He resented his shady career which compelled him to live ‘in the unpredictable area between trust and despair’ and blurred the ‘difference between friend and foe’(38).

The story underlines the irony of the lived lives of the natives as Jemtila finds a secret relief even as her husband was subjected to physical abuse by a rebel injuring his only good knee. The grievous injury acts as a deliverance from the complicated predicament as this ‘second injury truly secured his freedom from a sinister bondage’ (42). Satemba and his wife, Jemtila, represent the dilemmas of the indigenous who get entangled in the intricate web of complex circumstances which force ‘innocent, peace-loving people to turn to means that they would not ordinarily employ, just to stay safe and alive’(39).

The story, “Shadows,” underlines the dilution of the high idealism of ethnocentrism as the local leader of the underground army gives into the untamed ambition to rise higher up the hierarchy of power. The ethical integrity of Hoito, who was the unit commander of twenty-one fresh recruits of the underground Naga army, gives way to jealousy, distrust, one-upmanship fuelled by personal enmity, ambition and greed. His secret grudge towards Imli’s father adds to his resentment towards this inexperienced new recruit. Suspicion and mistrust lead him to get Imli murdered with fiendish, unimaginable brutality. The story exposes the cracks and gaps born out of internal dissensions and rivalry within the organisational ideological structure of the underground army. Its operations begin to mirror the oppression and the collective and systemic injustices by the state. Instead of indulging in the romanticisation of the rebels’ struggle for autonomy and independence, the narrative presents an incisive critique of the movement and its members and leaders. Corruption, pragmatism and selfishness seem to have replaced the high idealism of the initial period of the movement.

Ao problematises the exalted notion of struggle for liberation by underlining inherent gaps and vested motives which make it no different from the rest of the political system. The story reflects an ambivalent perspective towards ethnic Naga politics. It presents a strong critique of the underground movement and its operatives, a section of whom are shown to be afflicted with vices and deceptions. The story avoids uncritical acceptance of the rebel politics as a trenchant critique of the underground groups is intrinsically built within the narrative. The politics of violence blurs human perspective as the individuals indulge in acts of grisly violence and moral corruption. Humans turn into fiends due to egotistical weaknesses. The narrative echoes a strong condemnation of horrifying acts of violence when Roko, Imli’s only friend and sympathiser who has been a member of the underground unit, advises the youngsters of his village against joining the underground army - ‘When you have a gun in your hand, you cease to think like a normal human being’(85).

Hoito, towards the end of the story, is shown to have turned lunatic who roams around in the jungle in search of food. The hope for retributive justice, as reflected in the

fate Hoito meets at the end, underlines Ao's ideological perspective which is warranted by the fictionality of the narrative. These stories carefully avoid presenting jingoistic articulation of the politics of ethnic identity which degenerated into an orgy of violence. The fictional tales, in this anthology, present narratives of human suffering by revolving around the victims of this politics. In the Preface, 'Lest We Forget,' to *These Hills Called Home*, Ao perceptively observes-

What the stories are trying to say is that in such conflicts, there are no winners, only victims and the results can be measured only in human terms. For the victims the trauma goes beyond the realm of just the physical maiming and loss of life—their very humanity is assaulted and violated, and the onslaught leaves the survivors scarred both in mind and soul(x).

Her stories steer clear of the exoticisation of the strife and violence. Rather these come across as the sincere expressions of the tragic consequences of violent conflicts on the lives of ordinary people. These present unique and authentic narratives of Individual pain, anguish and suffering in the wake of continual political conflict between the mainstream state and the ethnic rebel groups.

Ao's fiction redefines the postcolonial literature of resistance as it focuses on the nuances of the politics of resistance. The stories avoid presenting an unequivocal endorsement of the violent acts. Ao catalogues the violent coercive measures of the state used as punitive instruments to control and contain the 'rebellion' - indiscriminate firing, killing of innocent people, setting fire to granaries, barns, and sometimes, the entire villages, forcibly uprooting people and confining them to 'groupings' denying them access to their land and fields. The comprehensive documentation of atrocities serves to underline the fact that the endless ethnic clashes affect all the inhabitants of the land. But the narratives subtly suggest that it is the native women who get affected the worst and at multiple levels. While they are the direct victims of gendered violence, women suffer indirect victimhood due to their subordinated position in their respective social structure.

In the story, "The Last Song," Apenyo and her mother are subjected to the worst form of gendered brutalisation by the captain and the men of the armed state force for a simple act of defiance. The barbarism and brutality of the army is a manifestation of the cruel measures taken by the state to coerce the indigenous into a submission to its authority.

Merenla, in the story, "A New Chapter," becomes an indirect 'casualty' to her cousin Nungsang's ambitions. She was absolutely unaware about the crucial role her pumpkins had played in Nungsang's unscrupulous scramble for power and wealth. Her life got devastated when she was deceived, betrayed and abandoned by her cousin while he himself succeeded in achieving his goal. Merenla was simply employed as a pawn in Nungsang's scheme of dark dealings. She feels completely disillusioned as she is cheated by her own kinsman. Besides highlighting the corruption that has beset all the levels of the Naga society, the story presents a powerful indictment of moral degradation and political expediency

which has increasingly begun to plague the community. The story stands as a testament to the metamorphosis of the indigenous community into a microcosm of the mainland society with its attendant vices and corrupt socio-political mores.

The story traces the linear progression of events which led to Nungsang's dramatic progression in social hierarchy. The simplicity of its structure heightens the tragic import of the narrative. The mercenary motives of Nungsang are sharply contrasted to the naivete of Merelna. The decayed stock of her pumpkins stands as a metaphor of the general decay and corruption of ethical values in a society driven by the pragmatism and selfishness.

The dehumanisation and degradation of normal human beings during violence and political turmoil gets highlighted in old man Sashi's ruminations in the story, "The Old Man Remembers"-

For a whole generation of people like old man Sashi, Imli and all their friends and relatives, the prime of their youth was a seemingly endless cycle of beatings, rapes, burning of villages and grain-filled barns. The forced labour, the grouping of villages and running from one hideout to another in the deep jungles to escape the pursuing soldiers, turned young boys into men who survived to fight these forces, many losing their lives in the process and many becoming ruthless killers themselves (93).

The horrors of war lead to a loss of innocence and sanity. Sashi, who was an underground operative along with his friend Imli during the turbulent fifties, is tormented by the ghosts of war as he groans, moans and at times, shrieks and screams during sleep due to the horrifying memories of the tumultuous years of his past. The terrible physical and mental agony transformed the young Nagas completely. The atrocities of army, which is on a mission to quell all kinds of rebellion, wounded the soul of young Sashi and Imli. He narrates the life-altering traumatic events of his childhood to his grandson- '[While in school one day, we] heard a great roar, of women and children shrieking and crying and trying to run away from the balls of fire which seemed to be chasing them. All the school children rushed out and we saw the most horrifying sight of our lives. At that time of the day, as you know, the only people left in the village are children, nursing mothers, old people who can no longer go to the fields and a few village sentries. It was these helpless ones that the gun-toting soldiers were picking out easily and shooting like animals running away from forest fire' (98).

While the atrocities of the army were the most horrifying, the confrontation with the 'dirty, bearded and longhaired creatures' from the underground army who stood beside them 'pointing their guns at [their] heads' in the jungle- was a picture straight out of hell. The excesses of the army forced them to flee their village, whereas the forced recruitment into the Naga National Army made them desperate to escape and go back to their village and be united with their families. The violence and bloodshed robbed children like Sashi and Imli of their childhood. Sashi narrates an incident of

violent ambush with a convoy of soldiers and wistfully tells his grandson-‘we walked as fast as we could not only for our safety but also to get away from the scene of the horrible massacre perpetrated by us. And do you know? We were not yet sixteen when we became such ruthless killers’(108).

Endemic violence resulted in desensitization and dehumanisation of ordinary human beings and made hard-core rebels of the young boys for whom the details of soldiers getting wounded or dying became irrelevant because of their altered way of thinking. The turbulence claimed their youth and turned them into killers. As they grew old, the truth about their history, about their lost childhood, began to signify an area of darkness in their lives which Sashi mustered up the courage to confront by narrating his past, ‘the truth about the self, the land and...about history’ to his grandson(112).

The festering wound on Sashi’s leg stands as a metaphor of wounded soul of the community that has been carrying the suffering and trauma in their collective memory over decades. The cleansing of soul by confronting the haunting ghosts of past heralds a new dawn, marks a new beginning in Sashi’s life.

These are the stories of corrupted innocence, of widespread vices, the endemic corruption and moral degradation which have crippled the native community. These stories record the transformation of the Naga society and culture as it struggles to negotiate with conflicting ideological forces of nationalism and sub-nationalism. Temsula Ao, in the Preface, contextualises the conflict and its consequences-

While some remained untouched by the flames, many others got transformed into beings almost unrecognizable, even to themselves. Nagaland’s story of the struggle for self-determination started with high idealism and romantic notions of fervent nationalism, but it somehow got re-written into one of disappointment and disillusionment because it became the very thing it sought to overcome(x).

The violent actions of the rebels wreak as much havoc on the lives of the people as those of the marauding armies taking retributory action against the ‘supporting’ villages. The situation of the ordinary people as the innocent victims of the excesses committed by both the groups, has been recorded sincerely and authentically.

The stories in the anthology neither endorse nor condemn any one of these ideologies, but, at the same time, these present an unequivocal critique of both by pointing out the consequences of the politics of violence that both engage into. The endemic corruption, decadence, moral degeneration which characterise, in varying degrees, all the parties involved, gets exposed through the incisive narratives of the stories in as much as Ao destabilises the conventional fiction–non-fiction binary by incorporating the lived experiences into her fictional tales. Margaret Ch. Zama terms the blurring of fiction–non-fiction divide as a pre-condition for authentic portrayal of the troubled past of one’s own

people and community- '[writers] who write of human sufferings, particularly of sufferings that are part of their own history, tread the thin line between fiction and non-fiction, and run the risk of projecting a one-sided approach' (xvi-xvii). The hallmark of Ao's writing is that despite chronicling the lived reality, her stories remain objective articulations of the contemporary socio-political reality of the Naga community. The stories are significant in that these provide documentary details of the consequences of the prolonged armed conflict on the lives of ordinary people. A sparse narrative structure comprising simple and direct prose becomes the ideal medium for sincere and authentic representation of the troubled post-independence Naga history through various tropes and images.

**Conclusion:** Temsula Ao's stories debunk the discursive determinism of the nationalist/sub-nationalist ideologies and expose their exclusivist agenda. By chronicling the physical and psychological turmoil caused by these conflicting forces, Ao has transcended the fictional narrative form that gets ruptured in the most vivid and graphic narrativization of the disruption of socio-political space during the political turbulence. The thematic complexity of the narratives exposes the inadequacies of the formal structural design of conventional fiction and demands an alternate structure bereft of standard narrative formalities and flourishes. The stories in the anthology, *These Hills Called Home*, present a strong critique of the violent power-politics by incorporating multiplicity of voices emanating from the affected Naga community. The plurality of voices brings authenticity and credibility to the fictional narrativity and the stories stand as testimonies of individual disenchantment, dissatisfaction, desperation and disillusionment with the power-politics. Ao problematizes the contradictions inherent in the politics of terror by focusing on the layers of complex power-structures which operate between the apparently simplistic binary of state versus rebels. The individual anguish and suffering have been historicised to record the trauma which has got permanently etched in the collective memory of the community. The stories serve to humanise and offer counter-narrative to the jingoistic (sub)nationalist discourse. ■

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# Fragmentation and Beyond: A Trajectory of the Modern Alienation of the Self and Romanticism's Response with Indian Overtones

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Fragmentation, in the contemporary sense of the term, points to the alienation of the self and the degradation of the environment, occurring simultaneously. The fragmentation of the self, experienced as alienation, manifests at different levels, including the psycho-spiritual domain. Tracing a history of fragmentation in the modern world locates its origins in Enlightenment Europe, where its many symptoms coalesce with the birth of 'modernity', when a theocentric worldview was replaced by an anthropocentric one. This study discusses the origins and impact of modernity and the manifestation of its symptoms globally, occurring most markedly in the isolation of individuals due to cultural and intellectual reasons – partly due to capitalism and ideologically set into motion by the concept of 'freedom' and the transformation of Nature into a 'natural resource'. Colonisation, an aspect of modernity, caused the spread of these modernist trends globally. However, an intellectual and artistic response to this is seen in the rise of *Romanticism* in Europe. Arising as a "modern response to modernity", *Romantic* poets strove to overturn Enlightenment ideas; theirs was a project of a creative 'recovery' of the integrity of the self from the rational essentialism of the Enlightenment. Their own phenomenological experiences of transcendence and unity as well as their exposure to foreign philosophies from the East – Indic, Chinese, Middle East *alled* to a cultural and artistic rebellion. Their aim also comes through in their 'rescue' of the environment from rapacious materialism, initiated by the sciences and furthered by technological progress. *Romanticism* anticipated the crises of the Anthropocene and birthed a new narrative akin to an 'ecological consciousness', in which the influence of Indic philosophy cannot be denied.

**Keywords:** alienation, modernity, fragmentation, Romantic imagination, spiritual self

## Introduction

We inhabit today the world of the *Anthropocene*, a world simultaneously transformed and endangered by human activity, wherein we witness the random and incessant exploitation

of Nature and the decline of faith in any spiritual order governing the world (Quinn 43). Human-directed scientific technology and an overreach of economic policies dictated by the notion of ‘progress’ (both of these having their origins in the European Enlightenment) have contributed to a global situation where both Nature and the human race stand at terrifying cross-roads. While many reasons are attributed as leading to this predicament, Max Weber identified the genesis of this crisis, as the crisis of ‘modernity’, wherein, he stated, “The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and above all, by the ‘disenchantment of the world’”, a world, “robbed of gods”, and from which, “the bearing of man has been disenchanted and denuded of its mystical but inwardly genuine plasticity (Weber, qtd in *Past and Present* 7)”. A direct impact of *modernity* is also the *fragmentation* of the self, which is experienced as an alienation from any known certainties. This phenomenon of alienation is depicted in contemporary literary works across cultures, portraying the human being as either confused or traumatised about notions of the ‘self’ and questions of identity, so much so that the post-modern perspective states that the human self is not merely fragmented, but along with the humanist imagination, is disappearing into fragments – resulting in “the ‘demise of man’ as a subject of identity (Kearney 13)”.

### **Types of Alienation and their Implications**

Originating as a concept in the West, but identifiable globally, alienation or the fragmentation of the self has several facets to it. David Leopold defines alienation in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* – “a distinct kind of psychological or social ill; namely, one involving a problematic separation between a self and other that properly belong together” (Leopold qtd. in Yalvac, “Alienation and Marxism”). Sean Sayers describes the concept of alienation as “one of the most important and fruitful legacies of Hegel’s social philosophy” (Sayers, “The Concept of Alienation”), wherein he introduces the concept of “estrangement”, which was adapted by Marx and the Existentialists to refer to social and mental/psychological experience of the same. Marx defined alienation in economic terms as “a process in which the results of production are appropriated and transformed into capital” (Øversveen, 2022, p. 441) and subsequently, “capitalism’s impact on social development . . . experienced as a corresponding increase in powerlessness and isolation” (p. 442). But, philosophers such as Heidegger, Kierkegaard and Sartre, emphasised on its ontological aspects, leading to a ‘spiritual’ and ‘mental’ alienation (Yalvac).

This study would deal with *spiritual alienation*, which occurs at different levels of the human embodiment. Swami Bhajananda (“Alienation and neo-Vedanta” 95) identifies three aspects to this alienation of the self and delineates them as *ontological* (alienation from God or the Divine ground of Being), *existential* (alienation from one’s higher Self) and *psychological* (alienation from one’s fellow human beings). While *ontological* alienation is an attribute of human life as it emerges into embodiment and enters into an awareness of separation from the Primal Source, *existential* and *psychological* alienation are conditions that have much to do with contemporary life situations, which also have a historical past.

However, in addition to the above, there is also a fourth type of alienation, which could be described as an alienation or distance from the natural phenomenal world or Nature, which was taken up by the *Romantic* movement. The *Romantics* – poets and philosophers, English and German, made it their mission to overcome the sense of “disenchantment” or “estrangement” that had set in with *modernity*, and which was reflected in the general attitudes towards the natural world. The German Romantics like Schlegel and Novalis, ascribed *disenchantment* of and *estrangement* from Nature as a result of the Enlightenment’s ultra-rationalistic trend. They “perceived modernity to have estranged humanity from nature and “disenchanted” Nature by applying to it *a narrowly analytic and reflective form of rationality*” (Stone, “Romanticism and the Re-enchantment of Nature” 4, emphasis added). They considered “disenchantment” as the direct result of assuming that reality could be made “completely intelligible through reason” (4). As a result of this, the sense of mystery and wonder receded from human consciousness, and a dry secular dynamic prevailed, with regard to the phenomenal world. The move towards a secular conception of the world, over a long period of three hundred and odd years since the Renaissance, disrupted the pre-modern belief of a spiritual order in the cosmos presided over by the Divine and the ensuing relationship between God and creation.

The Church too adopted a rationalistic stance towards religion. The Church in the name of ‘reform’ had moved away from the nucleus of faith and interiority towards ‘good actions’ or piety; they followed the prescriptive model of society being bound by God’s ordered laws rather than God’s love, with God too becoming an “impersonal being or as merely the creator of an impersonal order” (Taylor 279). Thus in many ways, a sense of deep alienation set in – ordinary people could no longer connect with a God who seemed remote and a world that worked like clockwork, according to fixed laws.

An acute anxiety of existence that sometimes dissolved into a nihilistic stance was not always the case. Though *ontological* alienation is a condition of human existence, and existential *angst* or anguish results from the separation of humans from the Source of life, alienation on other levels leading to nihilism had certain identifiable reasons for its emergence. In order to trace the emergence of these, an overview of conditions that ushered in ‘modernity’ through seismic changes taking place in European society, since the seventeenth century onwards, is discussed here briefly.

### **An Overview of Modernity and Fragmentation in Europe: Origins, Causes and Impact**

*Modernity* has its roots in the period of the *Enlightenment* in Europe, a time of great change around the seventeenth century, and influenced by ideas from thinkers and philosophers ranging from Francis Bacon to Immanuel Kant. There were major intellectual and allied transformations happening, which distinguishes this time-period from the pre-modern/medieval period in Europe, dominated by Scholasticism, feudalism and various monarchies. These changes directly impacted the notion of identity, of the nature and the autonomy of the self and of the relationship of individuals with society and Nature. The

growth of Newtonian *science* and Lockean *Empiricism*, and the dominance of empirical Reason (the *Rationalism* of Descartes), led to the rise of *individualism* that increasingly questioned the power of the Church and feudal monarchies over personal lives. Earlier on, the Reformation (1517-1648) had already split the Church and Protestantism had paved the way for individual autonomy in religion and the possibility for nation-states in Europe. Philosophically, intellectual movements advocated for the autonomy of the rational Self (mind-ego based), deriving from Descartes' *cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am), and reality of the world, as experienced solely through the senses, and interpreted through reason. Through the rise of science, there was the corresponding advent of technology that sought mastery over the natural world. Some of these new 'certainties' were intellectually challenged by Kant's distinction between the *phenomenon* and *noumenon*, when he postulated that reason could access the intricacies of the phenomenal world, as it presented itself and was perceived by the conscious mind as 'appearance', through *a priori* mental categories but could not know the 'things-in-themselves' / *noumena*. Hence, while limits were set on the 'knowability' of scientific reason to penetrate 'objective' reality, technology (the applicatory adjunct of science) however marched ahead.

Meanwhile, political *revolutions* (the American and the French), caused massive social upheavals and gradually made way for 'secular' democracies, all of which gave the Western individual a sense of 'freedom' from oppressive systems – feudal, religious and monarchical. Science and technology ushered in *industrialisation*, which encouraged *materialism* and further strengthened the secularization of life, now freed from moral and ethical controls, previously exercised by religion. 'Freedom' now meant 'self-determination', and the displacement of God as the master of Nature (Lumsden 373) and over human affairs. More importantly, the concept of 'freedom' which underpins 'modernity' is freedom from anything that dominates (Lumsden 383), and this included Nature, the human body, and the 'irrational' aspects of the mind – emotions or/and the imagination. These views justified the domination of a Euro-centric worldview in the name of 'freedom', and had several consequences, some unintended, which will be briefly explored here.

There are two temporal aspects to these changes- immediate and contemporary, related to 'faith' and alienation. In an *immediate* sense, the scientific 'ordering' of the phenomenal world and Nature being reduced to a mere 'natural resource' by capitalism, disrupted the older ethos of a natural 'order' governed by God, and the human sense of belongingness to it. Goethe mourned the impact of the "Copernican revolution":

"Perhaps a greater demand has never been laid upon mankind; for by this admission (that the earth is not the centre of the universe), how much else did not collapse in dust and smoke: a second paradise, a world of innocence, poetry and piety. . . (Goethe, qtd in Zukav 191).

The onset of the 'secular dynamic' and industrialisation led to communities previously bound by commonality of codes, customs and rituals fragmenting and separating out, which

is seen in a more virulent manner in today's migrations due to climate change. While partly this occurred due to the undermining of religious faith, forced migrations from rural communities to cities, did occur due to poverty and eroding of rural economies, thereby large populations exiting the community or 'tribe'. Desolation and loneliness grew in these societies, which served to be satiated through materialism. With the full onset of the Industrial revolution, the European common man was now on his own, ironically trapped within the confines of his own individuality and caught in a rational-material vortex by the very systems that had promised to 'free' him. Reason had rendered religion as meaningless, and recourse to the spiritual and the emotional as signs of weakness or delusion. Repression of emotions and suppression of the spiritual impulse resulted in what mythologist Thomas Moore terms as "loss of soul". This is witnessed as various psychological problems besetting our societies, since "when soul is neglected, it appears symptomatically in obsessions, addictions, violence and loss of meaning (Moore 182)".

The *contemporary* impact of modernity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in terms of self-determination (freedom) and self-realisation (through material fulfillment) occurs on two fronts. Geologically, we witness the disastrous effects of climate change and on the human front, the further fragmentation of the self – the decentred, disintegrated postmodern self and *performative* concepts of the secular Self which have further divided human society into multifarious identities. These 'performative' aspects of self are opposed to the older concepts of selfhood, both the pre-modern religio-spiritual *soul* and the early modern *rational-intellectual* self of the Enlightenment, terming them as *essentialist*. This trend is reflected in the literature and its interpretations, where "critical schools have sought to replace an essentialist model of selfhood with various performative selves (Parry)". These ideas have percolated down into non-European academia too, where native belief-systems and an indigenous cultural ethos, such as the Indic have been largely ignored by a casual adoption of the 'Western gaze'. These societies thus inherit the problems of Western culture too, especially the malaise of spiritual alienation. Phenomenologist Paul Ricœur theorised that these 'critical' views, both in the manner of perceiving reality and the self are related to "the hermeneutic of suspicion" (Felski), the collective effect of theories from the triumvirate of Marx, Nietzsche and Freud. The radical doubt and skepticism of Enlightenment rhetoric has now been replaced by overtly critical and negating attitudes that view any act (or discussion) of consciousness with 'suspicion' of hidden motives.

### **The Scourge and Paradox of Colonisation**

This response and assimilation of the Eurocentric worldview in indigenous cultures, is rooted in the most glaring aspect of modernity – *imperialism*. This last factor is what made modernity spread into America, Africa and Asia and wiped out or displaced native cultures divesting them of their unique significances. *Colonisation* spread the clash and confrontation between European and indigenous cultures globally; it extended *laissez faire* capitalism and slavery (including hidden forms like *indenture*/ 'bonded labour') to European colonies and resulted in humungous migrations, denudation of indigenous natural

resources, denigration of cultural practices, suppression of native educational systems and mass genocides. The incidence of *existential* and *psychological* alienation globally, can be largely traced to colonisation and its successor, globalisation.

However, the European *colonial* enterprise in a paradoxical way, brought disparate cultures physically and intellectually closer. While native systems were irrevocably transformed by colonial impositions, for the European mind these confrontations resulted in an intellectual opening up to new worlds. European historians called it “the Oriental Renaissance” and famous French intellectuals, Quinet, Duperron, Lamartine welcomed the philosophical and poetic light springing up from “the depths of Asia” (Latronche 478). In the Indian context, it gave birth to Indology and the enduring German interest in Indian philosophy, culminating in the writings of the Schlegel brothers, Schelling, Schopenhauer and others.

### **The India-Europe Encounter and the Rise of *Romanticism***

This was not a casual encounter. References to India were there since the Classical Greeks, and Drew remarks how “an image of India had been stored in Europe’s cultural memory prior to the modern rediscovery of India” (Review, *India and the Romantic Imagination* 101), in the writings of Plato, Plotinus and Pythagoras. However, for the modern colonial British, “India has been an image to uphold and a reality to look down upon (101)”. The old idea of distant India as ‘exotic’ in Europe’s mind, on direct confrontation, “set in motion the process of a fresh self- recognition through a continuous and pervasive confrontation with the cultural ‘other’. It worked through conscious as well as subconscious acts of imitation, idealization and assimilation (102)”.

With coming of the British to India, the stage had been set for Indian philosophic ideas to enter Europe in a major way. German Romantics like Friedrich Schlegel, distinguished the Indian way of thinking from mere philosophy; he recognised that “life and action” were deeply bound with the philosophical (Hosle 438). This Oriental perspective had a remarkable influence on the German and French Romantics and the English Romantic poets. Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats and Shelley assimilated several Indic ideas, which is reflected in their poetry and literary theories, as is convincingly enunciated by post-colonial scholar, Monirul Islam (*Oriental Wells* 74-76, 173-77, 195-199). This was initiated by translations of Hindu scriptural and literary texts – the *Bhagavad Gita* by Charles Wilkins (1785), *Shakuntala* by Sir William Jones (1789), French and Latin translation of the *Upanishads* from Dara Shikoh’s Persian one by Anquetil-Duperron (1787-1804), to name a few (Hosle 433-34, Latronche 479). There were also essays and books written about Indic concepts on art and religion (*Oriental Wells* 195; Hosle 436). The impact was electrifying. Into the tired mind of Europe, disillusioned by the failure of the French revolution, the reductive philosophies of the Enlightenment, and the dry rhetoric of neo-classicism, translated Indian works acted like catalysts. They “kindled the Romantic urge for spiritual reinvention . . . the Romantics found the exalted vision and imagination they so longed for (Latronche,

*French Romanticism* 477)”.Friedrich Schlegel even stated in 1800, “We must look for the pinnacle of Romanticism (*das hochste Romantische*) in the East, primarily in India”(Halbass 75, cited in Latronche 478).In retrospect, the Indic influence seems almost fated – while not always acknowledged in Britain, and sometimes retracted, it flowered in the receptive minds of the Romantics, searching for new modes of spirituality and creative literary expression. Yet, it is pertinent to mention here that only in the recent decade or so has this Indic influence on the Romantics being taken up seriously, along with other Oriental influences.

Romanticism is said to represent “a modern critique of modernity . . . the Romantic view constitutes modernity’s self-criticism” (Michael Lowy and Robert Sayre, qtd. in Han “Three Vignettes”). The famous Romantic nostalgia for the past has deeper significances; were they in search of a religion that their present had de-valorised, but for which they yearned?M. H. Abrams (*Natural Super-naturalism*, 1973)andAlexander Hampton (*Romanticism and the Re-Invention of Modern Religion*, 2019), for instance, refer to the ‘secularisation of Christian beliefs’ in the Romantics, since they recognised that there could not be a return to the old ways, now rendered obsolete by the findings of naturalist philosophies. The “immanent understandings of reality . . . without transcendent referents (Hampton 2)”, while intellectually satisfying, could not fill the nostalgia for transcendental yearnings. Wordsworth’s poetic experience of Nature balked at “the universe of death” created by “mechanical” philosophies of materialism, which substituted the living universe “that which moves with light and life instinct, actual, divine and true” (*The Prelude*xiv. 160, qtd in Willey). Recognising that the old religion no longer worked and a new spiritual *renaissance* was necessary, the *Romantics*, chiefly and explicitly Wordsworth, sought to discover and later articulate their spiritual experience of Nature. Aware of the religious predicament of their age, the poets attempted to solve a spiritual problem that would find a consensus between the old world of Christianity and the new world of science. Referring to “Tintern Abbey”, Barbour (151) says:

It is within this intellectual-historical context of declining Christianity and ascendant Enlightenment that Wordsworth wrote his great poem, a poem that enacts the intellectual drama he confronted. Both his instincts and his experience were against the Enlightenment, and though he had little interest in historical Christianity or its rejuvenation, those same instincts were ineluctably religious.

“Tintern Abbey”, the crowning poem of the *Lyrical Ballads* epitomises the Romantic antidote to the fragmenting *disenchantment* of Nature, a poem set on the banks of the river Wye in the backdrop of a ruined Catholic Abbey, where the poet relives his memories of his communion with the natural world and felt a sublime unity through:

A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts, a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused



Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns  
And the round ocean, and the living air  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.” (“Tintern Abbey”, lines 97-102)

### **The Romantic Remedy to Fragmentation**

The English Romantic response to the Enlightenment dialectic happened on many fronts. By giving primacy to their inner emotional life in their poems, they upheld the value of the heart, the seat of emotions, as also the seat of a spiritual ‘seeing’. When outer revolutions failed, they turned inward and sought creative inner freedom, striving to “cleanse the doors of perception”. Despite the Newtonian reduction of the natural world, they located their sources of inspiration in the sublimity of Nature, the ground of Being, to be revered and not dissected. When confronted with fragmented self-consciousness, they took recourse to the “productive imagination” and the pervasive power of memory to create a unified Self. The Romantic response is a phenomenological one; they affirmed through their poetry, the redemptive nature of the creative imagination, which at its zenith, bestowed a unifying vision of the world cut asunder by reflective reason. And yet, they did not dismiss or negate reason. As Wordsworth famously affirms in his magnum opus (*The Prelude-1850* 469):

This spiritual Love acts not nor can exist  
Without Imagination, which, in truth,  
Is but another name for absolute power  
And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,  
And Reason in her most exalted mood.  
This faculty hath been the feeding source  
Of our long labour:

(*The Prelude, Book XIV*, lines 188-194) ■

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# Characterization in Indian Hindi Web Series: “Exploring Complex Characters in Contemporary Narratives”

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Characterization in Indian Hindi web series has witnessed a notable evolution, characterized by the portrayal of complex characters within contemporary narratives. This paper explores the nuanced development of characters in Indian web series, focusing on the multifaceted personalities, intricate backstories, and dynamic character arcs that contribute to their depth and reliability. Through an analysis of key examples, it examines how characters in these web series defy traditional stereotypes, undergo profound transformations, and navigate the complexities of modern Indian society. By delving into the cultural, social, and psychological dimensions of character portrayal, this study sheds light on the creative strategies employed by writers and filmmakers to engage audiences and elevate storytelling in the digital age.

**Keywords:** Characterization, Indian Hindi web series, Complex characters, Backstories, Character arcs, Stereotypes, Transformation, Modern Indian society, Cultural dimensions.

## Introduction

Indian Hindi web series have gained immense popularity for their diverse storytelling, compelling narratives, and well-crafted characters that resonate with audiences. This article explores the nuanced portrayal of characters in Indian Hindi web series, highlighting the depth, complexity, and reliability of some iconic character portrayals. In the world of Indian Hindi web series, characterization plays a crucial role in engaging the audience and powerful narrative forward. Characters are the heart and soul of a story, and how they are portrayed can make or break a series. From the heroes to the villains, every character has a distinct personality and background that shapes their actions and decisions. One of the key aspects of characterization in Indian Hindi web series is the use of titles and quotations to highlight the essence of a character. Titles and quotations can serve as a powerful

tool to convey a character's traits, motivations, and beliefs. The characterization usually followed in drama and Indian Hindi web series share similarities in terms of their exploration of characters within narrative contexts, there are also notable differences owing to their distinct cultural, linguistic, and narrative traditions. The characterization of drama is influenced by Western literary traditions, often emphasizes the depth and complexity of characters. Characters are typically portrayed as multi-dimensional beings with intricate motivations, conflicts, and psychological depth. Characters' actions and decisions are often analyzed in relation to their psychological makeup and the social and cultural contexts in which they exist. Character arcs, or the development and transformation of characters over the course of a play, are a central focus in English drama character theory. Characters may undergo significant changes or growth as they navigate through conflicts and challenges, contributing to the thematic resonance of the play. Drama often features complex and nuanced characters, it also utilizes archetypes and tropes to create recognizable character types and narrative patterns. These archetypes may include the hero, the villain, the wise mentor, and the comic relief, among others.

They can encapsulate the character's journey, struggles, and triumphs in a few words, leaving a lasting impact on the audience. For example, in the popular web series "Sacred Games," the character Gaitonde is often referred to as "The Godfather of Mumbai." This title reflects his position of power, influence, and authority in the criminal underworld. Similarly, the character Sartaj is known for his unwavering dedication to justice, as seen in his quote "I will always stand for what is right, no matter the cost."

In another web series, "Mirzapur," the character Kaleen Bhaiya is symbolized by his title as "The King of Mirzapur," portraying his ruthless and dominating nature. His quote, "Power is not given, it is taken," further emphasizes his ambition and willingness to do whatever it takes to maintain his reign.

These titles and quotations not only add depth to the characters but also provide context and insight into their personalities. They help the audience better understand the characters' motivations and actions, creating a more immersive viewing experience. By using titles and quotations effectively, Indian Hindi web series are able to create memorable and impactful characters that resonate with the viewer's long after the series has ended.

The rise of Indian Hindi web series has brought forth a new wave of storytelling that delves deep into the complexities and nuances of human relationships. One of the key elements that set these web series apart from traditional television shows is the rich and nuanced characterization of its protagonists. In recent years, Indian Hindi web series have gained popularity for their ability to showcase multidimensional characters that break away from traditional stereotypes. These characters are often flawed, conflicted, and morally ambiguous, making them more relatable and engaging for audiences.

For example, in the critically acclaimed web series "Sacred Games," the character of Ganesh Gaitonde, played by Nawazuddin Siddiqui, is a gangster with a troubled past

who is both ruthless and vulnerable. As the series unravels, viewers are taken on a journey through Gaitonde's psyche, exploring the complexities of his character and the motivations behind his actions. Similarly, in the popular series "Mirzapur," the character of Guddu Pandit, played by Ali Fazal, undergoes a transformation from a naive young man to a ruthless gangster driven by revenge. Through his journey, audiences witness the evolution of Guddu's character, as he grapples with his own moral compass and the consequences of his actions. These complex characters not only add depth and richness to the narratives of Indian Hindi web series but also serve as a reflection of the complexities of human nature. By exploring the inner workings of these characters, viewers are able to empathize with their struggles and dilemmas, creating a more immersive and compelling viewing experience.

Characterization in Indian Hindi web series plays a vital role in shaping the narrative and engaging audiences on a deeper level. As more and more web series continue to push boundaries and defy conventions, the portrayal of complex characters will only continue to evolve, offering viewers a more nuanced and reflective portrayal of human nature. When it comes to Indian web series, the impact of characters cannot be understated. The diverse range of characters that are brought to life on screen play a crucial role in capturing the audience's attention and making the series memorable. From strong and relatable protagonists to interesting and complex antagonists, Indian web series have introduced a wide range of characters that have resonated with viewers across the country. One example of a compelling character in an Indian web series is Kalindi Anand, played by Rasika Dugal in the critically acclaimed series "Mirzapur." Kalindi is a strong and independent woman who navigates the dangerous world of crime and corruption in the fictional town of Mirzapur. Her character is not only well-written and multi-dimensional, but also challenges traditional gender roles and stereotypes, making her a standout character in the series. Another example of a memorable character in an Indian web series is Ganesh Gaitonde, portrayed by Nawazuddin Siddiqui in the popular series "Sacred Games." Gaitonde is a complicated and morally ambiguous character who is at the center of a gripping and twisted narrative. His character arc and interactions with other characters in the series provide a deep dive into the complex underworld of Mumbai, making him a fan-favorite character among viewers.

Generally, characters in Indian web series play a crucial role in shaping the narrative, engaging the audience, and leaving a lasting impact. Whether they are heroes, villains, or anti-heroes, the diverse range of characters in Indian web series continue to push boundaries and challenge conventions, making them an integral part of the success of these series.

E.M. Forster in his book "Aspects of the Novel," distinguishes between characters based on their depth and complexity. The classification of characters into "Round Characters" and "Flat Characters" was indeed introduced by E.M. Forster in his book "Aspects of the Novel."

*"Forster describes flat characters as 'constructed around a single idea or quality,' whereas round characters have the ability to surprise us 'in a convincing way.'"*

This quote highlights the key distinction between the two types of characters. Flat characters are often characterized by their simplicity and lack of depth, revolving around one dominant trait or idea. On the other hand, round characters possess complexity and depth, exhibiting a range of emotions, motivations, and behaviors that make them more lifelike and engaging to the reader or audience. Forster emphasizes that round characters have the capacity to evolve and surprise us, contributing to a richer and more dynamic narrative experience. In Indian Hindi web series, characterization plays a crucial role in engaging the audience and driving the narrative forward. Similar to English drama, character theory in Indian Hindi web series encompasses various concepts and classifications that help analyze and understand the characters within the series.

### **Character Development in Indian Hindi Web Series**

Character development is a key aspect of Indian Hindi web series, with writers and creators crafting multidimensional characters that undergo personal growth, face challenges, and navigate intricate relationships. From flawed protagonists to intriguing antagonists, these characters offer a mirror to the human experience, reflecting a range of emotions, motivations, and vulnerabilities that viewers can empathize with. Character development in Indian Hindi web series has evolved significantly over the past few years, reflecting a broader shift in storytelling techniques and audience preferences. Here are some key aspects of character development in Indian Hindi web series:

**Complex Characters:** Modern Indian Hindi web series tend to feature characters with multi-dimensional personalities. They are not simply heroes or villains but have shades of gray, making them more relatable and intriguing for the audience. Characters often have internal conflicts, moral dilemmas, and flaws that drive their actions and contribute to their growth throughout the series.

**Backstories and Motivations:** Effective character development often involves exploring the backstory and motivations of each character. Indian web series frequently delve into the past experiences and traumas that shape the characters' present behavior. Understanding their motivations adds depth to their actions and helps the audience empathize with their struggles.

**Character Arcs:** Just like in traditional storytelling, character arcs play a crucial role in web series. Characters undergo significant transformations or growth over the course of the series, driven by their experiences and interactions with other characters. These arcs can involve overcoming personal challenges, facing their fears, or reevaluating their beliefs and values.

**Ensemble Casts:** Many Indian web series feature ensemble casts with multiple interconnected characters. Each character brings their own unique perspective to the story, contributing to its richness and complexity. Interactions between characters often drive the narrative forward and provide opportunities for character development through dialogue and conflict.

**Subversion of Tropes:** In recent years, there has been a trend of subverting traditional character tropes in Indian web series. Female characters, for example, are no longer confined to stereotypical roles but are portrayed as strong, independent individuals with agency and depth. Similarly, male characters may challenge traditional notions of masculinity and explore vulnerability in ways that defy expectations.

**Cultural and Social Context:** Character development in Indian web series is often influenced by the cultural and social context in which the story is set. Issues such as class, caste, gender, and religion are explored through the experiences of the characters, adding layers of complexity to their identities and relationships.

**Continuity and Growth:** Successful web series pay attention to continuity in character development, ensuring that characters remain consistent within the established narrative while still allowing room for growth and change. This balance between consistency and evolution is essential for maintaining audience engagement and investment in the characters' journeys. Inclusive, character development in Indian Hindi web series has become more nuanced and sophisticated, reflecting the evolving tastes and expectations of audiences as well as the creative ambitions of filmmakers and writers.

### **Iconic Characters and Their Impact**

Iconic characters in Indian Hindi web series have left a lasting impact on viewers, resonating with audiences and becoming cultural touchstones. Characters like Sartaj Singh from “Sacred Games,” Kalindi from “Made in Heaven,” or GudduPandit from “Mirzapur” embody a spectrum of emotions, moral dilemmas, and complexities that make them memorable and engaging. These characters challenge stereotypes, push boundaries, and invite viewers to question societal norms.

### **Characterization in “Sacred Games”:**

In the series “Sacred Games,” the characters are portrayed with a depth that reflects the complexities of modern Indian society. Sartaj Singh, the protagonist, is depicted as a conflicted and morally upright police officer, struggling to navigate the corrupt and convoluted system. Gaitonde, the antagonist, is a fascinating portrayal of a gangster with a troubled past, whose character embodies the socio-political turmoil's of the city.

*“Characterization in ‘Sacred Games’ delves deep into the complexities of human nature, providing a nuanced portrayal of the characters’ inner struggles.” - Motwane, A. K. (Director Sacred Games) [Motion Picture].*

### **Characterization in “Mirzapur”:**

In “Mirzapur,” the characters are presented as products of their environment, grappling with power, violence, and morality in the crime-ridden town of Mirzapur. The portrayal of Kaleen Bhaiya as a ruthless and cunning crime lord is juxtaposed with the character of GudduPandit, who undergoes a transformation from a simpleton to a formidable force in the criminal underworld.



*“The characters in ‘Mirzapur’ are emblematic of the societal pressures and power dynamics prevalent in the hinterlands of India, effectively capturing the essence of the region’s complexities.” - Dr. Ananya Sharma*

In Indian web series characterization, his ideas about narrative structure can still provide valuable insights into how narratives, including Indian web series, are constructed.

One of Barthes’ key concepts is that of the “narrative code” or “narrative grammar,” which suggests that all narratives share certain structural features or codes. These codes are the underlying rules and conventions that govern the construction and interpretation of narratives. Here’s how Barthes’ ideas about narrative structure might apply to Indian web series characterization:

**Binary Oppositions:** Barthes argues that narratives often rely on binary oppositions, such as good vs. evil, love vs. hate, or tradition vs. modernity, to create conflict and tension. In Indian web series, characterization may involve the juxtaposition of characters that embody opposing qualities or values, reflecting broader social or cultural tensions.

**Narrative Functions:** Barthes identifies various narrative functions or roles that characters may fulfill within a story, including the hero, the villain, the mentor, and the sidekick. In Indian web series, characterization may involve a diverse range of characters with distinct functions, contributing to the development of the narrative arc and thematic exploration.

**Enigma:** Barthes discusses the importance of enigma or mystery in narratives, suggesting that audiences are drawn to stories that pose questions and invite speculation. In Indian web series, characterization may involve the use of enigmatic or complex characters whose motivations and intentions are not immediately clear, encouraging viewers to engage with the narrative on a deeper level.

**Narrative Voices:** Barthes explores the role of narrative voice in shaping the reader’s experience of the story. In Indian web series, characterization may involve the use of multiple narrative perspectives or unreliable narrators, providing different insights into the characters and their motivations.

## **Growth Arcs and Character Evolution**

As this paper delves into the intricate portrayal of growth arcs and character evolution in Indian web series, highlighting the profound transformations and nuanced developments that characters undergo throughout the narrative as mentioned above by Barthes. Through an analysis of notable examples, this study explores how characters in Indian web series navigate personal challenges, confront societal norms, and evolve in response to their experiences. Drawing on key quotations and scenes, it examines the techniques employed by writers and directors to depict authentic and compelling character journeys, contributing to the richness and depth of storytelling in the Indian digital landscape. Web series allow characters to evolve over time, with writers exploring their growth arcs, transformations, and moral dilemmas through multiple seasons. Whether it’s the transformation of Gaitonde

in “Sacred Games” or the evolution of Devi in “Never Have I Ever,” character evolution adds depth and richness to the storytelling, capturing the nuances of human behavior and the journey of self-discovery.

### **Scam 1992: The Harshad Mehta Story:**

#### **Character: Harshad Mehta**

**Evolution:** Begins as an ambitious, street-smart stockbroker and evolves into a megalomaniacal figure consumed by greed and power.

**Growth Arc:** His rise to fame and subsequent downfall highlight the consequences of unchecked ambition and the pursuit of wealth.

#### **The Family Man:**

#### **Character: Srikant Tiwari**

**Evolution:** Starts as a seemingly ordinary middle-class man leading a double life as a secret intelligence officer, and gradually confronts the moral dilemmas and personal sacrifices of his job.

**Growth Arc:** His journey explores the complexities of balancing family responsibilities with the demands of national security, leading to internal conflicts and eventual growth.

#### **Made in Heaven:**

#### **Characters: Tara Khanna and Karan Mehra**

**Evolution:** Tara and Karan, both wedding planners, navigate through personal and professional challenges in an industry filled with societal norms and prejudices.

**Growth Arc:** Their experiences with clients and events force them to confront their own biases, aspirations, and vulnerabilities, ultimately leading to personal growth and self-discovery.

#### **Delhi Crime:**

#### **Character: Vartika Chaturvedi**

**Evolution:** Vartika, a senior police officer, leads the investigation of a brutal gang rape case in Delhi. Throughout the series, she confronts the systemic issues within the police force and society while striving for justice.

**Growth Arc:** Her character evolves from being driven solely by duty to understanding the human cost of crime and the importance of empathy in law enforcement.

#### **Mirzapur:**

#### **Characters: Guddu Pandit and Golu Gupta**

**Evolution:** Guddu and Golu, initially portrayed as innocent bystanders, are thrust into the world of crime and violence in the lawless town of Mirzapur. Their pursuit of power and revenge leads to a transformation in their characters.

**Growth Arc:** As they navigate through betrayals, loss, and moral dilemmas, Guddu and Golu evolve into ruthless yet complex individuals willing to do whatever it takes to survive and seek justice.

These examples illustrate the diverse and compelling character arcs present in Indian web series, showcasing themes of ambition, morality, identity, and societal change.

## **Diversity and Representation**

Indian Hindi web series have also paved the way for diverse representation, featuring characters from various backgrounds, identities, and experiences. Characters belonging to LGBTQ+ communities, marginalized groups, or unconventional professions are given a voice, challenging stereotypes and fostering inclusivity in storytelling. The representation of strong, complex female characters also stands out, showcasing women in roles of agency, strength, and resilience.

Diversity and representation in Indian Hindi web series have been evolving over the years, reflecting the changing demographics and socio-cultural landscape of the country. While there's still progress to be made, there have been notable improvements in recent years. Here are some aspects of diversity and representation in Indian Hindi web series:

**Regional Diversity:** Indian Hindi web series have started to incorporate characters from various regions of India, representing the linguistic and cultural diversity of the country. This includes characters from states like Maharashtra, Punjab, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, etc., each with their unique cultural backgrounds and dialects.

**Religious and Ethnic Diversity:** There's a growing representation of characters from diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds. Stories are increasingly exploring themes related to different religious communities, such as Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, etc., and highlighting their cultural practices, beliefs, and struggles.

**Gender Representation:** There has been a noticeable shift towards more nuanced and empowered female characters in Indian Hindi web series. Women are portrayed as multi-dimensional individuals with agency, and their stories often revolve around issues like empowerment, identity, and autonomy.

**Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity:** While still relatively rare, there have been attempts to include characters representing LGBTQ+ identities in Indian web series. However, this area still requires significant improvement in terms of accurate and sensitive representation.

**Socioeconomic Diversity:** Indian web series are increasingly exploring stories from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, depicting characters from different strata of society. This includes narratives about both affluent urban lifestyles and the struggles of people from rural or economically marginalized communities.

**Age Diversity:** There's a growing recognition of the importance of representing characters

from different age groups. While youth-centric narratives remain popular, there's also an emergence of stories featuring older characters, exploring their experiences, challenges, and perspectives.

**Ability and Disability Representation:** There's a need for more representation of characters with disabilities in Indian web series. While some efforts have been made to portray such characters, there's still a long way to go in terms of accurate and respectful representation.

**Caste and Class Representation:** Some Indian web series have begun to address issues related to caste and class, although this remains a relatively under-explored area. There's potential for more nuanced storytelling that delves into the complexities of caste dynamics and social hierarchies.

Largely, while Indian Hindi web series have made strides in diversifying their characters and narratives, there's still room for improvement in terms of more authentic, inclusive, and sensitive representation across various dimensions of diversity. Continued efforts towards better representation can contribute to more meaningful and impactful storytelling in the Indian entertainment industry.

Caste and class representation in Indian Hindi web series has emerged as a significant thematic element, reflecting the socio-cultural realities of Indian society. Characters from various caste and class backgrounds are portrayed with varying degrees of complexity, shedding light on the shades of identity, privilege, and discrimination. While some series explore these themes overtly, others weave them into the fabric of the narrative more subtly. Through these portrayals, Indian web series contribute to a deeper understanding of caste and class dynamics, sparking conversations and raising awareness about these important issues in contemporary India.

Character development in Indian Hindi web series often revolves around creating complex characters with intricate layers that evolve throughout the narrative. Here are some examples of complex characters from Indian Hindi web series:

**Sartaj Singh - "Sacred Games":** Sartaj Singh, portrayed by Saif Ali Khan, is a troubled police officer grappling with personal demons and professional challenges in the series "Sacred Games." As the story unfolds, Sartaj's character undergoes significant growth, confronting his past traumas and questioning his moral compass in the face of corruption and violence.

**Kaleen Bhaiya - "Mirzapur":** Kaleen Bhaiya, played by Pankaj Tripathi, is a crime lord who rules the fictional town of Mirzapur with an iron fist. Despite his ruthless exterior, Kaleen Bhaiya is depicted as a complex character with shades of vulnerability and ambition. His journey from a small-time businessman to a powerful underworld figure is marked by moral ambiguity and internal conflicts.

**Bhaisaab - "Paatal Lok":** Bhaisaab, portrayed by Sanjeev Mehra, is a mysterious and enigmatic character with significant influence in the criminal underworld in "Paatal Lok."

Throughout the series, Bhaisaab's true motives and allegiances remain ambiguous, adding layers of complexity to his character as he navigates the intricate web of power and politics.

**GudduPandit - "Mirzapur":** GudduPandit, portrayed by Ali Fazal, undergoes a transformation from a naive young man to a vengeful anti-hero following a series of tragic events in "Mirzapur." His character development is marked by internal conflicts and moral dilemmas as he grapples with his desire for revenge and his own sense of morality.

**Gaitonde - "Sacred Games":** Ganesh Gaitonde, portrayed by Nawazuddin Siddiqui, is a complex and charismatic gangster at the center of "Sacred Games." Through flashbacks and revelations, Gaitonde's character is fleshed out, revealing layers of vulnerability, trauma, and ambition that drive his actions throughout the series.

These examples illustrate how character development in Indian Hindi web series focuses on crafting multi-dimensional characters with depth and complexity, whose arcs resonate with viewers on an emotional and psychological level.

Character development in Indian Hindi web series often involves intricate relationships and interactions with other characters, contributing to the complexity and depth of the individuals involved. Here are some examples of complex characters and their relationships with others in Indian Hindi web series:

**Gaitonde and Sartaj Singh - "Sacred Games":** The relationship between Gaitonde (Nawazuddin Siddiqui) and Sartaj Singh (Saif Ali Khan) in "Sacred Games" is central to the series. Gaitonde, a notorious gangster, and Sartaj, a troubled police officer, share a complex dynamic marked by conflict, manipulation, and mutual fascination. Their interactions drive the narrative forward as they engage in a cat-and-mouse game that delves into themes of morality, power, and redemption.

**Kaleen Bhaiya and GudduPandit - "Mirzapur":** The relationship between Kaleen Bhaiya (Pankaj Tripathi), the crime lord of Mirzapur, and GudduPandit (Ali Fazal), a young man seeking revenge, is fraught with tension and complexity. Initially, Guddu works for Kaleen Bhaiya, but their dynamic shifts as Guddu's ambitions and desire for power grow. Their conflicting interests and personal vendettas drive the narrative conflict, culminating in a gripping power struggle that shapes the series.

**Bhaisaab and HathiramChaudhary - "PaatalLok":** In "PaatalLok," the relationship between Bhaisaab (Sanjeev Mehra), a powerful underworld figure, and HathiramChaudhary (Jaideep Ahlawat), a disillusioned police officer, is characterized by intrigue and manipulation. Hathiram's investigation into a high-profile case leads him into Bhaisaab's orbit, where their interactions reveal layers of deception and hidden agendas. Their complex dynamic reflects the blurred lines between law and crime in the series.

**BeenaTripathi and MunnaTripathi - "Mirzapur":** BeenaTripathi (Rasika Dugal), Kaleen Bhaiya's wife, shares a complex relationship with Munna Tripathi (Divyendu Sharma), Kaleen Bhaiya's hot-headed son, in "Mirzapur." Their interactions are marked by tension,

desire, and manipulation as Beena seeks to assert her independence and Munna grapples with his insecurities and ambitions. Their dynamic adds layers of intrigue and drama to the series' familial conflicts.

**Gaitonde and Kukoo - "Sacred Games":** Gaitonde's relationship with Kukoo (KubbraSait) in "Sacred Games" is a poignant example of complex character dynamics. Kukoo, a transgender woman, becomes Gaitonde's love interest, challenging societal norms and expectations. Their relationship is marked by love, longing, and tragedy, highlighting themes of identity, acceptance, and redemption amidst the backdrop of Gaitonde's criminal empire.

These examples illustrate how character development in Indian Hindi web series is intricately intertwined with the relationships and interactions between characters, adding depth, conflict, and emotional resonance to the storytelling.

### **Memorable Adversaries and Anti-Heroes**

In addition to protagonists, Indian Hindi web series have introduced compelling antagonists and anti-heroes who defy traditional character archetypes. Characters like Kaleen Bhaiya in "Mirzapur," Binod in "PaatalLok," or Trivedi in "Special Ops" showcase shades of grey, moral ambiguity, and psychological depth that blur the lines between heroism and villainy. These characters challenge viewers' perceptions and add layers of complexity to the narrative.

In Indian Hindi web series; there have been several memorable adversaries and anti-heroes who have captivated audiences with their complex characters and intriguing storylines. Here are a few notable examples along with references:

**Gaitonde - "Sacred Games":** Ganesh Gaitonde, portrayed by Nawazuddin Siddiqui, is a ruthless gangster and one of the central characters in the series "Sacred Games." His journey from the slums of Mumbai to becoming a powerful underworld figure is depicted with intricate detail, showcasing his cunning intelligence and brutality. Gaitonde's character is a fascinating anti-hero who challenges societal norms and navigates the murky waters of crime and power.

**Kaleen Bhaiya - "Mirzapur":** Played by PankajTripathi, Kaleen Bhaiya is a crime lord and the undisputed kingpin of the fictional town of Mirzapur. He is portrayed as a shrewd and calculated villain who maintains control through a combination of fear and manipulation. Kaleen Bhaiya's character embodies the complexities of power and ambition, making him a memorable adversary in the series.

**Bhaisaab - "PaatalLok":** Bhaisaab, portrayed by Sanjeev Mehra, is a shadowy figure with significant influence in the criminal underworld in the series "PaatalLok." While his true identity remains shrouded in mystery for much of the series, Bhaisaab's presence looms large as he pulls the strings behind various nefarious activities. His enigmatic persona and Machiavellian schemes make him a compelling adversary for the protagonists.

**Bunty - “Mirzapur”:** Bunty, played by Divyendu Sharma, is the hot-headed and impulsive right-hand man of Kaleen Bhaiya in “Mirzapur.” Despite being a villainous character, Bunty’s charm and wit endear him to the audience, blurring the lines between antagonist and anti-hero. His volatile nature and unpredictable actions contribute to the tension and drama in the series.

**Guddu Pandit - “Mirzapur”:** Guddu Pandit, portrayed by Ali Fazal, undergoes a transformation from a simple young man to a vengeful anti-hero following a series of tragic events in “Mirzapur.” Driven by a desire for revenge, Guddu embraces his dark side and becomes a formidable force to be reckoned with. His journey from innocence to ruthlessness showcases the complexities of morality and justice.

These characters exemplify the rich tapestry of adversaries and anti-heroes in Indian Hindi web series, each with their own unique mutations and references that add depth and intrigue to their personas. Their compelling narratives and nuanced portrayals have contributed to the success and popularity of these series among audiences.

## **Conclusion**

The rich tapestry of characters in Indian Hindi web series reflects the diversity, creativity, and storytelling prowess of the industry. From memorable protagonists to captivating antagonists, these characters captivate audiences, provoke thought, and evoke emotional responses that resonate long after the screen fades to black. As Indian web series continue to push boundaries, innovate storytelling, and embrace diverse perspectives, the characters they portray will remain at the heart of the viewer experience, shaping narratives that inspire, entertain, and provoke introspection.

Indian web series have gained popularity for their complex and intriguing characters, which often embody the diverse social, political, and cultural aspects of the country. “Sacred Games” and “Mirzapur” are prime examples of such series that have garnered critical acclaim for their richly portrayed characters. This article seeks to explore the depth and intricacy of characterization in these two groundbreaking web series, and aims to analyze the various dimensions of character portrayal. Through the analysis of “Sacred Games” and “Mirzapur,” it becomes evident that the characterization in Indian web series is a reflection of the multifaceted nature of the country’s society. The portrayal of characters with depth and genuineness adds a layer of realism to these narratives, making them resonate with audiences on a profound level.

Indian Hindi web series have emerged as a powerful medium for storytelling, offering diverse narratives that resonate with audiences across the globe. With their bold themes, complex characters, and innovative storytelling techniques, these series have redefined the entertainment landscape, pushing boundaries and challenging conventions. As they continue to evolve and mature, Indian web series serve as a testament to the creativity and talent of the country’s entertainment industry, promising exciting possibilities for the future of digital storytelling. Indian Hindi web series stand at the forefront of a cultural revolution, weaving tales that transcend boundaries and capture the essence of modern India.

With their fusion of compelling narratives, diverse characters, and innovative storytelling, these series have become a cornerstone of the digital entertainment landscape. As they continue to push the covering and challenge norms, Indian web series not only entertain but also reflect the evolving aspirations and complexities of society.

In this golden age of content creation, they shine as beacons of creativity, inspiring audiences and creators alike to explore new vanishing point.””In conclusion, Indian Hindi web series have revolutionized the entertainment landscape, offering diverse narratives, complex characters, and innovative storytelling. With their ability to captivate audiences both domestically and internationally, these series stand as a witness to the creativity and talent of the Indian entertainment industry. As they continue to push boundaries and explore new themes, Indian web series promise to remain a driving force in the digital era of storytelling. ■

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# Spiritual Meditation and Transcendental Ethos: Philosophical Underpinnings in the Works of Ram Dass and David Frawley

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This paper explores the philosophical underpinnings of spiritual meditation and transcendental ethos as articulated in the works of two influential thinkers, Ram Dass and David Frawley. Drawing from their writings, lectures, and teachings, this research elucidates the core concepts of spiritual awakening, meditation practices, and the cultivation of a transcendental ethos. From one side to other a comparative analysis of their perspectives, this paper highlights the similarities and differences in their philosophical frameworks, examining how they converge and diverge in their approaches to spiritual inquiry and transformation. By delving into the essence of their teachings, this paper aims to offer insights into the profound wisdom and transformative potential inherent in their works.

**Keywords:** Transcendental Ethos, Self-awareness, Consciousness, Meditation, Spirituality

## **Introduction:**

In the realm of spirituality and philosophy, the exploration of consciousness, self-realization, and transcendence are of central focus for seekers across cultures and epochs. Among the contemporary spiritual luminaries, Ram Dass and David Frawley stand out for their profound insights into the nature of existence and the path to awakening. This paper seeks to delve into the philosophical foundations of their teachings, focusing on spiritual contemplation and the cultivation of transcendental ethos. By examining their perspectives on reflection practices, the nature of reality, and the journey of self-discovery, this research aims at illuminating the timeless wisdom embedded in their works.

Ram Dass, formerly known as Richard Alpert, emerged as a prominent figure in the West's understanding and adoption of Eastern spirituality. Influenced by his encounters with Eastern spiritual traditions, particularly Hinduism and Buddhism, Ram Dass's teachings emphasize the interconnectedness of all beings and the importance of cultivating love, compassion, and self-awareness. Central to his philosophy is the practice of mindfulness

and presence, which he believes are essential for transcending the limitations of the ego and realizing one's true nature.

David Frawley, on the other hand, is a prolific author and scholar known for his expertise in Hindu philosophy, Ayurveda, and Vedic astrology. Drawing from the ancient wisdom of the Vedas and the Upanishads, his teachings explore the fundamental principles of reality and the human quest for self-realization. He emphasizes the importance of aligning oneself with the cosmic order (Dharma) and attuning to the divine intelligence inherent in all creation.

One of the central themes in the teachings of both Ram Dass and David Frawley is the practice of rumination as a means of accessing higher states of consciousness and deepening one's spiritual awareness. Ram Dass advocates for various forms of meditation, including mindfulness meditation, loving-kindness meditation, and mantra meditation, as tools for quietening the mind and connecting with the divine presence within. Similarly, Frawley emphasizes the transformative power of meditation, particularly as a means of aligning oneself with the cosmic rhythms and accessing higher realms of consciousness.

Crux of both Ram Dass and David Frawley's teachings is the recognition of the interconnectedness of all beings and the underlying unity of consciousness. They both emphasize the importance of transcending the illusion of separateness and recognizing the divinity within oneself and all creation. Ram Dass often speaks of the "Over Soul," a higher, transcendent aspect of consciousness that encompasses and connects all individual souls. Likewise, Frawley's teachings highlight the concept of Brahman, the universal consciousness that pervades all the existence. Another key aspect of their teachings is the exploration of the nature of reality and the illusory nature of the ego. Ram Dass speaks of the illusion of Maya, the cosmic veil that obscures the true nature of reality, while Frawley delves into the concept of Lila, the divine play of creation. Both emphasize the importance of transcending ego identification and realizing one's essential identity with the divine. In their writings and teachings, they offer practical guidance for navigating the journey of self-discovery and spiritual awakening. They encourage individuals to cultivate mindfulness, compassion, and self-inquiry as pathways to realizing their true nature and accessing higher states of consciousness. Along meditation practices, philosophical inquiry, and alignment with the cosmic order, seekers can embark on a transformative journey of self-realization and transcendence. Their teachings offer profound insights into the nature of existence and the human quest for self-realization. Over their exploration of consciousness, meditation practices, and philosophical inquiry, they illuminate the timeless wisdom embedded in the spiritual traditions of the East and inspire seekers to awaken to the divinity within themselves and all of creation.

### **The Life and Teachings of Ram Dass:**

Ram Dass, formerly known as Richard Alpert, emerged as a prominent figure in the Western spiritual landscape following his transformative experiences in India and his

encounters with his guru, Neem Karoli Baba. Central to Ram Dass's teachings is the concept of "be here now" emphasizing the importance of present-moment awareness and the cultivation of loving awareness as a path to spiritual liberation. Across his writings, including the seminal work *Be Here Now*, Ram Dass elucidates the role of meditation, psychedelics, and interpersonal relationships in catalyzing spiritual awakening and fostering inner peace. His teachings emphasize the transcendence of egotist constructs and the recognition of the interconnectedness of all beings. His journey from Richard Alpert, a Harvard psychologist and researcher, to Ram Dass, a spiritual teacher and guide, is a testament to the transformative power of spiritual exploration and personal growth. His encounters with Eastern spirituality during his travels to India in the 1960s, particularly his meetings with Neem Karoli Baba, profoundly altered the course of his life and shaped his spiritual path. Inspired by his guru's teachings and the practice of bhakti (devotional) yoga, Ram Dass underwent a profound inner transformation, renouncing his former identity and embracing a life dedicated to spiritual inquiry and service. His teaching emphasizes the importance of fully inhabiting the present moment, free from the distractions of the past and future, and cultivating a state of loving awareness towards oneself and others. Through practices such as meditation, breathwork, and mindful living, individuals can cultivate a deeper connection to the present moment and access the timeless wisdom that resides within. *Be Here Now*, serves as a guidebook for spiritual seekers, offering practical insights and exercises for cultivating present-moment awareness and awakening to one's true nature. The book's distinctive blend of Eastern mysticism, psychedelic art, and practical wisdom captured the imaginations of millions and continues to inspire readers to this day. From one side to other the pages of *Be Here Now*, he invites readers to embark on a journey of self-discovery, guiding them towards greater self-awareness, inner peace, and spiritual fulfillment. In addition to mindfulness practices, he also explores the role of psychedelics, such as LSD, in catalyzing spiritual awakening and expanding consciousness. Drawing from his own experiences and research, he discusses how psychedelics can temporarily dissolve ego boundaries and provide glimpses of higher states of consciousness. However, he also cautions against becoming overly attached to psychedelic experiences, emphasizing the importance of integrating these insights into one's daily life and spiritual practice. Interpersonal relationships are other aspects of Ram Dass's teachings, highlighting the transformative power of love and connection in spiritual growth. He emphasizes the importance of cultivating loving relationships with others as a means of deepening one's spiritual practice and recognizing the inherent divinity within each being. Through practices such as loving-kindness meditation and compassionate communication, individuals can cultivate a sense of interconnectedness and compassion towards all of creation. Epicenter of Ram Dass's teachings is the transcendence of self-absorbed constructs and the recognition of the interconnectedness of all beings. He invites individuals to let go of attachments to personal identity and societal roles and to recognize the underlying unity that binds all of creation. Throughout practices such as self-inquiry, surrender, and devotion, individuals can awaken to their true nature and experience a sense of oneness with the universe. His teachings offer profound insights into the nature of

consciousness, self-realization, and spiritual liberation. Ram Dass's legacy continues to inspire countless individuals on their own spiritual journeys, reminding us of the inherent wisdom and love that reside within each of us.

### **Exploring the Philosophical Landscape of David Frawley:**

David Frawley, also known as VamadevaShastri occupies a prominent position as a leading figure in the exploration and dissemination of Vedic studies, Ayurveda, and Hindu philosophy. His extensive body of work encompasses a wide array of topics ranging from spiritual practices to holistic healing modalities, all rooted in the timeless wisdom of ancient Indian scriptures such as the Vedas and the Upanishads. His writings offer not only a scholarly elucidation of these texts but also practical guidance for seekers on the path of spiritual inquiry and self-realization. At the heart of Frawley's teachings lies the concept of "Sanatana Dharma," often translated as the eternal law or eternal duty. Sanatana Dharma encompasses the foundational principles that govern the universe and serve as a guide for ethical living and cosmic harmony. He emphasizes the importance of aligning one's life with these universal principles, recognizing them as the key to individual and collective well-being. During his exploration of Sanatana Dharma, Frawley invites seekers to delve into the deeper dimensions of existence and to discover the timeless truths that underlie the diversity of religious and cultural traditions. Central to Frawley's spiritual teachings is the practice of yoga, which he views as a comprehensive system for spiritual evolution and self-transformation. Drawing from the ancient teachings of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras and other classical texts, he elucidates the multifaceted aspects of yoga, including physical postures (asanas), breath control (pranayama), concentration (dharana), meditation (dhyana), and self-realization (samadhi). He emphasizes the importance of integrating these practices into daily life as a means of purifying the mind, harmonizing the body, and attuning to higher states of consciousness. In addition to yoga, he places a strong emphasis on mantra meditation as a potent tool for spiritual awakening and inner transformation. Mantras, sacred sounds or phrases, are believed to have a profound effect on the mind and energy body, serving as vehicles for invoking divine qualities and aligning with higher states of consciousness. He explores the power of mantra meditation in his writings, offering guidance on selecting, reciting, and meditating upon specific mantras to cultivate inner peace, clarity, and spiritual insight. Furthermore, he advocates for the study of sacred texts as a means of deepening one's understanding of spiritual principles and connecting with the wisdom of the sages. He delves into the teachings of the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, and other classical texts, offering insightful commentaries and interpretations that illuminate the profound truths contained within these scriptures. Through the study of sacred texts, Frawley encourages seekers to engage in critical inquiry and contemplation, allowing for the integration of spiritual knowledge into lived experience. Integral to his teachings is the recognition of the interconnectedness of all aspects of existence – the unity of the individual self (Atman) with the universal consciousness (Brahman). He emphasizes the underlying unity that pervades all of creation, transcending the apparent diversity of forms and phenomena. This recognition of unity serves as the

foundation for ethical living, compassion towards all beings, and a deep reverence for the sacredness of life. His teachings offer a comprehensive framework for spiritual inquiry and self-realization rooted in the timeless wisdom of the Vedas and the Upanishads. During his exploration of Sanatana Dharma, yoga, mantra meditation, and the study of sacred texts, he invites seekers to embark on a transformative journey of inner exploration and spiritual growth. His writings serve as a guiding light for those seeking to harmonize with the divine order and awaken to the deeper truths of existence.

### **Comparative Analysis:**

In comparing the teachings of Ram Dass and David Frawley, several key themes emerge, revealing both convergences and divergences in their philosophical frameworks. Both emphasize the importance of meditation as a transformative practice for accessing higher states of consciousness and transcending the limitations of the ego. However, while Ram Dass incorporates elements of psychedelics and interpersonal relationships into his teachings, Frawley emphasizes the primacy of yoga, Ayurveda, and the Vedic tradition as holistic pathways to spiritual realization. Ram Dass and David Frawley, despite their differing emphases, share a common ground in their recognition of the transformative power of meditation. For both spiritual luminaries, meditation serves as a foundational practice for deepening self-awareness, quieting the mind, and accessing higher states of consciousness. Ram Dass often speaks of meditation as a means of cultivating present-moment awareness and cultivating loving awareness, emphasizing the importance of being fully present in each moment. Similarly, Frawley views meditation as a key component of the yogic path, facilitating inner transformation and spiritual awakening.

Through practices such as mindfulness meditation, mantra meditation, and contemplation, practitioners can transcend the limitations of the ego and agree with the divine order of the universe. Where Ram Dass and David Frawley diverge is in their approaches to complementary practices and modalities. Ram Dass, drawing from his background in psychology and his experiences with psychedelics, incorporates elements of interpersonal relationships and psychedelic exploration into his teachings. He explores the potential of psychedelics as catalysts for spiritual awakening, acknowledging their capacity to dissolve ego boundaries and facilitate mystical experiences. Additionally, Ram Dass emphasizes the importance of cultivating loving relationships as a means of spiritual growth, recognizing the transformative power of love and connection in awakening to higher states of consciousness. In contrast, David Frawley places greater emphasis on traditional practices such as yoga, Ayurveda, and the study of Vedic texts as holistic pathways to spiritual realization. Frawley views yoga as a comprehensive system for harmonizing the body, mind, and spirit, encompassing physical postures, breathwork, meditation, and philosophical inquiry. He emphasizes the importance of aligning one's lifestyle with the principles of Ayurveda, an ancient system of holistic medicine, as a means of promoting physical health and spiritual well-being. Furthermore, Frawley advocates for the study of Vedic scriptures such as the Vedas, Upanishads, and Bhagavad Gita, which he considers to contain timeless

wisdom and spiritual insights. Despite these differences, both Ram Dass and David Frawley share a fundamental commitment to spiritual awakening and self-realization. They both recognize the interconnectedness of all beings and the importance of aligning with the divine order of the universe. While their approaches may vary, they ultimately seek to guide seekers on the path of inner transformation and transcendence of the ego. The teachings of Ram Dass and David Frawley offer complementary perspectives on the journey of spiritual realization. While Ram Dass incorporates elements of psychedelics and interpersonal relationships into his teachings, Frawley emphasizes the primacy of yoga, Ayurveda, and the Vedic tradition as holistic pathways to awakening. Despite their differences, both spiritual luminaries share a common commitment to guiding seekers on the path of self-discovery, inner peace, and spiritual liberation. By means of meditation, self-inquiry, and alignment with universal principles, practitioners can awaken to the deeper dimensions of existence and realize their true nature.

### **The Quest for Transcendence:**

Center of both Ram Dass's and David Frawley's teachings lies a profound quest for transcendence – a journey beyond the confines of the mundane world and the self-driven mind. Whether through the practice of mindfulness and loving awareness, as advocated by Ram Dass, or through the study of Vedic wisdom and the pursuit of dharma, as elucidated by Frawley, the ultimate aim is the realization of one's true nature and the unity of all existence. This quest for transcendence serves as a guiding light for seekers on the path of spiritual evolution and inner transformation. Ram Dass, born Richard Alpert, emerged as a central figure in the Western spiritual landscape following his transformative experiences in India and his encounters with his guru, Neem Karoli Baba. His teachings are rooted in the principles of mindfulness and loving awareness, which he presents as powerful tools for transcending the limitations of the ego and connecting with the deeper dimensions of existence. Via practices such as meditation, yoga, and compassionate action, Ram Dass guides seekers on a journey of self-discovery and spiritual awakening, encouraging them to cultivate present-moment awareness and unconditional love as pathways to transcendence.

Central to Ram Dass's teachings is the concept of *Be Here Now*, which encapsulates the essence of mindfulness and living in the present moment. He emphasizes the importance of letting go of attachments to the past and worries about the future, and instead, fully embracing the richness of the present moment. By cultivating mindfulness and loving awareness, practitioners can dissolve the boundaries of the ego and experience a profound sense of interconnectedness with all of creation. In contrast, David Frawley, also known as Vamadeva Shastri, offers a comprehensive framework for spiritual inquiry rooted in the wisdom of the Vedic tradition. His teachings revolve around the study of Vedic scriptures, such as the Vedas, Upanishads, and Bhagavad Gita, as a means of comprehending the nature of reality and aligning with the cosmic order. Frawley emphasizes the pursuit of dharma, or righteous duty, as the guiding principle for harmonious existence and spiritual advancement. By following the principles of dharma and engaging in practices such as yoga, mantra

meditation, and Ayurveda, practitioners can transcend the confines of the ego driven mind and realize their inherent unity with the divine. Frawley's teachings draw heavily from the ancient wisdom of the Vedas, which he sees as repositories of universal truths and spiritual insights. He explores the profound teachings contained within these texts, offering interpretations and commentaries that shed light on the nature of reality and the path to spiritual liberation. Across the study of Vedic wisdom, practitioners gain a deeper understanding of their place in the cosmos and their interconnectedness with all of existence. Despite the differing methodologies, both Ram Dass and David Frawley share a unified vision of guiding seekers towards transcendence – a state of consciousness that transcends the limitations of individual identity and the dualistic mindset. They both acknowledge the interconnectedness of all beings and the underlying unity of existence, encouraging seekers to sync with the divine order and awaken to their authentic nature. Whether through the cultivation of mindfulness and loving awareness or the exploration of Vedic wisdom and the pursuit of dharma, the ultimate aspiration remains the realization of oneness with the cosmos and the attainment of inner peace and spiritual fulfillment. The teachings of Ram Dass and David Frawley converge on the profound quest for transcendence – an odyssey beyond the confines of the self-absorbed mind and the material world. Whether During the practice of mindfulness and loving awareness or the study of Vedic wisdom and the pursuit of dharma, both offer invaluable insights and guidance for seekers on the path of spiritual evolution and inner transformation. From start to end their teachings, aspirants can embark on a voyage of self-discovery and come to understand the timeless truth of their intrinsic unity with the divine.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, the philosophical underpinnings of spiritual meditation and transcendental ethos as articulated in the works of Ram Dass and David Frawley offer profound insights into the nature of consciousness, reality, and the human condition. From start to end their respective teachings, they illuminate diverse pathways to spiritual awakening and self-realization, inviting seekers to embark on a journey of inner exploration and transcendence. By synthesizing their perspectives and integrating their wisdom into one's spiritual practice, one can aspire to embody the timeless truths that underpin the quest for meaning, purpose, and ultimate liberation. ■

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# The 1960s American Countercultural Movements

Madhusoodan Kundgol

The 1960s were a leap in human consciousness. Mahatma Gandhi, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Che Guevara, Mother Teresa, they all led a revolution of conscience. The Beatles, the Doors, Jimi Hendrix created revolution and evolution themes. The music was like Dalí, with many colours and revolutionary ways. The youth of today must go there to find themselves. The present paper intends to discuss all these issues.

**Keywords:** Counterculture, drugs, the Beats, the Hippie, resistance, post-modernism, technology, free speech etc.

The world is full of injustice. There is dominance and dictatorship as much as ignorance and ego in most people. This is one important reason that leads to resistance for justice. Culture-clash leads to counterculture. It is a reaction or reactionary trend in human society. Counterculture movements have been seen in the history; and it is a universal phenomenon. Our world has seen the growth of science and technology, world wars, decline in man's age-old values, faith and traditional way of life, and the emergence of globalization. The 1960s American Counterculture Movements reflect all these. This trend is "Synonymous with cultural liberalism and with various social changes of the decade" (**Wikipedia**, Counterculture of the 1960s 1). This aspect had another dimension called the Civil Rights Movements in the times of President John Kennedy in the 1960s. Martin Luther King Jr was behind it.

So, the Government of America was to enact Voting Rights Act of 1865 and manage foreign disturbances like the Vietnam War. The prevailing tensions pressed for human values / civil rights – respect for the individual, frank treatment of sex, women's rights, colour people's rights and end of segregation, use of drugs and the differing interpretations of the American Dream. The 1960s American Counterculture is an overreaching term here, enveloping many things.

The side effects or consequences of the movement were emergence of new cultural forms, a dynamic subculture that celebrated experiment, Bohemianism, hippie and other alternative lifestyles. The popular cultural acts like the Beatles, Jimi Hendrix and Bob Dylan, New Hollywood, French New Wave, Japanese New Wave, decline of old dress codes like suits and hats, new hair style, use of Eastern dress styles, miniskirt, fashion subculture with Jeans became important countercultural trends in the West. The modern man was obsessed with things other than food.

The Cold War era, Russia's suppression of anti-communist uprisings in Czech Republic and Cuba, Vietnam issue and racism led to distrust of governments and disillusionment. Youth sought freedom of speech and assembly. Poverty, environmental issues as Michel Carson spoke of were serious. Feminists and the downtrodden, tribals, LGBT community felt insecure. Birth control measures led to sexual revolution. This led to illegal birth of children. Kathryn VanSpanckeren observes,

In the past, elite culture influenced popular culture through its status and example; the reverse seems true in US in the post-war years. (VanSpanckeren 97)

The invention of electricity, automobile, aeroplane, TV and radio promoted the growth of Counterculture movement. TV and radio publicised horrifying news and happenings.

### **Changing Lifestyles:**

Communes, collectives and intentional communities regained popularity during this era. Early communities such as the Hog Farm, Quarry Hill and Drop City in the US were established as straight forward agrarian attempts to return to the land and live free of interference from outside influences. Yoga, occult practices and increasing human potential weakened religion. There was Generation Gap. This was because of rapidly evolving fashion and hairstyle trends. Beat and hippie culture marked this beginning. Jeans, Disco and Punk Rock of the 1970s, Jeans and T-shirts were marks of counterculture.

The use of drugs like Marijuana drove the young people underground, making them live clandestine lives. There was confrontation between college people and officials like police. The Columbia University Protest of 1968 is an example.

**Vietnam War:** The debate about the Vietnam War added to counterculture. The youth protests against the US war in Vietnam awakened the nation.

**Social and Political Movements:** Ethnic and racial movements included the Civil Rights Movements against racism in the 1960s America. Mexicans, Native Indians, Asian Americans, Jews and Women protested against the majority's act of marginalization. Cubans in America praised Fidel Castro and Che Guevara.

**Free Speech:** The student bodies demanded free speech. The 1964 Free Speech Movement at the University of California, Berkeley is just one example.

**New Left:** The New Left is a term used in different countries to describe left-wing movements that occurred in the 1960s and 1970s in the western world. They differed from earlier leftist movements that had been more oriented towards labour activism, and instead adopted social activism. The American 'New Left' is associated with college campus mass protests and radical leftist movements.

**Anti-Nuclear:** The application of nuclear technology, both as a source of energy and as an instrument of war, has been controversial.

**Subalternity and Feminism:** The role of women as full-time homemakers in industrial society was challenged in 1963, when US feminist Betty Friedan published *The*

*Feminine Mystique*, giving momentum to the women's movement and influencing what many called Second-wave feminism.

**Environmentalism:** The 1960s counterculture embraced a back-to-the-land ethic, and communes of the era often relocated to the country from cities. Influential books of the 1960s included Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* and Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb*. Counterculture environmentalists were quick to grasp the implications of Ehrlich's writings on overpopulation, Hubbert "Peak Oil" prediction, and more general concerns over pollution, litter, and the environmental effects of the Vietnam War, automobile-dependent lifestyles, and nuclear energy.

**Hippies:** After the January 14, 1967, Human Be-In in San Francisco organized by artist Michael Bowen, the media's attention on culture was fully activated. In 1967, Scott McKenzie's rendition of the song "San Francisco (Be Sure to Wear Flowers in Your Hair)" brought as many as 100,000 young people from all over the world to celebrate San Francisco's "Summer of Love". While the song had originally been written by John Phillips of The Mamas & the Papas to promote the June 1967 Monterey Pop Festival, it became an instant hit worldwide and quickly transcended its original purpose. It is said,

Albee had an American dream which has perhaps gone sour...San Francisco's flower children, also called "hippies" adopted new styles of dress, experimented with psychedelic drugs, lived communally and developed a vibrant music scene. (Nittapalli xi)

**The Use of Drugs:** Young people used Lysergic Acid Diethylamide (LSD) as a method of raising consciousness. The personalities associated with the subculture, gurus such as Timothy Leary and psychedelic rock musicians such as Grateful Dead, Pink Floyd, Jimi Hendrix, the Byrds, Janis Joplin, the Doors, and the Beatles, soon attracted a great deal of publicity.

**Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters:** Ken Kesey and his Merry Pranksters helped shape the developing character of the 1960s counterculture when they embarked on a cross-country voyage during the summer of 1964 in a psychedelic school bus named Furthur. The 1950 Beat Generation excelled in country tours. Neal Cassady, Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, — there were psychedelics. There were sexual revolution, alternative media, Frisbee, avant-garde art and anti-art.

**Music:** Bob Dylan's early career as a protest singer had been inspired by his hero Woody Guthrie and his iconic lyrics and protest anthems helped propel the Folk Revival of the 1960s, which was arguably the first major sub-movement of the Counterculture. This was protest music and he was a stylist.

**Film:** The counterculture was not only affected by cinema, but was also instrumental in the provision of era-relevant content and talent for film industry. Bonnie and Clyde struck a chord with the youth as the alienation of the young in the 1960s was comparable to the director's image of the 1930s. Films of this time focused on the changes happening in

the world. The film industry showed Beat, Hippie, LSD Use, Sex and Psychedelic parties. Examples are The Love-Ins, Wild in the Streets and Psych-out.

**Technology:** Cultural historian Theodore Roszak in his 1986 essay “From Satori to Silicon Valley” and John Markoff in his book *What the Dormouse Said* have pointed out that many of the early pioneers of personal computing emerged from within the West Coast counterculture.

**Religion, Spirituality and the Occult:** Many hippies rejected mainstream organized religion in favour of a more personal spiritual experience, often drawing on indigenous and folk beliefs. The counterculturists sought solace in yoga, occult, meditation, drugs and they embraced Buddhism, Wicca and Daoism.

**Criticism and Legacy:** There are many ongoing debates about the lasting impact of the 1960s counterculture. The 1950s produced Beat movement with Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac and William Burroughs. According to notable UK Underground and counterculture author Barry Miles,

.... it seemed to me that the Seventies was when most of the things that people attribute to the sixties really happened: this was the age of extremes; people took more drugs, had longer hair, weirder clothes, had more sex, protested more violently and encountered more opposition from the establishment. It was the era of sex and drugs and rock-n-roll. (Wikipedia, Counterculture 23)

Screen legend John Wayne equated aspects of 1960s social programs with the rise of the welfare state.

Critics think that counterculture changes the world from modern to postmodern. Politics, economy, society, religion and culture, all fields transformed. Steven Connor thinks this was shown by *delegitimaon* and *dedifferentiation*. (Connor 3) Even there was a clue for digitalization as the computer technology arrived. Counterculture was a popular phenomenon. Films like *The Big Chill* have recorded it vividly. ■

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# Analyzing the Traditional Gender Roles in Anita Nair's Novel *Lessons in Forgetting*

Neelam Mulchandani

Gender consistently assumes a crucial role in the existence of every individual, regardless of their biological sex, social class, racial background, or religious beliefs. Various indigenous customs involve the mistreatment of women, with some even regarding them as unfamiliar individuals despite being their loved ones.

Gender stereotypes frequently contribute to gender-based violence over time. A gender role refers to the societal expectations and norms regarding the behaviors and attitudes that are deemed acceptable, proper, or desirable for individuals based on their perceived or actual sex.

This paper aims to examine and challenge the conventional gender norms depicted in Anita Nair's novel, *Lessons in Forgetting*. Anita Nair subverts societal norms by portraying one of the protagonists, Smriti's character in her work as a female who defies stereotypes. This study challenges the principles promoted in the patriarchal society. Anita Nair employs J A Krishnamurthy's contemporary sensitivity and understanding to challenge the conventional dominant position of men.

This study also highlights the transformation of women from the restrictive and suffocating environments of a society ruled by men to a state of self-assertion, self-identity, and empowerment, as portrayed via the characters of Meera, Smirti, Lily, Sarada, and KalaChithi.

**Keywords** - Pivotal, Stereotyped, Claustrophobic, Self-proclamation, Identity, Gender role, Empowerment

## Gender Studies

Gender studies are an interdisciplinary topic that focuses on the analysis of gender identity and gender representation as key categories of study. This discipline encompasses Women's Studies, which focuses on the topics of women, feminism, gender, and politics, as well as men's studies and queer studies. Gender is intricately intertwined with other

determinants of an individual's social standing, including sexuality, race, class, ability and religion, place of origin, citizenship status, life events, and access to resources. This comprehensive collection seeks to provide readers with an introduction to gender studies in a broad sense. This demonstrates the progress the subject has made in the past few decades and highlights its interdisciplinary nature, which provides a variety of instruments for comprehending and analyzing our reality.

The examination of gender is a crucial component in the fields of Humanities, Fine Arts, Social sciences, and Natural sciences. Gender studies facilitate the analysis of gender within various academic fields and explore the societal expectations and behaviors associated with males and females, as well as the societal construction of masculinity and femininity. This theory posits that masculinity and femininity can be understood as a collection of qualities that are generated in collaboration and influence the experiences of both men and women. It questioned or contested notions of masculinity and femininity, as well as the traditional view of men and women being bound by biological factors in their historical roles. By excluding these concepts from the domain of biology, it enabled the emergence of a historical perspective.

Previous Indian novelists have shown women as stoic victims, defenders of traditional values and ethics, rigorous adherents to societal taboos, embodiments of tolerance and patience, role models for future generations, individuals devoid of personal space, and women lacking an independent identity. Throughout history, women have been consistently undervalued and overlooked. Simone de Beauvoir astutely observes, "A woman is not born, but rather becomes one." The societal portrayal of the feminine figure is not determined by biological, psychological, or economic factors. Rather, it is the collective influence of civilization that shapes an intermediary representation between males and eunuchs, commonly referred to as the female gender.

Postcolonial women writers such as Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sehgal, Shashi Deshpande, Anita Nair, Anita Desai, and Manju Kapoor have significantly altered the portrayal of female characters in their works. The primary focus of these writers has been to portray the interior thoughts and emotions of characters, as well as explore nuanced interpersonal connections. They reveal concealed truths by emphasizing the need of depicting women as individuals who defy established norms, liberate themselves from exploitation and oppression, and awaken to their own sense of identity in order to proclaim their individuality. Female authors redefine the concept of women in their literary works. The essence of the self is inherently intricate. The countless cells within an individual give rise to ongoing internal conflicts and disharmony, raising the hypothetical question of one's self-identity.

### **Lessons in Forgetting**

Anita Nair is an accomplished Indian author who has been actively producing a wide range of literary works in English since 1997. Her repertoire includes novels, short

stories, poems, essays, children's stories, plays, travel logs, and editing projects. She gained widespread recognition for her literary works, particularly her novels titled *The Better Man* and *Ladies Coupe*. Her works portray the authentic experiences of her characters, exploring the impact of societal conditioning on women and their liberation from these constraints. They defy societal norms and refuse to be constrained by the limitations imposed on women. Nair clearly defies the conventions of depicting her female characters and consistently reveals the unvarnished truth, regardless of its harshness. Her works provide a comprehensive record of the socioeconomic conditions and issues prevalent in the 21st century. The novel *Lessons in Forgetting* urges us to reconsider the ideological basis of men's patriarchal role in traditional society and contemplate the possibility of an alternate reality. The novel explores the arduous decisions women must make to establish and maintain their personal identity. Despite facing discrimination, women are determined to reclaim their identities within the patriarchal social order. Savitha Singh thinks that Anita Nair has successfully portrayed the significant role and empowering metamorphosis of women in the ongoing struggle for female self-identity.

The novel, *Lessons in Forgetting*, tells the story of Meera, the main character, who resides in Lilac house with her grandmother Lily, her mother Saro, and her two children Nayantara and Nikhil. During the 1930s, Raghavan Menon, her great grandfather, started his life in Calcutta. He develops a romantic attachment to Charo, a woman from Bengal, and enters into matrimony with her, resulting in the birth of their daughter, Leela. Charo passes away, prompting Raghavan Menon to send Leela to Shanti Niketan. It is there that a renowned Bengali director discovers her. She establishes herself as a renowned actress in Hindi movies under the name Lily. She weds Sandon, a Hungarian artist, and they relocate to Bangalore, residing in Lilac home, which was discovered for them by Raghavan Menon. Saro, their sole offspring, develops self-reliance and perceives herself as a woman with distinctive preferences. She develops romantic feelings for her best friend's brother and eventually enters into a marital union with him. The novel has Meera, their daughter, as the main character. Following the death of Saro's husband, she and her daughter Meera find sanctuary in Lilac house. Following her father's demise, Meera endured a period of adversity that compelled her to choose a modest and uncomplicated lifestyle. She lacks ambition and does not aim for significant achievements.

“Meera never had ambitious aspirations. She lacked any inclination towards luxury clothing, jewelry, or extravagant vacations. Her only concern was ensuring that she had enough resources to provide shelter and sustenance for herself and her family. Sufficient to maintain one's dignity and avoid seeking a temporary financial assistance from unwilling family members. Sufficient to sustain a lifestyle similar to theirs”,(Pg.41)

Meera's life undergoes a transformation when the Lilac house is selected for a picture shoot. Giri, a member of the shooting crew, coincidentally encounters her and develops romantic feelings for her. He develops a close and personal relationship with her, as well as with her family. Giri is captivated by the opulence shown to him, and he sees her

as a bride who possesses both elegance and a stunning ancestral residence. Giri, a strategic and driven individual, desires to plan for his future opportunities and break free from the challenging circumstances of his impoverished life in the hamlet of Palakkad. He secured employment in the corporate sector while actively seeking the chance to achieve the pinnacle of success in life. He desires to erase all memories of his father, including the faded yellowing clothing he wore and the dilapidated old house where he lived, as well as his impoverished family. He desires to attain a refined and sophisticated way of living. He weds Meera in the hopes of liberating himself from his tarnished history. With the aim of elevating his social standing, he marries her, although she remains oblivious to his true intentions.

“Meera’s presence would facilitate his ability to progress and let go of the past. Ultimately, he would be liberated from the lingering effects of his deteriorating history and the unpleasant remembrance of settling for less. He has a preference for the Lilac house fragrance called *l’air du temps*” (pg. 37). Meera identifies herself as Hera, the Greek goddess, earnestly awaiting the love of her Zeus, Giri. They have two children, Nayantara and Nikhil, in rapid succession. He advises her to cultivate social relevance, and as a result, she quickly establishes herself as a cookbook author. He exerts ultimate control over her life.

Giri aspires to establish his own enterprise with the aim of elevating his social standing and attaining wealth. Consequently, he intends to sell the Lilac house. He is concerned about his position in the corporate realm and desires greater opportunities. However, Meera refuses to sell the Lilac house because her grandfather had obtained a 99-year lease on the property. After a period of 45 years, the house must be relinquished to its initial proprietors. Giri, recognizing the absence of any tangible or social advantages, concluded that his relationship with Meera had reached an impasse. Consequently, at a social gathering, he abruptly abandons Meera and vanishes from her life, leaving her to care for their two children alongside her mother and grandmother. Meera subsequently comprehends that Giri had acknowledged her as a meal ticket.

Following Giri’s departure, Meera’s life descends into misery, as she expresses, “We may perish from hunger, but it will be in an elegant environment” (pg. 111). Consequently, she accepts employment as a Research assistant to Jak, an authority on cyclones. Conversely, Giri initiates a fresh chapter in their life and requests a legal dissolution of their marriage. Meera chooses to abandon her previous persona as Hera since Zeus no longer plays a role in her life. She embarks into her second phase of life, just as Giri does. When Giri entered her life, she had made no alterations to her home, hair, dreams, or personal identity. After he left her, she desires a transformation that would make her feel like a completely different person. In the words of Meera, “Now that she has rediscovered it, she feels empowered” (pg.186). In addition, she chooses to alleviate Giri’s obligations as a parent and assumes complete accountability for her children. She goes to the party alone. She is self-sufficient and does not require the presence of others. She is not experiencing any discomfort at the gathering that Nair describes as “a woman by herself at a party is like a man by himself” (pg.183). Her epiphany manifests itself in her choice to embark on the



next chapter of her life with Jak, as she acknowledges that the person she used to be will fade away and cease to exist indefinitely. Meera resolves to be present for him.

Smriti, the other protagonist, exhibits resistance towards prevalent societal norms, including the dowry system and female feticide. Anita Nair, the author, portrays this rebellion as a significant aspect of Smriti's character.

Notwithstanding the existing laws and regulations, mothers continue to find means of ascertaining the gender of their unborn offspring. If not the ladies themselves, then their families. If the fetus is female, they terminate the pregnancy. In the future, there may be a time when the female population ceases to exist.

Smirti's character portrays a new type of woman who is educated, brave, and able to forge her own path in a male-dominated society. Furthermore, her struggles serve as a warning to young people about the dangers of being controlled and taken advantage of.

Smriti, the offspring of Jak and Nina currently resides with her father subsequent to the official separation of her parents. Drawn by her father's captivating Indian tales, she embarks on a journey to India to seek her advanced education. She embodies the concept of mistaken identification. In India, she actively participates in a forum that is motivated by powerful phrases such as "The dying daughters of India need you" (pg.153). These slogans aim to raise awareness about pressing issues including dowry, violence against women, and female feticide in small villages. She visits her father's hamlet, Mingikapuram, in Tamil Nadu with her friend Rishi Soman as part of an awareness campaign. Upon her return to the hospital for the treatment of a glass injury, she is taken aback by the presence of numerous pregnant women who have come for ultrasound scans to determine the gender of their unborn babies. If the unborn kid is female, they may choose to get an abortion, either voluntarily or under coercion. Smirti, driven by her ideological fervor, views the practice as criminal and is determined to put an end to it.

"It is against the law!" Smirti's voice escalated," This action is performed in this location. What is your rationale for our presence in this location? The scan doctor is not a resident of this community. The woman quietly revealed that the doctor is brought in from another location and is willing to answer our questions. These pregnant women, who come from different areas of the district, are here because of the scan performed by the doctor. Furthermore, if you desire to, they are capable of doing the abortion procedure at this location as well, (Pg.292).

She endeavors to gather evidence to substantiate these claims in order to compile a report. She encounters a woman named Chinnathayi, whose daughter passes away in the healthcare facility following an abortion. Smirti requests documentation pertaining to this matter from her. Doctor Srinivasan and his disgruntled associates deceive Smirti by sending her a false message under the guise of Chinnathayi, and summon her to the seaside. Upon Smirti's arrival, the trio proceeds to annihilate her. These men were behaving like animals. The individuals aggressively assaulted the girl, and it appeared that her increased

vocalizations just heightened their arousal. “The odor detected was that of blood” (Pg. 217). Following the harrowing and distressing ordeal, she transforms into an immobile, pitiful, and inert form. Smirti, a girl raised in the United States, encountered significant difficulties in aligning herself with her fellow Indian women and the actions she believes are her responsibility to rectify societal injustice. According to Maya Vinay,

Smirti, a character in the novel *Lessons in Forgetting*, falls prey to a case of mistaken identity. Many men in India are not adequately prepared to deal with the type of modernity that arises from advanced Western education and upbringing. Despite her lighthearted nature, Smirti is also a girl who aims to initiate societal change through her social engagement. She is harshly penalized by the patriarchal society for her involvement in local affairs. She is perceived as an anomaly by her community because she showcases the potential of our society to a group of individuals who are not yet prepared to seize or recognize these possibilities (pg.118-119).

Nair discusses the desire of women to liberate themselves from the burdens of life through the character of Sarada, Jak’s mother. Her husband abandons her and their son in order to pursue sainthood. His parents hold her responsible for this and as a result, she begins to live independently with her son, named Kitcha or Jak. This is due to her husband’s dissatisfaction with everything in his life, including his home, wife, and son. She initially starts her career as a primary Mathematics Teacher at a local school and subsequently obtains her Bachelor of Education degree to achieve financial autonomy. Upon receiving a letter from her husband detailing the insurmountable obstacles preventing his return, she gains a clear understanding of the true nature of her existence and resolves to live a life of her own. Therefore, she enters into a new marriage with a Physics Teacher hailing from Hyderabad. Therefore, Sarada serves as a prime example of the challenges women face in striving for independence and autonomy.

Kala Chithi exemplifies women’s defiance of archaic customs. After her marriage, she is given the name Vaidehi to symbolize the exemplary traits of a wife and woman. She is a logical woman who questions the blame placed on her sister Sarada for her husband’s abandonment of his house and responsibilities, asking “but how can you hold Akka accountable?” Athimbel is the one who departed, a fact that is widely known among all of us” (Pg. 198). She experiences a sense of relief from her anguish when she washes her hair in the waves, as it is the first time she feels a sensation of weightlessness. “Spontaneously, I untied my hair and allowed the ocean water to permeate through it. My hair stood on end and the pain in my neck disappeared. I erupted with laughter”(pg.198). When she trims her excessively lengthy and burdensome hair, her spouse penalizes her by refusing to communicate with her. He returns to his usual state when she retrieves a lengthy strand of hair. When Ambi, her husband, decides to remarry due to their inability to conceive a child after 7 years of marriage, Kala Chithi presents him with a lengthy braid adorned with Jasmine and kanakambaram flowers, along with her marital name, Vaidehi. She trims her hair and

presents it to him, saying, “This is everything you have ever desired from me.” Retain it. “Allow me to depart, I stated as I walked away” (pg.206). She begins cohabitating with Sarada and reverts back to her original name, Kala Chithi.

After the loss of her daughter, Meera’s grandma Lily has feelings of loneliness. She counsels Meera, “I have no desire to discuss the wind or the trees. If they are causing you significant annoyance, then proceed to cut them down” (Pg. 204). Meera agrees with Lily’s perspective that men and trees are equivalent. She will cease to be concerned with appeasing her Zeus, Giri. Lily advises Meera to embark on a fresh chapter in her life, emphasizing that it does not solely involve changing her appearance or updating her clothing. A transformation that results in a metamorphosed individual. “Be realistic, Meera. Gain a realistic perspective before your life eludes your grasp” (pg.79). She counsels her to practice self-honesty and cultivate her own aspirations. It rekindles her inspiration to dream once again. Lily took great pride in her status as a National award-winning actress. She desires to assist Meera by alleviating some of the weight on her shoulders, as she bears the duty for all the members of her family. Lily chooses to visit Zahira, a former actress who abandoned her career some years ago and currently resides in Mysore. Zahira now lives with a multitude of animals and her son, who has achieved great success as a television producer. He has expressed a desire for Lily to participate in his upcoming series. Lily’s advanced age notwithstanding, her exuberant tone of speech reveals her profound joy in her work. Therefore, she aligns herself with the position of a television programmer and she exhibits a high level of autonomy in her decision-making, stating, “There is no obligation to express any opinion. I am not seeking your authorization. I hereby notify you of my judgment” (Pg.273).

## **Conclusion**

*Lessons in Forgetting* chronicles the journey of women as they strive to progress in life. Furthermore, people actively shape their own future. By becoming an assistant to Professor Jak, Meera achieves financial independence, manages her expenses, and takes on the burden of supporting her family. Sharda assumes the role of a teacher at the school and achieves independence by marrying her coworker and embarking on a new chapter of her life. Kalachithi changes her name to Vadehi following marriage. She divorces her husband and restarts her life under her former identity, Kala Chithi. She trims her hair, resulting in a decrease in its weight. It demonstrates her resilience in the face of her pain and her transformation into a revolutionary. She cohabitates with Jak in order to provide him with care. Meera’s grandma, Lily, is experiencing feelings of being alone and isolation as a result of Saro’s passing. Consequently, she made the decision to reside at her friend’s residence and resume her employment in the television industry. Smirti’s existence brings about immense suffering, as she confides in her father Jak, who feels obligated to combat unjust biases in India, particularly inside their hometown of Minjapuram. The novel concludes with a fresh start and acquiring knowledge about the process of letting go and progressing in life. Anita Nair’s writing revolves around her female characters’ quest for self-discovery and their determination to assert their individuality. ■

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# The Impact of Patriarchy on Man, and Woman: A Study of Jibanananda Das's Short Story *Shadow Play*

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The present study aims to explore as to how the identity of man and woman is a subject of authority and power relation in a patriarchal society and both men and women are bound by the traditional norms of the society. More than the gendered role, it is the patterned way of dealing in a given society in which not only one becomes women but also the same society sets similar pattern of engagements of men for the acts of psychic self-mutilation with little room for emotional space. The politics and power of patriarchy are equally inimical to women and men. In this context, the politics of patriarchy and its power are the centres of the crux. Jibanananda Das's short story "Shadow Play," representing the values of power equity, shows the complexities of the patriarchal social system in the narratives and raises questions about the practices of patriarchal needs. The paper is also attempted to reflect upon complex human relationships in the narrative movement of the story through analytical and critical methodology of study.

**Keywords:** Gender, Identity, Patriarchy, Society, Power Equity, Relationship, Subordination

## Introduction

In a society, gender-based identities of human beings rest not entirely on the basis of physical differences but it is more often than not, socially constructed and attributed to each individual. Men and women in the politics and power of a patriarchal society become what the society wants. Feminist existentialist philosopher Simone De Beauvoir states, "One is not born a woman, but becomes one" (Beauvoir 273). To her, a woman's identity is socially constructed; instead of identifying herself as a human being, she 'becomes' one identity with the inculcated meaning of 'societal woman.' On the contrary, man is free to develop self rather than 'becoming' by the inculcated meanings of society. However, the issues of such gender discrimination are changing with the implementation of education, awareness, empowerment, and different policy makings. In some contexts of society, Beauvoir's statement can be studied from different critical perspectives. To summarise the hypothesis, it can be said that women and men in the power (economic or political) of the patriarchal society are defined by patriarchal needs. According to some parameters instructed

by society, like ‘societal woman,’ a man is considered a societal man rather than simply a human being. Therefore, like a woman, a man ‘becomes’ one identity that is equally inimical to human existence irrespective of gender differences; bell hooks states:

The first act of violence that patriarchy demands of males is not violence towards women. Instead, patriarchy demands of all males that they engage in acts of psychic self-mutilation, that they kill off the emotional parts of themselves. If an individual is not successful in emotionally crippling himself, he can count on patriarchal men to enact rituals of power that will assault his self-esteem (hooks 68).

Patriarchy is the practice of a mindset that promotes the “rule of the father” (Ferguson 1048). The patriarchal society has not only men but also women in its foundation. In one way, “male power insinuates itself into the psyches of women, teaching them to collaborate in defining themselves as subordinate to, and dependent on, men” (Ferguson 1048). On the other hand, patriarchal domination demands “demands of all males that they engage in acts of psychic self-mutilation, that they kill off the emotional parts of themselves.” Therefore, men are equally victims of the patriarchy. The mindset of the patriarchal society is the centre of all crux, which controls power and politics to manipulate individuals’ identities irrespective of gender. Hence, the power of the patriarchy is in the centre. In this complex struggle with power, not only women are the subject of subjugation, but men are also the subjects. This subjugation of human life can also be studied with Foucault’s theory of ‘biopolitics.’<sup>1</sup>, where power is a tool “to ensure, sustain, and multiply life, to put this life in order” (138); the power of the patriarchy controls the overall human life. Jibananda Das (1899-1954) is a modern Bengali poet, novelist and story writer. Das’s short story “Shadow Play” can be seen as a true manifestation of this social crisis. This research aims to understand how the power of the patriarchy controls gender identities and plays a role in devising the complexities of gender inequity- man-woman relationships and freedom. The study also intends to explore complex human relationships throughout the narrative of the story.

### **Patriarchal Society and Complex Relationships**

In a society with patriarchal systems, women are not only the victims; men are parallel sufferers. Patriarchy emphasises power controlled by men, specifically by the physically, politically, and economically stronger men. In such a society, when a concept of equality or equity is discussed, whether that equality is between men and women or men and men. There are no such advantages.; The word ‘other’ can be referred to as women, ‘societal women,’ or men who are neither politically nor economically strong enough in comparison to patriarchal men of power in as much as domination of the other is the chief characteristic of patriarchal systems. Therefore, society gives them the identity of ‘other.’ In another words, it can be explained that the beliefs or prejudices of patriarchy construct the definition of men in society. Where men are not free to be a self; instead, they ‘become’ what the politics of the patriarchal society wants; they are unable to get rid of that bondage even if they want.

In “Shadow Play,” the woman character Reba is captivated by the protagonist’s house, which signifies the structure of the patriarchal system. There is less of Reba’s voice in the story; her voice remains less uttered throughout the narrative. The narrator confirms that Reba does not love him, nor can he marry her for unknown reasons. That crux continues in the story till the end. The narrator also confesses that being a man, he is the reason for Reba’s captivation, which indicates the values of gender equity in the voice of a man who is the victim of the patriarchal system. This complexity is more evident when it is found that the narrator even keeps his desires silent and is determined to free Reba from his bondage at the end of the story. The narrator says, “She is the one who’s dependent – on the stale dead one (08). However, society is in its way, as Reba’s aunt, becoming the victim of subordination of patriarchy, forces the narrator to marry Reba due to social fear, though that does not happen till the end. Neither the narrator can marry Reba due to his physical weakness and social status. The narrator cannot reply to Reba’s mother, who has already become a voice for patriarchal needs. He says, “It seemed as if someone had cut off my tongue. Just wouldn’t let me speak” (04), which reflects the subordination of a man to the social, cultural, and economic domination of the patriarchy.

There is a voice of patriarchy at the story’s beginning, while the narrator describes the earth as a feminine identity. He says, “If we want something from the earth we have to tear her heart out first. So what if it’s only for two handfuls” (01). Referring to the earth as ‘her’ and exploiting her with the needs of human existence reflects two perspectives: one, a woman (feminine identity) must be a giver, and therefore, a woman is a space to be explored or exploited; second, it seems that human beings, especially man has the right to exploit women and the nature normalising the identity of the dominance of the patriarchal society.

In the politics of power and position of the patriarchal society, identity based on gender is distributed by patriarchal needs, and those identities are manipulated directly by patriarchal men or indirectly within the society with patriarchal norms and practices. In this context, the relationship between men and women is a chief factor in the complex. In “Shadow Play,” the female character Reba is captivated not only by the protagonist’s house but she is also bound by the narrator’s love, lust, and desires. Here, again, man’s desire can be seen as the politics of patriarchal needs, a tendency to dominate femininity with patriarchal masculinity. In this context, a question may arise: How can a relationship between man and woman be stable with equity of power irrespective of gender? To hooks, this equity is possible, “If an individual is not successful in emotionally crippling himself, he can count on patriarchal men to enact rituals of power.”

The “Shadow Play” also reflects the complex human relationship between man and woman, where the narrator himself is the protagonist himself. He narrates about freedom while saying, “... Couldn’t this girl be freed- from this cage of a house?” (03) Soon, he gives the reason for that complex sense of freedom, saying, “But the bars of the cage are ribs that enclose my heart” (03), which reflects the complex relationship of human beings. On the one hand, he loves Reba from the core of his heart; at the same time, his desire to

love her is itself a cage or bondage, which he understands and, therefore, feels guilty for. This pain of guilt is more acute when he expresses, “Even though I had made it with my own ribs, a cage is still a cage” (03). The protagonist is ill and therefore dependent on Reba; on one side, his love for Reba is conditioned; that condition is not bound to a physical relationship that the protagonist understands, and perhaps, therefore, he accepts her as she is, though he knows that she does not love him. There is always a fear of a panopticon ear of the patriarchy, which listens to all the conditions of life as the narrator states, “Couldn’t pluck up the courage to tell another human being. Why? Is a human being even lower than the ground? (04)

The protagonist is the victim of the patriarchal society. He fears Reba’s mother and society in making decisions about his private life when hesays’ “‘Mashima-’ My own voice startled me. What I wanted to say-” (04). Mashima (aunt) is more concerned about the narrator’s life not knowing his present conditions of life; rather with the fear of society, Mashima blames, “Won’t you come to some arrangement with Reba? Shame! A man and a woman in the same hole- but no priest to come and chant the mantras! Sleeping in adjacent room- night after night! ...” (04) Being a mother Reba’s mother has a fear of rumours in the society about her daughter’s relationship with the narrator. Not only this, but the above statement suggests how society controls the voices within the society beyond gender identities. Here, within the patriarchal social system, Reba’s mother, instead of being a woman, speaks the patriarchal voice to control another man’s space and identity. The narrator says, “It seemed as if someone had cut off my tongue. Just wouldn’t let me speak” (04). Here, the word ‘someone’ may be referred to as the patriarchal panopticon voice, which always speaks to an individual about what should do and what should not; fear is always there in the heart of man. Consequently, the narrator states, “Much later, I said, ‘It cannot happen’” (04), which remains unheard by society, or maybe the narrator’s voice has no value to the more robust practices of the patriarchal power.

In the same context, the narrator also reflects how human beings, by narrating patriarchal politics, become conflictual with their own identities and those of their close ones. Mashima’s concern regarding her daughter Reba’s marriage is not only an individual concern but a social concern, as described, i.e., how that concern is led by social power to individual interest and how can that be harmful? The narrator, regarding the condemnation of Reba’s mother, states, “She would come twenty times a day. Say so many things- spread such rumours about her daughter. Such insults to womanhood made me hang my head in shame over and over again. But Reba never took all that seriously. She could see the truth far better than lies. Maybe that’s why” (04-05). Here, the narrator, with the word ‘womanhood,’ refers to the nature of women, which is that women are good at spreading rumours, which does not seem logical. However, at the same time, the narrator’s ‘head in shame over and over again’ due to the insults to womanhood reflects a man’s voice against the voice of Mashima, who advocates the patriarchal identity. Thus, the narrator does not hesitate “to count on patriarchal men to enact rituals of power.” Besides, the character of



Reba seems practical in this context; though she has less voice in the story, she is a mature one in the context of relationship and freedom, which can be found more explicit till the end of the story.

The poet's arrival indicates a complex identity crisis of the narrator as an ordinary human being and a creative writer. When asked which poem of the poet he likes the most. The narrator replies, "I didn't like even one of your poems. – The poem that I will like the most is the one I am creating" (05). This excerpt can refer to the narrator in another character as a poet who has the privileges of the patriarchal society where the narrator, as an ordinary man, is conscious about this less identified and less valued self. On the one side, the narrator, as a poet, is successful and accepted by society. On the other hand, he fears losing his mundane world and being destroyed by ill health and poverty, which can be interpreted as the crux of existential struggle. A man is inferior to another man, or a man's identity is oppressed by the socially defined definition of a known poet or successful man.

### **Quest for Freedom**

The story can also be regarded as a piece of freeing self, whether it is the narrator or Reba. However, sometimes, it seems obscure and complex. Such as the narrator writes "She never loved me. Nowadays she keeps veiling her face and shying away, despite to find a way to escape. What fear! What loathing" (06). Not Reba is speaking out herself, but the narrator's voice is speaking this complexly because he knows the value of the physical body and its manipulation with the sexual desires and the power of society. Therefore, he reveals his failure in love and desire, the reality of his relationship with Reba. This complexity is more apparent when the character of a doctor appears, and the narrator says:

With my eyes shut it seems to me- even I can speak- can say all the things you are saying- all; say them much more tumultuously than you ... I can say so much. I can. Whatever I might be, I can let myself go in a way you can't – will never be able to. The more passionate they get, the more naked they become – the more constrained they seem.

What are they compared to me!  
Is this their love!  
If only you'd let me know(07)!

The narrator accepts that Reba's love for him differs from his thoughts. Reba's sexual relationship with the doctor is more important than the desires or domination (patriarchal) of the narrator. He confesses, "No – no this could never be abominable! This was beautiful – absolutely beautiful" (08) !This statement of the narrator demonstrates the modern liberal mindedness of people.

The quest for freedom is the story's epicentre beyond the complexities of relationships and gender differences in the patriarchal society. The conscious mind of the narrator keeps saying:

Like a caged bird set free – the sound of her voice.  
Even I have got back the sky.  
Got back wherever light was in the sky – all of it.  
Light is bigger than darkness.  
Much bugger(08).

The narrator states that the freedom of the self is significant beyond the differences in gendered identities. Nevertheless, can that freedom be stable in the patriarchal social system, the stubborn human desires, relationships, and needs of mundane life? Perhaps the answer will be partially yes, partially no; especially in the conditions of women, it is more complex, which is voiced in the narrator's conscious voice when he says, "She's the one who's dependent – on the stale dead one" (08). Besides, neither the narrator is utterly free from the bondage of the patriarchal social power; the only thing he can do is escape with philosophical and moral perspectives as he claims, "There's no truth higher than that huge sky" (08). This philosophical escape sometimes consequently ends with the destruction of self, failing in the struggle against the politics and power of the patriarchy. There are complexities of gender equity in the patriarchal social system and the complex relationships between men and women, which Das has minutely delineated in the narrative of "Shadow Play." Reba is already a free mind like the narrator; Reba and the narrator reflect free voices against the control of the patriarchal needs and desired definitions of love, life, and freedom. Can they be free from the practices of the patriarchal system? The story ends with an unanswered note: "Before they could merge, Reba had to leave. Just like that" (08).

### **Conclusion:**

The "Shadow Play," from the foregoing analysis amply shows the inimical impacts of the patriarchy on both the genders. It reveals the complex voices of pangs and suffering in men's and women's relationships. There are issues like gender complexities, social bounding, patriarchal systems of the society, and the socio-political and economic power of the patriarchal needs. The story has a taste of aristocracy and unequal distribution of power. On one side, the subjugation of women by the patriarchal society has been shown by the characters of Reba and her mother. On the other hand, the narrator himself is conscious of his subjugation by the patriarchal social needs and practices. Overall, the politics of the patriarchal mindset in society is the epitome of such a crux, where not only does a woman 'become' one, but a man also 'becomes' the likes of the society set by the needs of the politics and power of the patriarchy. In this context, Beauvoir's statement, "One is not born a woman, but becomes one," regarding the subjugation of men in the patriarchal society, can be restated that one is not born a man, but becomes one. Significantly, the story "Shadow Play" manifests such a social pattern that needs a relook for better change. ■

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# Exploring the Eco-Critical Lens of Ruskin Bond's Selected Short Stories: Investigating the Intersectionality of Humanity and Nature in the Works of a Himalayan Writer

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The evolution of contemporary civilization bestows upon humanity a plethora of conveniences, rendering their existence more agreeable and comfortable. The inexorable process of urbanization unveils a myriad of opportunities, further enhancing the quality of life and facilitating a more sophisticated standard of living. In a concurrent manner, it seizes the splendour of the verdant world, thereby rendering existence more susceptible to a myriad of illnesses and posing a significant threat to the equilibrium of the ecological system. Ecocriticism has ushered in a novel perspective in the reassessment of our stance towards the world. This critical approach underscores the transition from an anthropocentric to a biocentric perspective, with major ecocriticism proponents emphasizing this shift. Ruskin Bond, born in 1934, has played a significant role in awakening environmental and ecological consciousness through his extensive body of literary works. Within his oeuvre, he intricately portrays the symbiotic relationship between humanity and the natural world, illustrating a realm where panthers and humans coexist in a bond of mutual trust, and where even the seemingly insignificant elements of the natural world play vital roles in the intricate tapestry of divine creation.

The study aims to re-examine the short stories of Ruskin Bond through the theoretical framework of ecocriticism, an interdisciplinary methodology that explores the relationship between literature and the physical environment. This analysis will be centred on the themes of ecology, nature, and environmentalism, with a particular focus on the effects of urbanization and industrialization on the natural world.

**Keywords:** Ecocriticism, Anthropocentrism, Biocentrism, Symbiocene, Post Humanism, Urbanisation, Industrialisation

The process of urbanization has presented a plethora of opportunities to humanity, enabling us to take advantage of advanced technologies by residing in urban areas, a luxury

that is not readily available to rural inhabitants. However, the unchecked and accelerated pace of urbanization can have detrimental effects on the ecological system of our planet. Consequently, it may result in gradual deforestation, water, soil, and air pollution. Given the inevitability of urbanization in the contemporary world, it is imperative that we prioritize environmental preservation to ensure a healthier and more meaningful existence. The contemporary epoch is plagued by an ecological crisis, a matter of paramount concern that has captivated the attention of social workers, non-governmental organizations, governmental policymakers, literary artists, and the general populace alike. In the context of urban societies, industrial pollution poses the most formidable hazard to human beings. The exponential rise in carbon dioxide levels and global warming constitutes a bane for the modern world. The repercussions of ecological imbalance could engender potentially disastrous scenarios in the future, including but not limited to flooding, desertification, famine, and ecological conflicts over depleting resources.

It is a universally acknowledged truth that the advent of contemporary technology has indubitably bestowed upon humanity a level of material prosperity that is hitherto unparalleled, yet this boon is not without its attendant costs, most notably the unabated assault on the verdant world that we inhabit.

In the realm of literature, ecocritics have played an instrumental role in fostering literary artists, who, through their creative oeuvres, have succeeded in transmitting the profound ecological values that underpin our existence. Ecocriticism, as a discipline, is concerned with the intricate relationship between the physical environment and the literary works that it inspires.

Richard Kerridge posits that Ecocriticism represents a form of literary and cultural critique that adopts an environmentalist perspective. Within this framework, texts undergo assessment based on their environmental connotations. Ecocritics delve into the evolution of notions like 'nature' with the aim of comprehending the cultural and ecological predicament. (Waugh 530)

In the narratives penned by Ruskin Bond, there frequently resides an implicit environmental significance within their fabric. While M.R. Anand advocates for the marginalized in society, Raja Roy delves into philosophical depths in his literary creations, and Anita Desai unravels the intricate psychological facets of humanity, it is unequivocally Ruskin Bond who, through his captivating short stories and novels, lays bare the egregious errors of contemporary mankind in its wanton destruction of the natural world. Those who have pigeonholed Bond solely as a purveyor of children's literature have perhaps failed to recognize that, akin to the environmentalist Sundarlal Bahuguna, few Indian writers parallel Bond in evoking such universal ecological concerns within the realm of literature. The fundamental tenets of ecocriticism underscore a profound ethical obligation towards nature and emphasize the interconnectedness between humans and the natural environment. It underscores the imperative for us to rectify our ethical stance towards nature. Bond articulates

his profound apprehension for the well-being of our planet, Earth.

I am told that this entire region is “eco-  
Fragile” . . . I should think most of our earth  
Is “eco-fragile” having had to put up with  
Hundreds of thousands of years of human  
Civilization ( Rain 236 ).

Bond’s oeuvre consistently insinuates a reevaluation of our ethical stance towards nature, given his profound appreciation for the natural world. The author’s troubled childhood, marked by his mother’s separation from his father and his father’s untimely demise, led him to find solace in the calming embrace of nature. This relationship with nature transcends its role as a mere aesthetic backdrop for his artistic pursuits; it serves as a perennial source of inspiration, a protective spirit during his moments of solitude, and a celestial existence that informs his humanism towards the world of flora and fauna. In the contemporary milieu of rampant urbanization and industrialization, Bond’s works offer a refreshing escape to verdant forests, pristine meadows, and idyllic hamlets where humans and panthers coexist harmoniously. His deep-seated empathy towards the natural world is akin to that of a biologist who observes nature with a keen sense of wonder and curiosity, rather than as a detached observer. This is evident in the author’s astute observation of the natural world, as exemplified by the following passage:

And I would thank my God for leaves and  
Grass and the smell of things, the smell of  
Mint and myrtle and bruished clover, and  
The touch of things ,the touch of grass and  
Air and sky, and the touch of the sky’s  
Blueness (Rain 96-97 )

The author has an unbridled appreciation for the olfactory, auditory, and tactile experiences offered by the natural world. The exploitation and degradation of natural resources and the verdant planet, motivated by industrialization, consistently evoke a sense of distress within the author. The author’s literary career has consistently highlighted his profound affection for the natural world. He envisions that the harmony of nature extends to all living beings, irrespective of their physical attractiveness or insignificance in the grand scheme of existence

In “The Kitemaker,” Bond employs the image of the tree as a means of exploring the human condition, drawing parallels between the growth and development of the titular character and the natural world. Through this metaphor, Bond underscores the idea that human beings, like trees, are shaped by their environment, their experiences, and the relationships they forge over the course of their lives.

Moreover, the tree metaphor serves to emphasize the interconnectedness of all living beings, as well as the importance of nurturing and caring for these connections. Just as a

tree's roots extend deep into the earth, drawing sustenance from the soil and the elements, human beings are similarly rooted in their communities and relationships, deriving strength and support from these connections.

In this way, Bond's humanism is revealed to be a holistic and all-encompassing worldview, one that recognizes the inherent worth and dignity of every individual, as well as the complex web of relationships that bind us together. Through the skillful and nuanced use of the tree metaphor, Bond invites readers to consider the myriad ways in which our lives are intertwined, and the profound impact that these connections can have on our growth, development, and well-being.

The analogy between man and tree in "The Kitemaker" serves as a powerful and evocative illustration of Bond's humanistic perspective, underscoring the importance of community, connection, and interdependence in shaping our lives and experiences. By drawing attention to these themes, Bond encourages readers to reflect on the ways in which our own lives are shaped by the world around us, and to consider the many ways in which we are all connected, both to one another and to the natural world. In the narrative, the artisan Mahmood Ali expounds upon the indissoluble bond existing between humanity and the natural world. ( Night 103- 104 ).

In the narrative "The Cherry Tree," Ruskin Bond eloquently portrays how the affectionate relationship between the young character, Rakesh, and the cherry tree creates a diminutive yet intricate ecosystem. The tale unfolds with Rakesh, a young lad, and his arboreal-obsessed grandparent, who cultivate a profound bond with nature. After planting a cherry seed, the young protagonist becomes captivated as it sprouts into a fledgling sapling, and together they flourish. As time progresses, blossoms adorn the tree, and it bears fruit, attracting various insects, bees, and birds, which find refuge within its branches, analogous to Rakesh and his grandfather, who frequently rest under the soothing shade it provides. Through this narrative, Bond instills a sense of environmental consciousness among his readers, delicately illustrating the harmonious coexistence of man and nature.

Conversely, "Dust on the Mountain" presents a distressing portrayal of the heartless devastation of the green world, unmasking humanity's disregard for the environment. The story follows Bisnu, who ventures to Mussoorie in pursuit of sustenance for his family, only to witness the gradual annihilation of the trees. Industrialization transforms life-sustaining nature into dust and pollution. As Bisnu and Chitru gaze upon the mountain, they observe the summit obliterated by dynamite to extract limestone rock, leading to the demise of every natural element, including birds, grasshoppers, butterflies, and grass. Despite the bleak scenario, the narrative concludes on an optimistic note, as Pritam Singh, perpetually engrossed in materialistic pursuits, recognizes the life-saving capabilities of trees when an oak tree shields his truck from a potential accident. Through Bisnu's words, Bond emphasizes the significance of environmental preservation, conveying a profound message to his audience.

I will work on my land. It's better to grow  
things on the land, than to blast things out of it  
( Bond, "Dust" 502 )

In the story 'My Father's Arboreal Endeavors in Dhera,' Bond delineates an arboreal expedition undertaken in tandem with his paternal progenitor. In a moment of juvenile dissent, the young Bond expressed reservations upon observing his father's sylvan afforestation amidst the existing arboreal canopy, positing that the secluded locale rendered such efforts futile, as no beholder would traverse that path to admire the nascent growth. In response, the paternal figure imparted sagely that a future wayfarer might chance upon this verdant tableau. This exchange serves as a poignant illustration of the author's deep-seated environmental conscientiousness, as underscored by his father's prescient perspective on the intrinsic value of ecological stewardship.

If people keep cutting trees, instead of  
Planting them, there'll be soon no forests  
Left at all and the world will be just one vast Desert  
(Night Train, 145)

In the relentless march of time, the paternal patriarch of Bond's lineage had departed from the mortal coil. After an extended hiatus, during which the inexorable hands of the clock continued their ceaseless revolutions, Bond found himself once again in the forested landscape that had once been his paternal domain.

The intervening years had wrought significant changes, and Bond, who had once been intimately familiar with every tree and stone, now found himself a stranger in his own ancestral land. The once-thriving community of Bond's kin had dwindled to a mere handful, leaving Bond with a profound sense of isolation and dislocation.

And yet, amidst the desolation and decay, there were signs of life and renewal. A veritable avian menagerie had taken up residence in the trees that his father had planted with his own two hands, including a flock of vibrant parrots and a chorus of melodious koel birds. As if in response to Bond's arrival, these feathered denizens greeted him with a cacophony of joyful song, as if to herald his return with a fanfare of avian trumpets.

The sight and sound of these birds filled Bond with a deep and abiding sense of peace, as he contemplated the possibility that his father's dreams and aspirations had found fruition in this remote and tranquil corner of the earth. The author deftly interweaves memories of the past with a subtle and nuanced exploration of the interconnectedness of all living things, offering a poignant meditation on the cycles of life, death, and rebirth that govern the natural world

. In the narrative "Panther's Moon," Bond, through the protagonist Bisnu, elucidates the perilous consequences that deforestation and malicious hunters inflict upon the lives of fauna, particularly the panther. As the story unfolds, Bisnu arrives at the realization that the



danger to their lives stems not from the man-eater but from the mercenary hunters who attempt to shoot it. Consequently, the man-eater, bereft of its ability to chase down deer, is compelled to prey on humans. Thus, the equilibrium between man and the natural world is disrupted by man's insatiable greed. Bisnu's introspection reveals a profound truth: just as man requires land, a tiger necessitates a forest, for every entity on this earth possesses an inherent right to exist.

In "Death of the Trees," Ruskin Bond adeptly portrays a repugnant tableau of deforestation, elucidating the deleterious impact of human avarice on both the natural environment and the animal kingdom.

The explosions that continually shatter the  
Silence of the mountains- as thousand-year-  
Old rocks are dynamited- have frightened  
Away all but the most intrepid of birds and  
Animals. Even the bold langoons haven't  
Shown their faces for over a fortnight .

(Dust 461)

The deleterious action executed by the PWD (Public Works Department) has desecrated the immaculate and tranquil allure of the mountain. In this context, Bond's invocation for a profound and rigorous ethical reassessment of human behaviour towards nature is not only warranted but also crucial.

The PWD's catastrophic act, which has disrupted the equilibrium of the mountain's ecosystem, has raised significant questions about the ethical implications of human actions towards the environment. The mountain, which once stood as a testament to the pristine beauty and serenity of nature, has now become a symbol of human recklessness and disregard for the environment.

Bond's call for an ethical reassessment is a clarion call for humanity to re-examine its relationship with nature. It is a plea for us to recognize the intrinsic value of the natural world and to treat it with the reverence and respect it deserves. By doing so, we can ensure that future generations can enjoy the same beauty and serenity that we have been privileged to experience.

The ethical reassessment that Bond calls for is not a simple task. It requires a fundamental shift in our thinking and behavior towards the environment. It requires us to recognize that we are not separate from nature but an integral part of it. We must acknowledge that our actions have consequences, and that we have a responsibility to ensure that those consequences are not detrimental to the natural world. The PWD's catastrophic act has desecrated the mountain's pristine beauty and serenity, highlighting the urgent need for an ethical reassessment of human behavior towards nature. Bond's call for such a reassessment is a critical step towards ensuring that we treat the natural world with the reverence and

respect it deserves. It is a call that we must heed if we are to preserve the beauty and serenity of the mountain for future generations.

The short story “The Leopard,” is a profound exposition of the author’s perspective on the extermination of rare species, such as the leopard, through the actions of hunters. The narrative constructs a milieu of mistrust between the human and animal realms, fueled by the hunting escapades of mankind. The narrator contemplates the possibility that the leopard, having placed its trust in a single human, may have mistakenly bestowed that trust upon others (Leopard, 263).

In this narrative, the author underscores the importance of coexistence between man and nature. Bond conveys a cogent message that nature possesses two faces: one that is benevolent, and another that is menacing. The author firmly asserts that those who align themselves with nature are destined to endure, while those who manipulate the natural world to their detriment will inevitably face retribution in the long run.

In the story “Sita and the River,” Sita and her grandfather refrain from exploiting nature for their personal interests. Instead, they rely on nature solely for their survival. When the river becomes violent with floodwaters, Sita survives by clinging to a peepul tree, which has a deep understanding and familiarity with her (Sita, 189). This story serves to emphasize the significance of respecting and preserving the delicate balance between man and nature.

The literary works of Bond evince a profound and earnest preoccupation with the matters of nature and ecology. The author does not espouse an antagonistic stance towards urbanization or industrialization; rather, he advocates for a measured and deliberate approach to these phenomena. This advocacy is underpinned by the author’s implicit suggestion that nature is the ultimate benefactor of human beings, providing them with a purposeful and salubrious existence. In my estimation, Bond has achieved a significant milestone in his oeuvre by elevating environmental and ecological awareness, which is highly relevant in the contemporary world, given the imminent threats to our planetary home.

In conclusion, the present trend of the Anthropocene and the need for a symbiotic relationship necessitate a shift away from anthropocentrism and towards biocentrism and posthumanism. By recognizing the intrinsic value of all living beings and cultivating a more symbiotic relationship with the natural world, we can begin to address the environmental crises that threaten our planet and create a more just and sustainable future. The emergence of posthumanism as a theoretical framework offers a promising path forward, one that challenges the limitations of anthropocentrism and opens up new possibilities for a more inclusive and equitable world. ■

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# Assertion of Dignity in Bama's Short Story *Old Man and a Buffalo*

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Dalit Literature endures as a testament that chronicles the stories of Resilience and Empowerment. It witnesses the resistance and indomitable spirit of a community that has endured the harsh realities of caste-based discrimination in India which are rooted in the lives of Dalits, The genre has emerged as a powerful expression of Dalit's struggles and aspirations. They ultimately challenge societal norms and foster discussions on identity, equality and justice. One of the prominent voices in Dalit literature is Bama, a Tamil writer whose works provide a poignant exploration of Dalit life. Her assertion on dalit identity transcends mere storytelling and becomes a call to action by urging society to dismantle ingrained prejudices and recognize the shared humanity that unites us all. Through her evocative language, Bama sheds light on the dehumanizing experiences and celebrates the resilience and dignity of the Dalit community.

The present article explores the assertion of Dalit identity as a symbolic subversion of social norms. The nuanced exploration of caste-based prejudice prompts to confront uncomfortable truths, fostering a deeper understanding of the Dalit experience. The short story *Old Man and a Buffalo* is featured in two of her collections, 'Harum-Scarum Saar' (2006) and 'The Ichi Tree Monkey' (2021). Malandi Thatha from *Old Man and a Buffalo* offers a fresh interpretation of Dalitness, portraying it as a stance of empowerment rather than submission. According to him, A Dalit should raise and stand against injustice and prejudice, rather than succumbing to oppression. He must emerge as a symbol of empowerment and resistance, challenging traditional power dynamics and advocating for a more assertive Dalit identity.

**Keywords:** caste, dalit, untouchability, oppression, humiliation, exploitation, resilience, etc

Dalit literature, a prominent subgenre addresses the struggles and identity of Dalits. It empowers Dalit voices facing caste-related oppression. Dalit literature serves as a powerful platform, articulating the experiences of Dalits silenced by societal discrimination. The genre fosters discussions on human rights, equality and social justice by shedding light on Dalit struggles, setbacks, and aspirations. The literature plays a pivotal role in raising Dalit consciousness, gaining popularity as a catalyst for reformations and activism within the

community. Through vivid imagery and evocative language, Bama captures the interplay of power dynamics within the narrative, shedding light on the dehumanizing experiences of the Dalits. Her Short stories not only reflect the daily hardships but also celebrates the resilience and dignity of the Dalit community, challenging prevailing stereotypes and fostering empathy.

Bama, a notable Dalit woman writer, has played a crucial role in making a substantial contribution to Indian contemporary literature, with a particular emphasis on the realm of Tamil Dalit literature. Her notable works include *Karukku* (1992), *Sangati* (2000), *Vanmam* (2002). Bama's influence extends globally, with translations of her works into languages such as English, French, Malayalam, Telugu, and more. In the realm of English translations, Bama's Short story collections have gained recognition. *Harum-Scarum Saar* (2006), translated by Mr. N. Ravi Shanker, and *Just One Word* (2018), translated by Ms. Malini Sheshadri, exhibits the depth of her storytelling. The most recent collection, *The Ichi Tree Monkey* (2021), also translated by Mr. N. Ravi Shanker, presents a blend of both old and new short stories. The Short story *Old Man and a Buffalo* holds a place in both *Harum-Scarum Saar* (2006) and *The Ichi Tree Monkey* (2021) and demonstrates the enduring impact of Bama's narrative across multiple collections.

Mr. N. Ravi Shanker, who translated Bama's latest Short story collection *The Ichi Tree Monkey* spoke to the Indian Cultural Forum. During the interview, when asked to choose his favourite character from the collection, he expressed that MalandiThatha holds a special place for him. He said,

One character whom I cannot remember without a trace of awe and admiration is MalandiThatha from *Old Man and a Buffalo*. At his age, he is a hero of the kids and while grazing his pregnant buffalo he tells them stories of his valorous battles with snakes. But more of his battles are revealed when his intense hatred for the upper caste landlord is exhibited. He is fearless before him and teaches the boys to be so. At the end of the story, it comes to the fore that he had gutted the dad of the present landlord using his own cow against him....He is sharpening the horns of his buffalo for the fight ahead. He is a symbol of militant Dalit uprising. <https://indianculturalforum.in/2021/04/27/the-ichi-tree-monkey-bama-ravi-shanker/>

Bama's short story *Old Man and a Buffalo* offers a divergent perspective of Dalit life, providing a poignant exploration of societal inequities. The title of the story skillfully portrays the struggles of the Dalit community, using the metaphor of the buffalo to symbolize their marginalized existence. The old man's relationship with the buffalo serves as a powerful allegory, emphasizing the enduring bonds forged in the face of adversity. Bama delves into the complexities of caste discrimination, weaving a story that exposes the harsh realities faced by the protagonist, paralleling the oppressive burden of the buffalo.

In the story, MalandiThatha from Kuppayapattivillage is depicted in diverse and contrasting manners, which compels to contemplate the genuine mindset and lifestyle that

every Dalit should embrace in the face of numerous challenges they encounter every day. Thatha emerges as a living embodiment of joy in the community. Remarkably, there is an astonishing absence of any tangible proof or discernible traces portraying Thatha's profound and poignant sorrow. It emphasizes the mysterious depths of his emotional concealment and establishes him as a stoic figure. Thatha's radiant and cheerful countenance acts as a magnetic force that inexplicably draws the young dalit towards his optimistic energy.

Thatha is the most favoured personality in the Dalit community. He not only has a great sense of humor but also engages in light-hearted conversations with young Dalits. They emulate Thatha and share jokes just like him. In essence, Malandi Thatha emerges as a candid and uncomplicated individual who revels in the simple pleasures of life, leaving an indelible mark on the communal ethos. Top of Form The narrator describes Thatha's positive attitude as,

He had a white towel slung over his shoulder, and sometimes he would act like he was going to beat the kids with it and the kids in turn would pretend to be scared and run from him laughing. Thatha's face always glowed, and he was always shaved by a barber who sat under the tree at the end of the street. Whenever he was there, Thatha regaled the young crowd standing around him with his jokes. They didn't lag either, matching him joke for joke. (*The Ichi Tree Monkey* 95-96)

The narrative delves into the poignant aspect of Thatha's life, providing a glimpse into his solitude following the demise of his wife. Despite societal expectations and familial pressures, Thatha consciously chooses to remain single, a decision that is laden with defiance against conventional norms. The tenacity is evident in his retort to those who suggest him to remarry. He emphasizes his self-sufficiency and rejects the notion that companionship is a prerequisite for a wholesome living.

Thatha's buffalo in his life underscores the theme of self-reliance. In a society where dependency on the spouse is often emphasized, he finds solace and sustenance in his bond with the buffalo. The buffalo is not only a source of income but a companion that sustains him emotionally and economically. The everyday routine of bringing the buffalo to pastures demonstrates a peaceful connection between the old man and the buffalo which challenges the established societal conventions. Thatha's reliance on the buffalo reveals a more self-sufficient mode of existence.

He also defies loneliness through his profound relationship with young Dalits in the community. Engaging and sharing stories with them are the integral parts of his daily routine. Thatha highlights a lively and socially interconnected lifestyle. He finds delight in narrating childhood memories and adventures with a touch of heroism which enhances his attitude and underlines resilience in unconventional relationships and pursuits. The event in the narrative offers a perspective on finding mirth beyond the customs.

The event involving the snake sighting unveils Malandi Thatha's quick and decisive action in response to a potential threat. The group of youngsters Kandasami, Madan, Masilamani, and Murukesan, immediately raise an alarm when they spot a snake near the canal. Thatha, hears their screams, and promptly approaches to investigate the commotion. He demonstrates his courage by using his stick and pushes the snake to the ground. Remarkably, he captures the snake's head with bare hands, exhibiting fearlessness and skill that commands everyone's attention. The occasion vividly encapsulates the gravity of the moment, depicting Thatha as a discerning figure who not only comprehends the situation but also takes decisive and effective action when necessary. With steady assurance, he holds the snake with exceptional calmness,

You call this a snake? It's a mere water snake. Do you know how many snakes I caught when I was your age?'....I would carry three snakes in each hand. I'd whirl them in air and throw them to the ground. They would just lie there, dazed, as if they were drunk on palm toddy! (P.101)

The old man enthusiastically recounts some of the courageous heroics accomplished in his youth. He embellishes the childhood reminiscences with fervent detail, infusing the present moment with a lively account of his past exploits. He says,

One day I found a snake hanging from a karuvelam tree. ....A beeeeee snake! My body tingled with fear but I went near and took a look. Unkappannoli! The snake had a sparrow in its mouth!'....I looked around. I thought hard about how best to save it. Saw a piece of clay lying near by. Picked it up, gave a mighty swing, and it went and hit the snake right on its head. The snake dropped the sparrow and slithered away. "You think you can escape after killing an innocent sparrow? Here's is more for you!" I aimed at the snake twice more. It was hit, but escaped with its life. Then I picked up the sparrow and left. (P.104)

Thatha's exceptional courage is apparent through his bold responses in the presence of danger. Even when confronted with the initial surge of fear upon encountering a big snake, he deliberately opts to approach and address the situation directly. The choice to inspect the circumstances, despite a palpable sense of fear, displays not only his valor but also a resolute eagerness to confront challenges.

He confronts the snake and attempts to strike several times. The act exhibits a moral stance against cruelty and a commitment to justice. His persistence when the snake escapes reinforces the idea that bravery involves taking action for the greater good, even at the expense of personal risk. The theme of bravery, in the context, is woven into the narrative through the protagonist's courageous efforts to protect the vulnerable sparrow from harm. Thatha proceeds to describe another courageous act in which he kills a water snake.

I beat a big water- snake to death and was playing around with it, when a pot-bellied Naicker came that way. Know what I did? I swung the snake

round and round in the air and deliberately let it go and fall on him! You should have seen him run with his pot belly jiggling up and down! It was so funny! (P.105)

Thatha rejects irrationality and refuses to accept unjust insults from the privileged castes. His response to these insults is direct and forceful which indicates his refusal to be demeaned or belittled. His unequivocal and resolute rejection distinctly underscores an unwavering commitment to both unyielding self-respect and dignity, as his behavior transcends the realms of ordinary personal resilience and portrays a fortified determination. The expression 'without any hesitation or fear' emphasizes Thatha's fearlessness and unwavering commitment. It makes him address the landlords directly and challenges the existing power dynamics for a more assertive stance against social injustice.

In one such occurrence, Thatha's buffalo, alongside the cattle of other Dalit children was grazing on the landlord's fields. The landlord seeing this yells at Thatha because it is seen as felony for a low-class person's livestock to trample a landlord's crops. He angrily roars, 'How can you be so irresponsible? You call yourself an old man? You goaded the young fellows on and let the cattle stray into the crops! Be careful or I'll break your buffalo's legs.' (105)

### **Assertion of Dalit Dignity:**

Dalits frequently encounter demeaning treatment from upper-caste individuals. It endures systematic discrimination and prejudice deeply ingrained in social hierarchies. The oppressive behavior takes on diverse forms, encompassing the use of derogatory language, unjust denial of fundamental rights and exclusion from crucial social and economic avenues. No one in the community had the nerve to respond to a Naicker because Dalits, being at the lower rungs, feel societal pressure to conform to established norms. The fear of retaliation discourages Dalits to challenge the status quo and deeply ingrained societal expectations contribute to a passive acceptance of the established social order. Centuries of systemic oppression and discrimination against Dalits have created a social environment where challenging the upper castes is seen as a direct violation which contributes to a culture of silence and submission. Dalits are economically dependent on the dominant castes for employment and livelihood. The fear of losing economic support deters individuals from openly responding to upper-caste individuals.

But, Thatha has a unique response for the landlord. People around him are in awe of how he handles the situation. He responds confidently, 'Ayya, have your crops been destroyed? We shooed the cattle away before they could enter the field. Why are you shouting yourself hoarse like this?' The landlord shouts back furiously 'I was there, so you came running and shooed the cattle away. But if I'm not around you will let the cattle loose in the crops. I know you, you thieving dogs!' (P. 106)

Listening to this Thatha couldn't resist his anger, he gave him his part of share



saying ‘You, don’t you *dare* abuse us! Born just yesterday—how dare you call me a thieving dog? I’ll wring your neck, aama!’ (P.106)

Thatha’s fearless response to the landlord’s agitation is marked by a direct and confrontational tone. By questioning the landlord, he not only addresses the issue at hand but also challenges the landlord’s exaggerated and loud expression of distress. The use of the phrase ‘shouting yourself hoarse’ indicates his willingness to question the landlord’s behavior and assertively communicate with him. His response suggests a refusal to be intimidated or cowed by the landlord’s apparent dominion. Thatha’s resilience reminds of Maya Angelou’s famous lines from the poem *Still I Rise*,

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear I rise  
Into a daybreak that’s wondrously clear, I rise  
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,  
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.  
I rise  
I rise  
I rise.(stanza 9)

Thatha, like the speaker in the poem, becomes the symbol of hope. He embodies the dream and resilience of Dalits who refuse to be shackled by societal norms. Into the daybreak of defiance and courage, he brings the gifts of fearlessness and the spirit of resistance which echoes the rise of determination against oppression. In the face of challenges, Thatha rises, a testament to the enduring strength and unwavering spirit who dares to defy. It demonstrates not only his practical approach to problem-solving but also his assertiveness to challenge unnecessary trepidation, highlighting a remarkable character valiant enough to speak truth to power.

From the time when Thatha was young, he had always been the same. Thatha’s father Irulandi used to graze the village’s livestock. Thatha would intentionally seize the landlord’s buffaloes, give them the landlord’s name, and enjoyed riding on them calling the buffaloes by the Naicker names. The action symbolizes a bold inversion of power dynamics, challenging the traditional hierarchy. He would force the buffalo to run nonstop until it was exhausted. He made an image of himself riding on the back of a landlord. Hence, he subverts the roles, mocking at the victimizer.

When Thatha gets the chance to visit the landlord’s homes, he would throw cow excrement at themselves as a visceral form of protest, symbolizing a rebellious and confrontational stance against perceived oppression. Thatha’s actions reflect a unique form of resistance, utilizing unconventional means to assert agency and challenge the established social order.

In an instance that gives the Dalit youth Thatha’s spirit is when Komaravel Naicker thrashed Irulandi because his livestock were returning home late. Thatha becomes enraged

after learning this, without pausing for thought, Thatha gets his father's grazing staff and gives the Naicker's buffalo a solid beating. He harshly warns the Naicker, stating, 'The Beating your cow got today, you yourself will get tomorrow, you Naicker! I won't rest till I give you blow for blow, dei!' (P. 108)

Thatha addresses the Naicker, with the informal term 'dei' instead of ayya. It reflects his disregard for conventional norms and a refusal to bow down to societal hierarchies. The theme of resistance and resilience in the context of a Dalit addressing a landlord with the term 'dei' is a multifaceted dynamic act that can be analyzed as resistance against oppression. Thatha's dynamic language reminds of popular Marathi poet, Sharankumar Limbale's famous lines from the poem *The White Paper*

You'll beat me, break me,  
Loot and burn my habitation  
But my friends!  
How will you tear down my words  
Planted like a sun in the east?  
...My rights are rising like the sun.  
Will you deny this sunrise? (lines 18-24)

Despite the potential threats and mistreatment, Thatha stands firm, like the speaker in the poem. The refusal to be broken or silenced and the assertion of rights resemble the tenacity displayed by Thatha in addressing the Naicker informally, planting his words firmly against the prevailing oppression. Thatha, like the speaker in the poem, embodies the metaphorical sunrise of rights that cannot be denied, symbolizing a relentless pursuit of dignity and equality despite external challenges.

Assertion of Dalit individuals' dignity and demand for equal treatment, signaling the rejection of the landlord's assumed superiority, challenging stereotypes, and reclaiming language as a tool of self-expression is seen as a symbolic subversion of social norms. Thatha borrows 200 rupees from a Naicker Rajaram Ayya. By that time he paid 1000 rupees in interest. To give away the Buffalo and pay back his loan, he waits for the Buffalo to deliver. However, he believed that he had already paid the Naicker an enough amount in interest payments. He thus declines to return the borrowed money to the lender. Malandi Thatha's states,

I have paid him thousand rupees so far for a two-hundred rupee loan. Now I have to give the buffalo also? Let that thieving m\*\*\* come—I will ask the buffalo to pee in his mouth!.....Let him come!...I will decide one way or another. I don't care about this stupid life. How long can we go on being cheated by them, go on letting them cheat us.

The lines reveal Thatha's frustration and resentment. The use of derogatory language and the reference to the possibility of the buffalo urinating in the lender's mouth conveys intense

anger and defiance. He expresses a strong determination not to give away his own buffalo emphasizing a strong refusal to further exploitation. The tone suggests a breaking point where Thatha is prepared to confront the lender, regardless of the consequences. The phrase 'I don't care about this stupid life' reflects a sense of hopelessness and exasperation with a system that allows exploitation to persist. The narrator questions the ongoing cycle of being cheated and seems ready to take a stand against injustice, symbolizes the declaration saying, 'Let him come! I will decide one way or another.' He conveys a powerful sense of frustration, resistance, and a willingness to challenge the prevailing unfair circumstances.

### **Conclusion:**

Assertion of Dalit identity is imperative for fostering a more nuanced and accurate understanding of the experiences and challenges faced by the Dalit community. It involves moving beyond stereotypes and acknowledging the diversity within the Dalit population. This subversion challenges stereotypes that often limit the understanding of Dalit life and presents a multifaceted view to counter misconceptions and prejudices. The subversion amplifies the voices of the marginalized and provides a platform for more authentic representation and a deeper insight into Dalit aspirations. Further, a unique perspective addresses the intersectionality in the Dalit community by acknowledging factors such as gender, class, and regional variations in their experiences. It captures the cultural realities like Dalit traditions, rituals and practices and also sheds light on the social and economic injustices that contribute to raising awareness and change. The assertion of Dalit identity not only celebrates resistance and empowerment but also fosters empathy and understanding among a wider audience. To conclude, the assertion of Dalit identity evokes emotions and encourages a more compassionate view towards the challenges faced by the community. ■

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# The Role of Erroneous Judgement in Ilango's *Silappathikaram* and Tagore's *The Repayment*: A Comparative Study

S.Valliammai

Ilango's *Silappathikaram* depicts how the Pandiyan King hastily pronounced erroneous judgement. Because of this an innocent trader Kovalan was accused as a thief and sentenced to death. Kannagi proved the innocence of Kovalan in the King's court which resulted in the death of the King and the queen. Due to Kannagi's anger, Madurai city was burnt. Similarly, in the poem "The Repayment", Tagore has described how an innocent trader Bajrasen was accused as a thief and he was expected to be executed. But Shyama, the public woman in Varanasi rescued him by asking Uttiya, a love-infatuated teenager to accept the crime and to die on behalf of Bajrasen. In both the literary works, the harsh outcome of erroneous judgements has been depicted.

**Keywords:** Erroneous judgments-Innocent traders-Awarding Death Sentence-Revenge taking - Offering supreme sacrifice-Finding divinity in human beings.

The classical text of the Epic of the Anklet, attributed to Prince Ilango Adigal, is written in Tamil. One day, in the mountainous forest of the Chera region tribal girls came across a lovely but distraught young woman. The forlorn young woman told them her story, upon which the tribal people pronounced her to be "Goddess of Chastity."

The King of the land, Shenguttuvan, heard about Kannagi. He requested that his brother, Prince Ilango Adigal, a monk who lived in those mountains, write down the young woman's story.

Ilango resolves to write an epic based on the role of the anklet:

We shall write a poem, with songs, illustrating the three truths that dharma will become the God of death to kings who swerve from the path of righteousness, that it is natural for great men to adore a chaste lady of great fame, and the destiny will manifest itself and be fulfilled and as these truths centre round an anklet of artistic beauty, the poem may be named *Silappathikaram* (P18)

In Poompuhar, two affluent merchants had offspring—one bore a son, Kovalan, and the other a daughter, Kannagi. In their youth, the children were wed, and they were established in their own abode, where they dwelled contentedly and joyously for a span of time.

One day, Kovalan and Kannagi attended the debut of a court dancer named Madhavi. Kovalan was so captivated by Madhavi that he became her benefactor. For a full year, Kovalan lavished his attention and riches on Madhavi. Eventually, however, he grew disillusioned with Madhavi and returned home to Kannagi, pleading for forgiveness.

Kannagi was overjoyed to see Kovalan, as she had prayed for his return every day. She did not reprimand him at all, despite the fact that the couple was now practically destitute. Kovalan suggested that they seek their fortune elsewhere in Madurai. There, he planned to sell their remaining valuables—Kannagi’s ankle bracelets—and start a business. Kannagi agreed to accompany him.

The journey proved exceedingly arduous for Kannagi and Kovalan. Along the way, they encountered a female ascetic who offered them guidance. They also encountered a group of fierce tribespeople known for their thievery and drunkenness, yet surprisingly hospitable to the couple.

Upon reaching the outskirts of Madurai, Kovalan ventured into the town alone, carrying one of the anklets in hopes of selling it. Unfortunately, the court goldsmith, who had recently stolen a similar anklet from the queen, accused Kovalan of theft. The king, seeking to appease his displeased queen without investigation, ordered Kovalan’s execution.

Upon learning of her husband’s fate, Kannagi fainted but later stormed into Madurai’s court. There, she broke open the remaining anklets—revealing their differing gemstones—and proved Kovalan’s innocence. Overcome with remorse, the king fell to the ground and died.

The King’s last words are:

“Am I a ruler - I who have listened to the words of goldsmith? It is I who am the thief. The protection of the subjects of the southern kingdom has failed in my hands for the first time. Let me depart from this life” Speaking this, the king fell down in a swoon and his great queen collapsed (P.249).

Kannagi went outside and cursed the city at each of its four gates. Then she tore off her left breast and dashed it to the ground. She commanded Agni, God of Fire, to burn Madurai, permitting only the good to escape. Madurai burned.

Kannagi, delirious and hysterical, wandered off toward the west. Upon reaching the mountainous forest, perhaps 200 kms to the west, she was discovered by the tribal girls. Eventually, Kannagi was swept up by a sky- chariot driven by her husband, Kovalan, and they went off to heaven together.

In Tagore's *The Repayment* the misfortune of a trader has been described. Long ago there was a horse dealer at Takshashila, named Bajrasen. He was on his way to the fair at Varanasi. Then he was attacked by the robbers and his horses were stolen. As he slept in a deserted house in the suburbs of Varanasi, he was caught by policemen as a thief. He was ordered to the place of execution. Shyama, the first public woman in Varanasi fell in love with Bajrasen. Uttiya, who was mad after Shyama was willing to sacrifice his life for the sake of Bajrasen. He pleads guilty to the charge of theft from the royal treasury by showing the police chief a ring which Shyama had herself had as a present from the king. This was accepted as evidence of his guilt. Tagore has lifted the story into a dizzy height of serious tragedy where a love infatuated teenager's entirely spontaneous and voluntary act of self sacrifice becomes the linchpin of action.

In both the stories, the protagonists are merchants who visit distant places for the sake of trade but fate plays the role and they are considered thieves due to mistaken identity. In *Silappathikaram*, Kovalan was murdered. But in Tagore's story, Bajrasen was rescued by Shyama but she makes Uttiya, an infatuated teenager offer the supreme sacrifice by donning the role of the thief voluntarily.

Shyama speaks about Uttiya as follows:

“A young teenager  
His name Uttiya was nearly driven mad  
by his hopeless passion for me. At my request  
He pleaded guilty to the charge held against you and gave his own life/  
And this is my pride.  
That the greatest sin of my life I have committed  
for your sake, O most – excellent of all (142-148)

In both the works, the protagonists are compared to divine beings. After seeing Bajrasen for the first time, Shyama considered him to be God Indra:

“Alas! who's this?  
So tall, handsomer than great Indra himself,  
being dragged to prison like a common thief  
in harsh chains!. Quick my friend  
Go to the police chief, mention my name”. (20-23)

When Bajrasen was rescued by Shyama, he considered her to be merciful Lakshmi:

“After the horrors of a grotesque nightmare night  
who are you, appearing in my prison cell  
like the white dawn, the morning star in your hand,  
life to the dying, liberation incarnate,  
merciful Lakshmi in this merciless city”. (66-70)

When Kannaki entered the Pandiya King's court, the soldiers reported the matter to the King about her arrival. By using negative statements, they assert her divinity. They say that she was not Korravai nor Kali.

The gatekeeper approached the king and stated as follows:

Someone waits at the gate. She is not the deity of korravai, the Goddess of victory, holding in her hands the victorious spear, and standing upon the nape of the buffalo with an unceasing gush of blood from its fresh wound. Nor in the Anangu, younger sister of the seven virgins, who made Siva dance; nor even in the kali of the forest which is the residence of ghosts and goblins; nor again is she the Goddess that tore up the mighty chest of Daruka. She seems to swell with rage. She has lost her husband and she has in her hand an anklet of gold and she waits at the gate (P 247).

To sum up, in both the works, the kings had pronounced erroneous judgements which affected the lives of the characters. Tagore's story is based on Buddhist myth whereas Ilango's work is based on what really happened in Tamilnadu. ■

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# The Contribution of Women Writers during Freedom Struggle in India: An Analytical Study

Rakesh Singh Paraste

The present research paper is a humble attempt to explore such women writers who contributed to the growth and spread of nationalist sentiments among Indian people during freedom struggle. The discourse and textual analysis method have been used in order to find out the objective of the study. The writings of great men of letters and their thoughts shaped the great freedom national movement and through their words and creative writings they inspired and created the awareness of nationalism and patriotism among people which ultimately led to the freedom. India's struggle for freedom is entirely incomplete without mentioning the writings and ideologies of women writers who contributed to find out the freedom. Some well known notable writers like Taru Datta, Mahadevi Verma, Sarojini Naidu, Savitribai Phule, Mahashweta Devi, Kamla Suraya and many more. Apart from these writers, there are many other important women writers like Ismat Chughtai, Pandita Ramabai, Kamini Roy and Amrita Pritam who contributed to the spread of nationalism and patriotism in the days of struggle for freedom but unfortunately they have almost forgotten. Through this research article, it will be tried to explore the contribution and sacrifice made by these women writers through their works so as to people will be awoken and understand the importance of their works. The sacrifice made by the women of India will deserve the foremost place in the history. This research article will be very beneficial and useful for further research also to explore the writings, lives and successes of women writers during freedom struggle.

**Keywords:** Indian Freedom, Role of Women writers, Gandhian National Movement, Literature, Freedom Struggle & Women Writers etc.

## **Introduction:**

There are large numbers of women writers who participated and contributed in India's freedom struggle by their thoughts and actions in their writings. There would be no exaggeration if we say literature writing acted as a central tool in India's freedom struggle against British colonial. Undoubtedly, Literature played an important role in awakening the feeling of nationalism and patriotism during India's freedom struggle. It is always mentioned



that some notable great men of letters shaped and inspired freedom movement but seldom has been mentioned that women writers and their words contributed for freedom movement.

After all the main target of Indian freedom movement was to end British rule in India. In this movement, women and their writings played a very important role in achieving India's Independence. However, their lives, struggles, and contributions to the movement are never recognized at the same level of prominence as that of male. Their names and their contributions are almost forgotten or mentioned in brief<sup>1</sup> except the names of some prominent women writers. Now when India is celebrating 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsava' so it is very necessary to explore the contribution and sacrifice made by those forgotten women writers so as to people will be awakened and can understand the importance of their works. Many women writers created the awareness of nationalism sentiments, patriotism and amplified the freedom struggle through their creative words. Inspired by this freedom movement, there emerged in full swing of writings which contributed to the spread of nationalist sentiments across the country. As we know that creative writing is one of the serious profession and the best way to create the awareness among people.

### **Research Objectives:**

1. To explore the contribution and role of the Indian women writers during freedom struggle in India.
2. To understand the struggles, sufferings and sacrifices faced by Indian women writers.
3. To promote women writers to write against gender inequality, social evils and for their rights.
4. To hear the unheard voices of women through their writings.
5. To establish their revolutionary literary works from a feminist point of view in Indian English Literature.

### **Review of Literature:**

In order to find out the objectives of the research work, there are many research articles have been studied which are relevant to the topic. Through the above works the writers and scholars tried to explore particularly the role and status of women during freedom struggle but still there are some areas which is still remained and gap, so now it is a time to fill the gap and explore the proper contribution of such Indian women writers who wrote to spread the nationalism and patriotism by their writings in the days of India's freedom struggle as well as they also fought against the prevailing patriarchal system by their thoughts and works but unfortunately they were sidelined and almost forgotten. The present research work will definitely fulfill the research gap and it will explore the sacrifice and contribution made by the Indian women writers by their writings during freedom struggle.

### **Research Methodology:**

Discourse and textual analysis method have been used in order to find out the objective of the study. The findings have been supported with the help of a significant

numbers of books written by Indian women writers, scholars and articles, theses, research papers on various national and international journals have been considered to do the framework of this paper. Apart from that, the findings have also been supported with help of many renowned newspapers, Govt. reports, Interviews, observations and websites etc.

### **Feminism in Indian Literature and their contribution in Freedom:**

Indian Feminism has its own specific importance and it has played a significant role during freedom struggle in India. But the problem is that their contribution and their writings were ignored by the society. Their contributions were not explored or better to say intentionally suppressed from the mainstream of the literary perspectives. When we talk about feminism in India we have to place it necessarily in the larger context of Western feminism to understand how far it is similar or dissimilar to it. But we cannot totally negate the contribution made by our freedom struggle, independence, spread of education, concern for economic development and stability, employment opportunities and above all the resultant new awareness of our women. As far as feminism is concerned regional literatures too fall in line with this pattern.<sup>2</sup>

India's struggle for freedom is entirely incomplete without mentioning the writings and ideologies of women writers who contributed to find out the freedom. Some well known notable writers like Taru Datta, Mahadevi Verma, Sarojini Naidu, Mahashweta Devi, Kamla Suraya and many more. Apart from these writers, there are many other important women writers like Ismat Chughtai, Pandita Ramabai, Kamini Roy and Amrita Pritam who contributed to the spread of nationalism and patriotism in the days of struggle for freedom but unfortunately some of them have almost forgotten because they also wrote about the prevailing patriarchal system in this society as well and may be this is the reason their voices and their works have not been listened properly.

In the pre-independence period, the status of Indian women was very pitiable and in a very deprived state. Generally women were not allowed to read and write as well as they were not allowed to participate in the implementation of any particular tasks and activities as well as they were not allowed to express their ideas and viewpoints due to the prevalence of male domination in the society. There were so many unfavorable systems which imposed upon women like Child Marriage, Widow Remarriage, Purdah system, Sati Pratha, Female feticide and polygamy.<sup>3</sup> During the pre independence period, there were many women, who fought against Britishers and participated in India's freedom struggle like Rani Laxmi Bai, Sarojini Naidu, Bhima Bai Holker, Madam Bhikaji Cama, Kamla Nehru, Begum Hazrat Mahal, Captain Laxmi Sehgal, Savitiri Bai Phule and Pandita Ramabai and many more. We cannot ignore their unforgettable contribution for the freedom struggle in India. They will be remembered forever.

### **Phases of India's Freedom Movement:**

Indian Freedom Movement can be divided into seven phases which are as under:

(1) The first phase- First war of Independence (1857 to 1858)

- (2) Second Phase- Swadeshi Movement and Partition of Bengal (1905)
- (3) Third Phase- Jallianwala Bagh Massacre (1919)
- (4) Forth Phase- Non-cooperation Movement (1920)
- (5)Fifth Phase- Poorna Swaraj (1929)
- (6) Sixth Phase-Civil Disobedience & the Dandi March (1930) and
- (7) Seventh Phase- The Quit India Movement (1942)

### **Nationalism through Language & Literature:**

It is obvious that the British brought their language and literature as an important tool to their colonial project; in fact, any country that invades another brings in it's their own language and literature which is imposed on their target. Just like the Aryans brought in the Sanskrit language and literature. The Mughals also did the same and brought in Persian and Arabic; the British also did the same. It is cleared that the Macaulayan plan of education was intended to educate a particular class of administrators to help the rulers to build their Empire and that was their main objectives, and with this intention they wanted to demoralize the Indian subject, their language, literature, culture, values, and religion and destroy their self-esteem. It can reasonably be said that Indian nationalism did not germinate of its own accord in the soil of the country; it was an exotic fruit of the European knowledge which was imparted through their language and English education. In this way, it can be said that the Indian nationalism which ironically taken as much to contact with British knowledge and English as to the inner desire of the nation to create its destiny, did not show any real interest rejecting English and English education either during the struggle for freedom or even decades after independence. In this way, it can be said that without the existence of British regime and their element of foreign imperialism, the inception of Indian nationalism would be difficult to imagine.<sup>4</sup>

### **Gandhian Movement:**

The Gandhian movement is one of the most important and significant movement for awakening and motivating the Indian women for their active participation during freedom struggle. The result is that women were actively participated in the Satyagraha movement on par with men. A.R. Desai is rightly said that about the Gandhian movement-‘This is unique in the entire history of India, with hundreds of women were participating in mass political campaigns, picketing of liquor stores, demonstrations, courting jails, facing lathi charges and bullets’.<sup>5</sup>

The status of Indian English literature in the Gandhian era was affected by these epoch-making events in Indian life. A very notable feature is that the novel suddenly blossomed in the 1930s, when the Gandhian movement was probably the most powerful. In fact, it was during this time that Indian English Fiction revealed some of the most compelling themes like: the evidence for freedom struggle, the relationship between East and West, community issues and the plight of untouchables, the landless poor, the downtrodden, the economically exploited and the oppressed. In this way, all forms of

writing, only exception of prose, were motivated and encouraged to take part the freedom struggle in India.

### **Some Forgotten Women Writers during freedom struggle:**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the rise of the reformist movement, the trend of educating women started which result was that more and more women's participation in the rebellion against British rule. As a result, this led to a new stage in the development of women's literature in India. Through their writing, they created awareness and motivated to participate in national movements. Although there were still women such as Bhabani and Jogeshwari whose writings in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century questioned the male domination of their husband, but the majority concentrated on the India's freedom struggle.<sup>6</sup> These are some notable Indian women writers who significantly contributed to awake the women through their writings and works during freedom struggle but unfortunately their names are not remembered properly.

**Pandita Ramabai** was a great social reformer and writer in the pre-independence India. Whenever we talk about feminism our gaze moves towards West and figures like J.S. Mill, Wollstonecraft, Showalter, Toril Moi, Simone de Beauvoir etc. come to our mind. But when we think about feminism in India there is vagueness before our sight. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century when India was fighting to gain her lost freedom, Pandita Ramabai in a very radical way struggled to establish the lost glory of Indian woman. When the status of women in India was at its lowest ebb, Ramabai sought to conjoin women-centred issues with the issues of nation building so that the attention of reformists as well as nationalists could be drawn to the ignoble plight of Indian women. It is not only her writing but the whole of her life is an example of a radical who tried to deconstruct the myth about Indian womanhood constructed by Hindu scriptures and Brahmanical code of conduct like Smiritis (Manu, Atri etc).

**Usha Mehta** is another name who was one of the greatest freedom fighters in India. She participated actively in the Quit India movement led by Mahatma Gandhi. Through her writings she encouraged to all the women to take part in the India's freedom struggle. She wrote her important book "Women and Men Voters, the 1977-80 Experiment" which is one the most important books for providing equal voting rights without restriction of genders in India. She made unforgettable contribution during freedom struggle in India.<sup>7</sup>

**Ismat Chughtai** is the greatest woman writer in Urdu. She has a lot of revolutionary writing to her name. Many women have been influenced and inspired by her words, which are bold and sometime taboo also. She is also a great feminist and became the first woman writer to write about same-sex desire. Ismat Chughtai was born in the year 1915 and she was ahead of her time, often writing many significant articles on female sexuality and other similar topics. Her writings are so much inspirational and are idolized by future young women writers and authors. She was summoned to court in 1944 for one of her best work Lihaaf due to obscenity. Through her writing, she has inspired and awakened national spirit during freedom struggle.

**Amrita Pritam** was born in 1919. She was the greatest author mainly in Hindi and Punjabi. She was known as the first female poet of Punjab. When India was partitioned in 1947, she shifted from Lahore to India. Even after shifting from one country to another country, she was and is loved by readers and intellectuals from both the countries. She has written more than 100 poems, Punjabi folk songs, essays and more in her credit. Most of her works have been translated to many foreign languages. Her most famous poem, Aaj Aakhaan Waris Shah nu (An Ode to Waris Shah) has been read across the world. This poem was a great tribute to those who lost their lives during the partition of India and her agony towards it. This poem is dedicated and addressed to one of the great Sufi poet i.e. Waris Shah- and this elaborate works which remind us of the bloody partition in India.

**Kamini Roy** was a Bengali poet, and a feminist. She was born in 1868 and became the first woman to receive honours graduate in British India. She was also one of the first girls to receive a school education in India. She came from an elite family in Bangladesh. Her father was a judge and writer, and she learned to write from him. She started young, at the age of eight. She has published the book of poems in 1889. It was called Alo O Chhaya.<sup>8</sup>

### **Finding and Suggestions:**

As far as the research is concerned, historically we found that women have participated in various national movements during the colonial rules. The women writers were writings very inspirational works that led to participate in national movements. The situation was not favourable for them because generally they were not allowed to participate in any particular tasks or activities as well as they were not allowed to read and write anything but even after that they created the awareness and motivated to people through their writings during freedom struggle. Hence, most of the writers were suppressed and could not take the proper position in the literary history due to male domination society. Even today, women writers are marginalized and ignored, as writing has been a male territory from the beginning.

At present time also, though marginalized, woman are still writing because they believe in the art. Literature in India has not become a structured system yet. However, women writers cannot wait for another renaissance in literature- revival of the golden age of Kalidas- to create great literature. Women writers in India and throughout the world always swim against the tide projecting a sense of culture threshold in a way vastly diverse society, and trying to knit it into a unified bond. At this present scenario, the writers have not seen any spectacular social revolution of any particular religious war. Economic disparity, caste prejudice, and so on, still exists. Writers continue their struggle against social evil.<sup>9</sup> India is celebrating its 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of independence (with the mission of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav) and the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has often shares his vision of building i.e. Aatma Nirbhar Bharat (Self Reliant India). The Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav is an emphasized programme, to start country wide campaign which will focus on participation of common people, to be recalibrated into a 'Janandolan', where small

changes, at the local level, will add up to momentous national gains.<sup>10</sup> We need more and more research to identify the women writers. The woman's quest for identity gives rise to a number of issues. The new woman is emerging and there are a number of new issues to be taken up in future. Women are more expressive and want to publish books and research articles about everyday life. We should promote and motivate them to write against social evils and for their rights.

### **Conclusion:**

India got independence on 15<sup>th</sup> of August, 1947 because of many national freedom movements, sacrifices, and a century of revolutions, struggles and blood shedding by the freedom fighters. India's struggle for freedom is entirely incomplete without mentioning the writings and ideologies of women writers who contributed to achieve the independence. Unconditionally the women shouldered critical responsibilities in India's struggle for freedom. They have created the nationalist sentiments and patriotism through their works. Their intellectual insights, conceptual, theoretical and textual experiments have engaged and interpreted the complex colonial situations.

The Indian women writers can do better in the field of their writing skills because today they have empowered themselves to speak their ideas, views and give voice to their innermost thoughts; they have mastered the courage to break free from the shackles of domination that throttled and choked their voice. Writing is the best profession and powerful weapon for women through which they can express their thoughts, voices and create awareness among people so as to attention may be drawn of the literary historians towards their revolutionary works from a feminist point of view. They should be motivated and promoted to write for women's right and for the nation building and the deserved place should be provided to them and remembered equally in the field of literary writings. It should not be only established their unheard voices but also to retrieve forgotten women writers, freedom fighters, and social histories and explore the histories of suppression. ■

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# Migration, Matrimonial Choices, and Cultural Continuities: A Diasporic Analysis among Indian Girit Women through Peggy Mohan's *Jahajin*

Ayesha Zameer,  
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The literary work *Jahajin* is authored by Peggy Mohan who is a promising writer of Indo-Caribbean literature. She endeavors to explore the experiences and narratives of “Girit women” within the historical framework of the indentured labor system in Trinidad and Tobago. This study will focus on the breakdown of the institution of marriage among female laborers of Indian descent who were subjected to indenture. Its objective is to illuminate the challenges, subjugation, and marginalization faced by these women. These diasporic female laborers encountered systemic injustices, including unequal pay, harsh living conditions, unsafe workplaces, sexual exploitation, and the complex role of marriage, both in their past lives in India and their contemporary existence on the island. Peggy Mohan highlights the dual marginalization experienced by these women, first as laborers on Sugar Plantations and second as women. For some, this situation offered a degree of autonomy and independence, enabling them to surpass the constraints of their oppressed lives in India and assume the role of wage earners, thus relieving the financial burdens on their families. This study will examine the redefined identity of diasporic Indo-Caribbean women, elucidating their emotional states, vulnerabilities, experiences of immigration, linguistic intricacies, dynamics of caste, instances of sexual violence, as well as the overarching themes of subjugation and marginalization that shape their lives.

**Keywords:** Diaspora, marriage, marginalization, indenture, sexual exploitation.

In her literary opus *Jahajin* (2007), Peggy Mohan, a Trinidadian author of Indian lineage, embarks on an examination of the migratory trends of Indians to the Caribbean after the cessation of slavery in 1833, particularly under the framework of indentured labor. Peggy's novel *Jahajin*, portrays the adversities encountered by Indian women who underwent indenture in Trinidad, while also elucidating the enduring repercussions of indenture, migration, and colonization on subsequent generations. The novel delineates the intricate impact of marital dynamics on the lives of these women in India, prompting their decision



to embark on a journey to Trinidad as indentured laborers. In addition to grappling with the challenges of poverty, discrimination, and caste prejudices, these women were compelled to leave their homeland in pursuit of a new sense of identity, freedom, and a more secure livelihood. Within this narrative, Mohan underscores the exacerbated severity and rigor of the experiences encountered by women, known as ‘girmits,’ in contrast to their male counterparts within the same labor context. The term ‘gimit’ originates from the Indian rendition of the English word “agreement,” signifying the contractual arrangements established between the British Government and laborers from the Indian subcontinent. During the 19th Century under British rule, the British Colonial planters sought a new workforce following the abolition of Slavery in 1834, leading them to recruit Indians to fulfill the labor demands in Trinidad and Tobago. These laborers were dispatched to sugarcane estates in Trinidad and other locales through contractual agreements spanning a stipulated duration of five years, in return for passage, rudimentary amenities, and wages. However, these agreements delineated the period of the laborers’ sojourn in foreign territories and the terms governing their repatriation. These indentured laborers were forced to work in harsh conditions, severe climate, long working hours with minimum rights and low wages. Sadia Intekhab writes in *Trauma, Identity and Violence in Coolie Women: The Odyssey of Indenture* by Gaiutra Bahadur:

The indentured labour system was thus a cruel and exploitative practice that led to millions of people’s displacement, exploitation, and suffering. The Girmityas were treated as mere commodities, and their lives were considered disposable. The accounts of physical and sexual abuse, ill-treatment, and the development of new cultures and languages demonstrate the destructive and traumatic impact of the system on the lives and identities of indentured labourers. (Intekhab 185-86)

From 1845 to 1917, around 144,000 Indian indentured laborers, mainly from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and South India voyaged to Trinidad to fulfil the requirement of laborers. Among the entirety of laborers who migrated to Trinidad, an estimated 85% adhered to the Hindu faith, while approximately 15% identified as Muslims. The majority of these migrants were youthful and unmarried, opting to undertake the journey independently. However, a portion elected to migrate accompanied by their families, while others made the decision to leave their families behind in India. These migrant laborers faced a lot of challenges- cultural, lingual, religious, and social. And finally in 1917 the Indenture System ended due to growing opposition and changing labor dynamics. These diasporic laborers in the indenture system persist through the descendants of these Indian laborers, who contribute to shaping the multicultural identity of Trinidad and Tobago. It implies that it continues through their descendants.

‘Diaspora’ refers to a group of people originating from the same homeland who have scattered or migrated to different places as indentured laborers. These laborers were referred to as ‘coolie’. The term “coolie” was employed as a pejorative label to denote

indentured laborers, indicating a derogatory connotation associated with their status and labor conditions. Elliott Young in his book, *Alien Nation: Chinese Migration in the Americas from the Coolie Era Through World War II*, states “Coolie was not a legal term but rather a vague notion of cheap and easily exploitable labor that was almost inextricably linked to Asians, and particularly to Chinese and Indians” ( Young 46).

In her novel *Jahajin*, Peggy Mohan employs a distinctive narrative technique known as ‘Bilingualism,’ aimed at elucidating, interpreting, and conveying the cultural identity of a community. This technique facilitates the amalgamation of cultural attitudes, values, beliefs, and perspectives. Throughout the narrative, the migrants are depicted conversing amongst themselves in Bhojpuri and other indigenous languages spoken by the migrant laborers, serving as a means of expressing emotions. Bilingualism in literature serves as a potent mechanism for preserving a community’s identity within the broader cultural landscape. It can be regarded as a tool for fostering a unique sense of communal identification. This narrative device engenders a heightened awareness of divergent cultural identities, reflecting the philosophical and emotional conflicts inherent within the characters. Due to their limited knowledge of English, a Creole language called ‘Trinidad Bhojpuri’ emerged, named after the Bhojpuri-speaking majority among the laborers who hailed from various parts of northern India.

Deeda, a central character, maintains dialogue with the narrator in Bhojpuri, even in contemporary settings. The novel aptly illustrates the significance of language in reflecting one’s identity. This theme is further reinforced by the narrator’s decision to pursue a PhD in Bhojpuri, emphasizing that one’s identity is inseparable from their language, community, and environment. Regardless of geographical location, language plays a pivotal role in shaping an individual’s life, serving as an enduring component of their identity. Mohan in her novel *Jahajin* mentions that not only men but also women of various ages, and marital statuses, including single, married, divorced, and unhappily married, were all involved in the indentured labor system during that period. She writes:

Roughly thirty per cent of the migrants on every ship were females. Some of these were women coming with their husbands, of course, and children. But most of the men were not travelling with their wives. According to the records, most of these women were adults travelling alone. (Mohan 15)

In addition to Peggy Mohan, several other scholars have extensively documented the migration of women and their helplessness to choose to leave their homeland. The systemic oppression experienced by women was of such magnitude that individuals from diverse caste backgrounds found themselves compelled to depart from their communities, a circumstance indicative of the profound injustices they faced. Similarly, Gaiutra Bahadur in her book *Coolie Woman: The Odyssey of Indenture* provides insights into the experiences of women within this context. She writes :

It is pleasing to think the Bahadur—the hero—of this story could have been Sujaria herself. She did, after all, leave a village in the most conservative corner

of India. At the time, she was twenty-seven, middle-aged by the standards of the day and the dateline. As a member of Hinduism's highest caste, Sujaria had the most to lose by crossing the Indian Ocean. This was a forbidden passage, especially for a woman, especially for a Brahmin, and most especially for a Brahmin woman travelling without a male relative. I like to think she claimed the decidedly masculine title of Bahadur for women, too—and for acts of valour that have more to do with crossing boundaries than with killing anyone in battle. (Bahadur 21-22)

This study uses a feminist perspective to look at the many difficulties women faced not just before the migration but also during their long journey across the ocean and their lives afterward in Trinidad. By using feminist theories, the study wants to highlight parts of women's lives that are usually ignored during this time in history. Through a detailed look at original sources, this research paper wants to show the different sides of women's challenges, strength, and ability to make choices as they dealt with the tough journey and the society of Trinidad, as seen through the writings of Peggy Mohan, a writer from the diaspora. Furthermore, the term 'Jahâj,' signifying 'ship' in Indic languages, and 'Jahaji,' connoting 'people of ship' or 'people arriving via ship,' elucidate the focus on the female cohort, termed 'Jahajins', who collectively embarked on the voyage via ship. In contrast to their male counterparts, female laborers or 'Jahajins' constituted a considerably smaller demographic, accounting for only 30 to 40 percent of the overall indentured labor force. The research contributes to a broader understanding of gender dynamics in historical contexts, emphasizing the importance of acknowledging and interpreting women's experiences through a feminist perspective. It will explore how they went through difficult experiences first under colonial rule and then among their male co-workers. On the ship they lived in cramped quarters, poor sanitation and hygiene that resulted into so many deadly diseases like cholera and dengue, and limited availability of food and other necessities and upon arrival in Trinidad, the circumstances further deteriorated, exacerbating the challenges faced by the laborers. They encountered significant cultural displacement, necessitating the abandonment of their native dwellings to acclimate to unfamiliar surroundings and establish new residences. The estate owners in Trinidad subjected the laborers to exploitative conditions, prioritizing economic gains over the welfare and physical well-being of the workforce, particularly females. Bahadur in her book *Coolie Woman: The Odyssey of Indenture* writes:

Some historians have called indenture "a new form of slavery." In many ways, it was; once in the sugar colonies, coolies suffered under a repressive legal system that regularly convicted more than a fifth of them as criminals, subject to prison for mere labor violations, which were often the unjust allegations of exploitative overseers. The story, however, is more nuanced than that, especially for women. From the beginning, in all the colonies that turned to indenture to rescue their plantations from ruin after slaves were freed, men enormously outnumbered women. (Bahadur 26)

## Discussion

This study aims to explore the intricate experiences of women belonging to a specific demographic, with a particular emphasis on aspects such as trauma, marginalization, oppression, marriage, harassment, and subjugation. Individuals, regardless of gender, hailing from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, left their homes and families behind with hopes of attaining improved prospects. However, their ambitions were met with profound exploitation during the colonial period. Enduring various hardships during their oceanic voyage, these female individuals now collectively identify as “Jahajins,” symbolizing their shared experiences as companions on the same journey. Women endured hardships from the very beginning of the journey, facing dual marginalization and harassment during the sea journey, both as indentured laborers and as women. -Ensuring women’s safety posed a significant challenge, lacking proper regulations to protect them. Incidents of harassment, molestation, and rape by sailors for their amusement were unfortunately common, and they were further forced to abort the pregnancy if it happened. Hugh Tinker in his book, *A New System of Slavery* expresses this unfortunate treatment towards women:

Females, imported at the ratio of one to every four or five men, were bought for field work, for domestic labour and other purposes. In these conditions, slave men and women could not expect to live as married couples. The women were available for sexual exploitation by all—manager and overseer first, and slaves afterwards. Only after they had passed through a phase of virtual prostitution, or at best a series of temporary, unstable unions, did the women begin to settle down with semi-permanent companions. During the greater part of the centuries of slavery in the Caribbean, the planters were not interested in their slave-women producing children: this deprived them of the labor of the females, or otherwise lessened their usefulness: ‘It is cheaper to buy than to breed’ was an often-quoted planters’ maxim. Thus, the females’ employment of means to avoid conception, and frequent use of abortion, was not opposed. (Tinker 11).

This paper explores the significant role marriage plays as a barrier in the lives of women through various women characters of the novel, particularly focusing on how the institution of marriage is depicted in the lives of “girit” women. While marriage is generally associated with companionship and equality, Indian marriages, in the context under consideration, extend beyond these conventional notions. Deeda, a migrant laborer, left her husband in pursuit of a better life. This suggests that her married life might not have been satisfactory, leading her to choose indentured labor. During the indentureship in Trinidad, her connection with Mukoon Singh indicates her appreciation for the respect and significance he provided, possibly lacking in her marital relationship. Overall, the narrative reflects how women, for desiring respect, equality, and love in marriage, often find themselves relegated to a subordinate position. When Mukoon Singh proposed to Deeda, suggesting they return to India to start anew as his daughter Sunnariya is now married. He asked:

‘Deeda. Aayegi mere saath? Jahaj me?’ he asked, very softly. Will you come with me? On the boat? And time stopped. I couldn’t breathe. I couldn’t think. Mukoon Singh and me, for the rest of our lives. Sunnariya was married. Now I was free. (Mohan141)

She knows the return journey to India means the same long boat journey and coolie quarters and cramped ship and insecurity and she also understood that their union would face rejection in India due to the caste difference – she being from a low caste and him a Rajput. Caste barriers would pose a significant obstacle.

In Trinidad, she found solace in a life free from her dominating husband, where she controlled her own destiny. Valuing her freedom and independence above all, she firmly and very politely refused Mukoon Singh’s proposal. She says :

And I knew then that what had grown between Mukoon Singh and me was a part of that time we had had together in the barracks, in Trinidad. India would be a different story: in India I would be just a kahaar, and he would be a thakur. A Rajput. Would he understand and protect me in India? Would he even see the problem? And would people there let us be happy? Then I remembered I had to give him an answer. So I closed my eyes and pressed my palms together in front of my face, though my heart was breaking. Namaste. A respectful refusal. (Mohan 142)

Sunnariya, Mukoon Singh’s daughter, recognized for her beauty and manners, experienced harassment from the overseer at the Esperanza estate. Consequently, her father arranged marriage with Janaki Devi’s elder son because according to him a husband will protect her from such mishappenings and take care of all her needs, which paradoxically means a woman is safest with a man, and unsafe too with a man. Mary A. Kassian in her book, *The Feminist Gospel: The Movement to Unite Feminism with the Church* writes:

...the fear of rape would cause a woman to associate herself with a male who would offer protection from other males. This according to Brownmiller, was the cause and origin of marriage and of all the societal structures of domination. (Kassian 46)

The groom easily agreed, influenced by Sunnariya’s exceptional beauty and Mukoon Singh’s respected standing within the laborer community. As Deeda in the novel *Jahajin* explains to the narrator about Sunnariya’s marriage:

The boy was happy to be getting Sunnariya as a wife. Well, that was not exactly right. It looked to me as though what was really making him happy was the thought of having Mukoon Singh as a father-in-law. Sunnariya was just the bonus. (Mohan 137)

Another female laborer on the estate was Acchamma. She came to Trinidad because she was unhappy in her marriage and ran away from her husband. However, she felt she needed to marry again in Trinidad because she thought she couldn’t survive without a husband. She believed having a husband was important for her safety, security, and dependency. This belief was ingrained in her from a very young age due to societal norms in the Indian

subcontinent. Acchamma's experience highlights how marriage significantly influences the lives and opportunities of women. Deeda tells narrator about Acchamma:

She had run away from her husband in India, and found herself in Madras. Then when she reached Trinidad she got married again, because she said she didn't think she could manage by herself, without anyone at all. And she was not the only one. (Mohan 115)

Even in contemporary societies, women consistently face evaluation and recognition predominantly based on their physical attractiveness, perpetuating the notion that they are mere objects intended for public display. This objectification of women persists universally, transcending cultural, socio-economic, and contextual boundaries. Unfortunately, women frequently encounter derogation if they fail to conform to specific standards of physical beauty, as their allure is frequently regarded as their primary qualification. This restrictive mode of evaluation reflects an unfortunate aspect of the prevailing societal norms.

Post-marriage, a significant portion of women face instances of violence, exploitation, and emotionally unsatisfactory relationships. Society frequently indoctrinates these women to accept such treatment, justifying it by emphasizing the husband's role as the primary provider and familial authority figure. Consequently, these women are expected to tolerate injustices silently and demonstrate unwavering reverence and affection towards their husbands to be deemed as fulfilling their roles as good wives.

For centuries, women have harbored desires for autonomy, personal agency, and equality, yet societal structures, particularly in patriarchal contexts, constrained their ability to vocalize these aspirations. In the Indian cultural milieu, where traditional gender norms prevailed, women found themselves largely dependent on male family members, thereby stifling their capacity for self-expression. Moreover, prevalent societal attitudes and limited access to education further marginalized Indian women, leaving them largely unaware of their entitlements and rights. Enmeshed in prescribed roles as dutiful wives and doting mothers, they internalized these expectations, relegating their aspirations to the private sphere. However, an undercurrent of discontent brewed within them, prompting some to seek refuge in places like Trinidad, where the promise of freedom, economic autonomy, equality, and independence beckoned as a beacon of hope. Farzana Gounder observes the emergence of a distinct cultural phenomenon characterized by a departure from entrenched patriarchal ideologies and conventional marital roles. This shift is particularly notable in contexts devoid of the societal frameworks prevalent in India, where individuals were constrained by caste, class, and entrenched patriarchal norms. Farzana Gounder in *Restoring Indenture: The First Fiji Hindi Speakers Narrate* writes:

They discarded customs, including caste hierarchy and habits, not suitable for the plantation environment, and replaced them with another set of norms and values more attuned to the new environment. Jasodarecollects in the excerpt

below, that the norm in India of a wife preparing food, and serving her husband only after he has bathed was inappropriate for the plantation environment. On this first day, in acknowledgement of their changed environment, and the need to adapt, her husband, who has not had a shower, cooks the food, and serves Jasoda. (Gounder 8)

The novel *Jahajin* illustrates numerous instances of women leaving their marriages behind due to intolerable injustice, subjugation, and dominance and migrated to other country as indentured laborer. But unfortunately, the situation has not improved, and even in Trinidad, these women continue to face similar mistreatment after marriage and considered as inferiors and she is taught that her existence is incomplete without a man, emphasizing her dependence on a father, brother, husband, and eventually a son. In Indian culture, a husband is regarded as akin to a god for his wife, demanding her submission. The Indian woman is culturally oriented towards venerating her husband to an extent of almost worshipping her husband. The narrator recounts her Nana's life story, where initially, he sought a wife primarily for domestic tasks, considering only cooking and cleaning as expected roles for females. Fortunately, the marriage evolved into a deep connection of souls. Peggy Mohan writes, "Nana needed to find a wife, mainly to do the cooking and help look after his brothers and his sister" (Mohan 152).

Women are much stronger than men, they face a lot, they also face judgment and are made to feel guilty for excelling in their careers. If they surpass their husbands, particularly in terms of finances, they are labeled as overly ambitious and disrespectful wives. This phenomenon is rooted in social conditioning, reflecting a societal discomfort with witnessing women outperforming men. Mohan writes, "Don't you know that women are always feeling guilty about doing better than their men?" (Mohan 82). The indentured laborers encountered numerous challenges, being overloaded with tasks in the sugarcane fields without any provision for holidays until the work was completed. When Mukoon Singh experienced seizures while working, he hesitated to take a leave because he knew that doing so would result in a deduction of pay. This, in turn, would lead to accumulating debt, which he could not afford and this was a way how sugarcane planters kept on increasing the tenure of the stay agreement as indentured laborers. The laborers experienced a spectrum of torment and harassment on a daily basis, devoid of access to fundamental provisions. Their treatment egregiously disregarded human rights, reducing them to a state devoid of humane recognition. Particularly egregious was the intensified suffering endured by female laborers within this context. Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed mentions the severe sufferings and torment towards women in their book, *Inside Indian Indenture: A South-African Story, 1860-1914*. They write:

Mungi had arrived with her husband, Halhori, from Shahabad in July 1881. They were young, aged 25 and 24 respectively. She was in an advanced stage of pregnancy and, according to Dr. Lindsay Bonnar, gave birth 'instrumentally' to a

stillborn child in Durban on 12 August. The following day, still weak and incapacitated, she was forced to go by rail to Isipingo with a group of Indians under the supervision of Reynolds Bros.' agent FWB Lindi. From Isipingo, they had to walk 40 miles to Umzinto on a 'cold and rainy day' because 'there was no wagon or means of shelter, the want of which was doubtless the cause of the poor young woman's untimely death... When the woman complained of poor health no attempt was made to obtain any sort of accommodation for her... No carriage was provided for her either.' (Desai & Wahed 130)

Numerous instances of inhumane and unjust treatment towards the laborers occurred, indicating a profound disregard for their lives and an absence of regard for their welfare. The perpetrators exhibited unbounded cruelty, exemplifying a systemic devaluation of the laborers' humanity. Female laborers experienced pronounced marginalization and oppression, enduring humiliation, systemic inequality, and social ostracization both in India and during transit to Trinidad. These circumstances rendered their plight pitiable, compounded by the systemic suppression of their voices. Furthermore, they faced the threat of lethal reprisals if they dared to vocalize their grievances, underscoring a pervasive culture of fear and coercion. Nearly every female laborer confronted instances of violence, including sexual assault and even rape, with a significant portion succumbing to these circumstances, resulting in fatalities. Desai and Wahed in their book *Inside Indian Indenture: A South-African Story, 1860-1914* writes:

One woman, Reheman, was 'discovered' by Magistrate Lucas while visiting the Central Hospital in Alexandra on 21 January 1881. She was suffering from the effects of an assault by Sirdar Moonsawmy 10 months previously. Confined to bed and unable to work, she still bore marks on her chest and back caused by rows of nails on a hook. (Desai & Wahed 131)

Female laborers encountered pervasive sexual and physical violence within their workplace milieu, yet were often bereft of viable recourse. Cohabiting within shared living quarters, laborers collectively endured the vicissitudes of their circumstances. Coming from diverse regions of India and living together in Trinidad the laborers viewed each other as well-wishers, transcending caste and religion. Disregarding the strict caste system from their homeland, they intermarried, fostering a culture of free unions and cultural amalgamation by inter-caste and inter-religion marriages. In reality, there existed no formal religion or caste system among them; rather, they were a collective of indentured laborers whose shared experience fostered a profound sense of interconnectedness and unity.

## **Conclusion**

Contrary to the common perception that men are at the center, the reality is the opposite – women are at the forefront, learning, evolving, and growing stronger. Despite numerous challenges, women are excelling in various domains. They are asserting their



rights, establishing their individuality, and shaping their identity. Deeda and other indentured women exhibited resilience in the face of adversity, refraining from succumbing to their challenges but rather comprehending and adapting to their circumstances. Despite having the option to return to India with her partner Mukoon Singh, Deeda opted to remain in Trinidad as a laborer, avoiding the perceived injustices, caste divisions, biases, and loveless marriages she anticipated encountering in her homeland. This decision empowered her to assert control over her own life, asserting her agency in decision-making processes. Central to a woman's aspiration is the pursuit of autonomy, enabling her to exercise independent decision-making devoid of external influence. In Trinidad, the social identities of laborers undergo a transformation, devoid of the hierarchical distinctions associated with caste systems. Here, indentured laborers coexist on an equal footing, sharing communal spaces, forming bonds, and engaging in social activities without the imposition of caste restrictions. It is imperative to acknowledge that this shift is driven by the agency of individuals rather than being solely dictated by geographical location; these are the same individuals who exhibited different behaviors and lived distinctively in both India and Trinidad. Women laborers prefer Trinidad over India for its liberty, freedom, and space. Canadian missionaries significantly influence the lives of these laborers, especially women, by promoting education, health infrastructure, equality, and a caste-free society. A woman's life is heavily influenced by marriage, if oppression persists from men and patriarchal structures, women may hesitate to marry, disrupting the overall balance. It's crucial to recognize the equal importance of both men and women in relationships and society to maintain equilibrium. The key to addressing this injustice lies in adopting a humanitarian approach towards females and wives, acknowledging their human rights and respecting their lives with dignity rather than subjecting them to oppression, humiliation, and disrespect within marriages. ■

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# Portraits of Masculinity in Heidi Cullinan's *Carry the Ocean*

**Chisti Das**

**Soumya Sangita Sahoo**

Feminist discourses have challenged men to ascribe to a newer masculinity that is different from the traditional patriarchal one. Just as women are redefining their identities, reclaiming theirs, similarly there is an urgency for men to redefine their roles. Men caught up within the patriarchal ideals of portraying the perfect man, and the modern metrosexual, are having a tough time with assertion of identity. Diverse interpretations of masculinity occur due to differences in what masculinity means to different people. Hegemonic masculinity affirms the superior positioning of men endowing them with privilege and power to control and dominate those who were not their equivalent in physical strength and status. Men who failed to meet these demands for hyper-masculine behaviour were identified as subordinate masculinities. These men who are most likely to face discrimination, mistreatment, abuse and social exclusion are those who identify as homosexual, disabled or deliberately defy gender norms. There also exists men who serve as the finest models of healthy masculinity, demonstrating the rules of social adaptability and are the most inclusive members of society. This article analyses the various manifestations of masculinity that occur in Heidi Cullinan's 2015 novel *Carry the Ocean*. The novel deals with three types of masculinities – Hegemonic, Subordinate and Healthy. The study reveals that preferences, choices, and abilities are as diverse as bodies. Thus, for a more open and egalitarian society, it is crucial to promote healthy masculinity.

**Keywords :** masculinity, hegemonic, subordinate, healthy.

## INTRODUCTION

Popular discourses around us play a pivotal role in fostering images of identity for us. Representation is often misconstrued for being the carrier of norms and tradition. Societal and cultural platforms such as customs, festivals and cinemas often influence the way gender should perform and display its role. Gender roles are assigned to men and women based on the perceived disparity between them. Gender roles are social constructs that are laid down

for fostering difference in roles and status. People are under tremendous pressure to follow these paradigms, not just from their families and communities, but also from other sources. Many had long held the opinion that since men have always held positions of power, they are not victims of patriarchy or gender norms. Popular ideas associate masculinity to traits such as dominance, power, strength, aggression, and independence. The prevalent belief in society ignores male victimization of any kind. However, males have been subjects of gender norms, victims of patriarchy, and often subjected to societal expectations stemming from male performativity.

There are various manifestations of masculinities in society. It's expected of men to act a certain way, and it's considered inappropriate to act otherwise. Gender is stressed more by the term "masculinity" than by biological sex. In addition to examining the numerous gender roles that society assigns and the definitions of masculinities, it addresses "the collective privileges from which men as a group benefit as well as the disadvantages that certain groups of men face"<sup>1</sup>. There are numerous movements and ideologies that support and defend women's rights, but unfortunately, issues pertaining to men are yet to get widespread attention. Power structures and masculinities are related and it does not limit to men exercising these power on women, but also on men who do not fit the yardstick of masculinity. Even women pick men who conform to the socially prescribed ideals of masculinity—muscular appearance, loud voice, assertiveness, and emotional and physical strength.

Men are still expected to provide for their families. "One is not born, but rather, becomes a woman," argues Simon de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (1993, 283), addressing the idea that womanhood is something that a woman achieves through "societal and physiological conditioning" (Amudhan, 2013). In reality, a person likewise becomes a man through the same process as women do. Though not born, one unquestionably develops into a man. Men who fall into certain categories—such as men with disabilities or gay men—are placed in the category of Others if they fail to become the image of "Idle Men". These individuals are compared to other males who are viewed as Idle or Alpha by the society, leading to their subjugation.

Gender is not passively scripted on the body, and neither is it determined by nature, language, the symbolic, or the overwhelming history of patriarchy. Gender is what is put on, invariably, under constraint, daily and incessantly, with anxiety and pleasure. (Judith Butler, 1988)

Judith Butler rightly puts it up in the above lines that gender is not something which can be enforced on individuals, rather it should be accepted by persons with an open heart and with "happiness and anxiety" (Butler, 531). The 1993 book, *The Myth of Male Power: Why Men are the Disposable Sex*, by male rights campaigner Warren Farrell explores how male strength has been exaggerated in a number of ways and how masculine disadvantages are rarely addressed. "A woman in a man's world may be considered as being progressive. But a man in a woman's world is pathetic" (2006, 50), says Amritlal in Chapter 4 of Mahesh Dattani's

*Dance Like a Man*(2006), which gives a clear understanding of the realities of gender issues and prejudice against men. When people assign traits like masculinity and femininity, it frequently leaves them perplexed as to why they are expected to act in particular ways. David Mallard, member of Melbourne Men’s Group, said in an interview that with an increasing number of women speaking up for themselves and their rights, “there is an increase in the number of men feeling confused. They’re not quite sure what they are supposed to be or how they are supposed to act”. When it comes to masculinity, men who defy gender norms are viewed as corrupted because they are unable to live up to societal expectations and are, therefore, viewed as monsters who do not comply to society’s traditional standards.

Heidi Cullinan is a book author and campaigner for LGBT rights. She has written about the challenges LGBTQ+ community encounters and how society views them. Emmet Washington, a bright autistic boy who double majors in math and computer science, and Jeremy Samson, a recent high school graduate suffering from clinical depression, are the main characters of his novel *Carry the Ocean* (2015). The negative impression that society has of men with disabilities and gays has made their lives tough for both of them. Not only do they have health issues, but they also identify as LGBT. Through the difficult lives of Jeremy and Emmet, the author guides the audience through their triumphs over obstacles. Heidi skilfully illustrates how men can be both their own victims and the perpetrators of various forms of masculinity in her book. In *Carry the Ocean*(2015), Heidi portrays a variety of masculine archetypes.

#### **LITERATURE REVIEW:**

In his book *Masculinities*(2005), R.W. Connell defines hegemonic masculinity as “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (Connell, 2005, P-77). Most people believe that women are the only ones affected by hegemonic masculinity, but male members of society are also under pressure to conform to gender norms in order to avoid unfavourable outcomes. As it marginalises men who don’t conform to the gender norms that are expected of men in society, hegemonic masculinity is just as harmful for men as it is for women.

In *Carry the Ocean* (2015), Jeremy’s father represented hegemonic masculinity. He never tried to understand his son’s condition, rather he, along with his wife, tried to impose gender norms on him. Jeremy was suffering from clinical depression and his father had a hard time to digest the fact that his son could be having a disability. He was being pressured by his father to change into someone he wasn’t. His goal was to turn Jeremy into the ‘Normal’ guy that people in their social circle believes him to be—an idle man. Not only was Jeremy disabled, but he was also queer, and Mr. Samson became enraged at the thought of his son becoming anything but an idle man. When Jeremy informed his parents at a family therapy session that he was moving out of the house to live with Emmet in a flat,

Mr Samson's face turned red with rage, and he began to yell at Emmet's mother when she asked him to pay attention to Dr. Howard North, Jeremy's doctor. When Dr. North attempts to explain to Mr. Samson that his adult son was the one making decisions regarding his own health, under his advice, Mr. Samson reacted in the typical toxic masculine way, asking, "So you expect us to pay for whatever he decides is all right?... To pay to let him shack up with this kid he thinks he's dating?"(Cullinan, 194). He was disgusted with his son's preference and mental health condition and tried his best, along with his wife, to control his son's actions. Through Mr. Samson's character, the portrait of hegemonic masculinity is created in the novel, *Carry the Ocean*(2015).

Men who do not conform to the idea of hegemonic masculinity are referred to as subordinate masculinities and are viewed as inferiors in the gender hierarchy. Men who identify as gay or disabled are prime instances of subordinate masculinity. A binary framework that incorporates power relations is what leads to gender division. Men and women are neatly divided into two categories by the stereotyped repetition of actions and language. Judith Butler writes about the binary frame, in which gender is assumed to signify an essential self, in *Undoing Gender* that,

a restrictive discourse on gender that insists on the binary of man and woman as the exclusive way to understand the gender field, performs a regulatory operation of power that naturalizes the hegemonic instance and forecloses the thinkability of its disruption(43).

Historical accounts reveal that societies have always viewed self-sufficient, physically fit, and charismatic men as the embodiment of the perfect man. Throughout their lives, males who challenge societal norms face immense physical and psychological challenges as they are perceived as individuals who fall short of society's ideal standards. Bell Hooks in her 2004 book *The Will To Change* writes,

Many men in our society have no status, no privilege; they receive no freely given compensation, no perks with capitalist patriarchy... These men suffer... They suffer in a society that does not want men to change, that does not want to reconstruct masculinity so that the basis for the social formation of male identity is not rooted in an ethic of domination... Broken emotional bonds... the traumas of emotional neglect and abandonment that so many males have experienced... have damaged and wounded the spirits of men. Many men are unable to speak their suffering.(Hooks, 138-139).

Due to their refusal to conform and consequent lack of masculine advantages, subordinated men—such as homosexual men, disabled men, or members of minority groups—are stigmatised as inferiors and end up becoming victims of toxic masculinity and even are cast out of the mainstream. In *Carry the Ocean*(2015), subordinate masculinity is presented through the characters of Emmet and Jeremy.

In *Carry the Ocean* (2015), Cullinan walks us through Jeremy and Emmet's trying life, where their disabilities and preferences provide numerous obstacles. The fact that Jeremy experiences clinical depression and anxiety is not understood by his family. In order to prevent the family from feeling ashamed because of Jeremy, his mother, Mrs. Gabrielle Samson, makes every effort to have him behave normally in front of her peer group. When he had the greatest need of his family to support him, he received criticism for acting abnormally and being weak. Additionally, Jeremy's family set loose all sorts of chaos when they discovered he was gay and in love with another gay man with a disability named Emmet. Along with his relationship with another incomplete man, they were disgusted with their own son. Men are expected by society to be strong, both physically and mentally, so that nothing can harm them or give the impression that they are weak. In order to preserve the family name, these subservient men are under constant pressure from their parents to behave properly, particularly in front of their social circle. They are made to act normal in order to fit in with the sons of friends and family and are compared to them. Jeremy's parents are among those who think that due to the prescribed gender roles, men cannot experience depression. Jeremy suffers in silence, as a result, thinking that no one can relate to him, until he meets Emmet. She was upset that she could not display a son of such calibre in front of the public, as she had hoped her boy would behave like a man would—a "bright, smiling, charming son" (*Carry The Ocean*, 17). Her son's condition and suffering didn't matter as much to her as maintaining her reputation. It is evident that not only does Jeremy's family want him to be sufficiently manly in the eyes of society, but he also makes a concerted effort to blend in so as to avoid disappointing them. He was on the verge of suicide due to the pressure from his own family to be the idle son and their disregard for his health. Jeremy says, "No wonder I feel alienated. They're the ones telling me I'm not like everyone else. It doesn't matter how normal I am, somebody's ready to tell me I'm different" (Cullinan, 2015, 257), describing how his disability and the way society treated him made him feel like an outcast.

Emmet, who has autism spectrum disorder, has the support of his family but is seen as ridicule by other people around him. A study claims that because men's brains differ from women's, autism is more common among men. Many males suffer from Autism Spectrum Disorder, which causes them to interact with people differently. Due to the educational institutions typically not wanting to get themselves into the trouble of admitting these individuals, it is difficult for them to get employment or receive a quality education in the first place. These males are marginalised and viewed as nothing in society. People discriminate against them, not their illness. It is not their condition that discriminates against them, but the people. Emmet in *Carry The Ocean* (2015) says, "When people find out I have autism, they don't think I should be allowed to be in love" (Cullinan, 6). A man's limitations and dependence stemming from his condition or sexual preferences make people believe that he is undeserving of love or a relationship. Employers do not want to recruit men with disabilities, which puts pressure on these men who are viewed as inferiors due to the expectation that males should provide for their families. Although it is uncommon, Emmet

was fortunate to land a job where his abilities are valued and his pay is paid equally to others' without any forms of prejudice. Due to the lack of career opportunities for persons with disabilities, most employers only hire them out of compassion and pay them pitiful wages, therefore his pals are fighting to make ends meet. Although Subordinated Men fight to alter public perceptions of them, the failure they witness in others' eyes due to their failure to uphold male ideals causes them to doubt their own masculinity and develop a poor body image. They start to believe the things that those around them say and how they feel. Their negative self perception severely undermines their self-esteem.

Emmet was insulted by Jeremy's family when they first caught Jeremy and Emmet kissing. Jeremy's family insults Emmet for falling in love with their son since they are unable to accept Jeremy's sexual orientation and his relationship with a disabled man. Upon witnessing Emmet and Jeremy share the kiss, Mrs. Samson attempted to create the impression that Emmet had pushed himself on Jeremy. She went so far as to exert pressure on Jeremy to acknowledge that Emmet had attempted to use him and that he wasn't gay. Jeremy's mother even denied to accept that her son was gay when she insults Emmet's mother by saying, "He's not gay. I didn't realize your son was or that he was so poorly controlled"(Cullinan, 2015, 105). Emmet's mother, who has always been his staunchest ally, finds it a bit hard to accept her son's homosexuality. Jeremy and Emmet are two examples of these subordinated males who are viewed with disdain for manhood.

Emmet talks about how others view him differently after learning about his autism in *Carry the Ocean* (2015). They view him as a worthless, mentally deranged man who, if allowed to roam free, may pose a serious threat to society. It is restrictive and possibly even damaging to perpetuate stereotypes that men should be emotionally detached, physically powerful, and the main breadwinners in their families. Strong evidence also suggests that men and boys are regularly suffering from the pressure to maintain a certain "masculine," muscular body image. Emmet continues by saying that rather than condemning him based only on his illness, people do not take the time to recognise or at least acknowledge other facets of him that merit their consideration. Emmet says, "A lot of things about autism are unfair, but the worst is people on the mean have a double standard about autistic people's behaviour"(Cullinan, 2015, 108). Though the patriarchy has granted men the upper hand in society, it has also fostered discrimination against members of its own kind who do not fit the stereotypical male gender roles. After battling to embrace his identity and physicality, Emmet in *Carry the Ocean* (2015) eventually finds the strength to acknowledge that he is a normal man who can provide unconditional love to others and that other men who are considered subordinated can too. He says, "I am normal. I belong. I have a friend who can kick ass from a wheelchair. I love independently and get good grades. I'm an excellent lover"(Cullinan, 2015, 350). There is much more to masculinity than the labels that the patriarchal culture has attached to it. However, there is still a long way to go before people realise that, provided their actions and ideas contribute to society, a person who does not fit the predetermined roles can also be considered an ideal man.



In the novel, *Carry the Ocean*(2015), Cullinan also draws a picture of what Healthy Masculinity looks like through the character of Emmet's father, Mr. Doug Washington. The concept of healthy masculinity holds that males can express their feelings without feeling less of a man. Men falling under this category are far away from toxic practices of masculinity. The ones who have triumphed over social pressures and preconceptions that label particular beliefs and feelings as "feminine" or "masculine" are men who exhibit positive masculinity because they refuse to allow gender standards to control who they are or how they live, they think men can be both powerful and competitive and at the same time be sympathetic, authentically feel emotions, and take care of their mental health. These category of men believe in supporting each other, irrespective of the choices people make. Regardless of gender, these men support the acceptance of a broad spectrum of positive feelings and moral principles. When Emmet's mother and his aunt, Althea, were fighting over Emmet's relationship with Jeremy, it was Emmet's father who fought against them for his son and tried to make him feel better by talking him to have ice-cream and watch Emmet's favourite movie, *The Blue Brothers*, together. Emmet's father was his biggest supporter who fought the world for his son's sake. Emmet says, "I loved my dad before that week, but I loved him more after because he kept defending me to Mom and Althea. When I complained they weren't treating me fairly, he said he agreed with me"(Cullinan, 120). Even when Emmet decided to move out of the house and start living with Jeremy independently, it was Mr. Washington who encouraged him to give it a try. When Emmet's mother told Dr. North about her doubts regarding her son's understanding of dating and living independently, Mr. Washington showed confidence in his son. He said,

"Emmet is a lot better put together than most nineteen-year-olds I know. I understand Mari's reservations, but I know my boy. If he's made up his mind about this, it's already as good as done. I'd rather he didn't move in alone, and I know it's going to be tough for him to room with anyone. The only person I can possibly see working in that scenario is Jeremy"(Cullinan, 2015, 183).

Neither his wife nor his son were ever subjected to Mr. Washington's dominance. He acted in the most refined, reasonable way possible. He encouraged his son to make all of his own decisions. Despite their conflicts, he never treated his wife disrespectfully, and he also never allowed Emmet to treat Mrs. Washington with disrespect when he was upset. When things at home became too chaotic due to Emmet's choice to move out, he attempted to bring things back into equilibrium. His father had faith in Emmet, even when others did not, that he could survive and lead an independent life. The epitome of what it means to be a man is Emmet's father. No macho ego, no use of masculine dominance, no male privilege—just a man who respects and supports everyone, regardless of their gender or sexual orientation, and who isn't afraid to express his feelings and opinions.

## **METHODS/APPROACH**

The present article employs the qualitative research approach of textual analysis to comprehend the issues mentioned. A textual analysis of the text Heidi Cullinan's *Carry the*

*Ocean*(2015) has been carried out. The analysis has been done on three levels : Portraits of Hegemonic Masculinity, Sub-ordinate Masculinity and Healthy Masculinity as presented by Cullinan through the various male characters in the novel. ways in which different female characters in the text respond to the three different forms of masculinities that are covered in the book have also been analysed. This paper makes an attempt to identify the issues with how our culture views and interprets different forms of masculinity and explains why it is critical to rethink how we view gender norms and men’s performativity in society.

## **RESULTS/DISCUSSION**

Following the analysis, it was uncovered that since the beginning of time, masculinity has been linked to dominance, strength, and power; nonetheless, some men are viewed as weak and a disgrace to the masculine. The prevalence of hegemonic masculinity justifies men’s superiority over the other subordinate genders, even the males who defy gender norms fall under the category of subordinate masculinity. They are always being told that they are more of a burden and less of a man because of a serious lack of something. Men who don’t behave in a manly manner are ignored and treated unfairly since they are perceived as flawed individuals who should face discrimination and punishment. They are often targets of mockery since they do not conform to the ideal of the masculine standard. These men experienced exclusion because of social norms and restrictive ideas about what constitutes a “real man.”It is reasonable to deduce from the examination of the male characters in *Carry the Ocean* (2015) that society needs more men with the kind of masculinity that Mr. Doug Washington embodies—one who is welcoming to all people regardless of their circumstances or choices, which is necessary to build a society that is more inclusive.

## **CONCLUSION**

In Heidi Cullinan’s *Carry the Ocean*(2015), one may observe many facets of masculinity and how they impact both men and the societal construct as a whole. The analysis shows that just as bodies vary, so do preferences, choices, and abilities. Simply put, more tolerance and comprehension of variety are needed from people. All a man has to do is decide whether he wants to be on the toxic side of things or embrace healthy masculinity and improve the lives of people around him. The way we perceive people and their circumstances shouldn’t be influenced by gender standards and prejudices.

## **FUTURE SCOPE**

Writing has always been the voice of the voiceless, but unfortunately, it still doesn’t give much weight to the words of the oppressed men. Many studies on women’s subordination have been conducted, but it is necessary to investigate men’s subjugation as well. There is definitely more scope of research in the way men are represented on various platforms, be it in popular culture, or classical and modern literature, or comics, cartoons, anime or in digital platforms, and how this representation is affecting those who are considered as subordinates, especially the subordinated men. ■

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# A Critical Analysis of Dalit Culture and Female Torture in the Works of Meena Kandasamy

Ananya Mohakud

A young and rebellious Indian woman poet, Meena Kandasamy, in her collection of poems entitled “Ms. Militancy” focuses on caste oppression and women issues. Her poems emphasise on the psychological pressure on women and on the women empowerment. She presents how the Dalits are tortured in India. They are treated a low caste men in the society. She raises voice for freedom to the women. Rather as a confessional poet, she exposes her private life in the poems like “Strip Random Men”, “A Cunning Stunt”, “Backstreet Girl” and “Traitor,” etc.

**Keyword:-** Women empowerment, Dalit issue, caste oppression, female subjugation, male chauvinism, sexuality, violence and gender oppression.

One of the Champions of Dalit literature, Meena kandasamy of India writes not only for Dalits but for the suppressed women of the world. In an interview with Sampsonia Way Magazine, Meena said “My poetry is naked, my poetry is in tears, my poetry screams in anger, my poetry writhes in pain, my poetry smells of blood, my poetry salutes sacrifice, my poetry speaks like my people, my poetry speaks for my people”. (<https://www.britishcouncil.de/en/interview-meena-kandasamy>. web)

As a writer, Meena’s focus is mainly on caste annihilation, feminism and linguistic identity. Kandasamy’s *Mascara* and *My lover speaks of Rape*, won her the first prize in all India Poetry competition. Her poems like ‘Random Access Man’, ‘A cunning stunt’, ‘Ms Militancy’, ‘Backstreet girl’, ‘Eating dirt’, ‘Moon-gazers’, ‘Traitor’ raise voice against male chauvinism.

Traditional thought of Shakespeare “frailty thy name is woman” is challenged in the contemporary world by the feminists. They are no more a puppet in the hands of a male person. Feminist activists take revolutionized step to protest male chauvinism. Govt. and law support them. But the mentality of man is not changed. Both male and female writers raise voice against the sick social system and seek for equal rights as man enjoys.”

Kandasamy protests against subjugation to females and raises voice against prevalent injustices against them in the society. Her poems like “Aggression”, “Moon gazer”, etc. say

about the societal torture on Dalits and suffering women, who wail and meet tragic end. Being dissatisfied, he calls for an explosion, which can mitigate trouble from the society.

“The Orders Were to Rape You: Tigresses in the Tamil Eelam Struggle” is a book by Kandasamy about the violence, particularly sexual violence, faced by the female fighters of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam after the end of the Sri Lankan Civil War. She narrates the suffering faced by first-person accounts by women who moved abroad to Malaysia and Indonesia after the end of the Sri Lankan Civil war.

Kandaswamy writes in the Preface of “Ms Militancy”:

“You are the repressed Ram from whom I run away repeatedly. You are Indra busy causing bloodshed. You are Brahma fucking up my fates. You are Manu robbing me of my right to live and learn and You are Sage Gautama turning your wife to stone. You are Adi Sankara driving me to death. You are all the men for whom I would never moan, never mourn. You are the conscience of this Hindu society.”..... I actually fight to get back to myself. I do not write into patriarchy. My Maariamma bays for blood. My Kali kills. My Draupadi strips. My Sita climbs on to a stranger’s lap. All my women militate. They brave bombs, they belittle kings. They take on the sun, they take after me.” Her revolutionized thought can cause a revolution for the suppressed women.

The theme of Male patriarchy is reflected in her poem, “A Cunning stunt”, which is included in her book, ‘Ms Militancy’. As a confessional poetess, she expresses her feeling like Sylvia Plath and Kamala Das. In this poem, the sexual partner comes for sexual enjoyment. The sexual act seems to be mechanical. She cannot enjoy such sexual act as it is enjoyed brutally by her partner. It is onesided love. He arrived and forced her to open her thighs for sex. He keeps his face in her vagina to lick, gets happy in having sexual intercourse. Her cunt becomes an “abode, home, lair, nest, stable” for him. He opens her legs wide and pushes his genital hard. She writes:

and he opens my legs he wider  
and shores more and phones  
harder and I am torn apart  
to contain the meanings of  
family, race..... (A Cunning stunt, page 23-27)

The forcible sexual act results in child birth, family and race. She writes that the act is painful and she suffers a lot and even cannot walk after having the cruel sex. She is weak and gets frightened due to such forcible and violent sex. Love is no more a sentimental or emotional thought. It has been mechanical. There is congenial relationship, but it is for the temporary amusement.

In the anthology, “Ms. Militancy” the *Back-Street Girl* is a revolutionary lady. She revolts against society’s abhorrence towards girls. Meena’s women need not chain themselves by the rules anymore. They can act according to their whims and fancies. They need freedom

and need not confine themselves within the iron bars of culture and tradition. They want to have their identity and liberty to play roles such as ‘sluts, gluttons, bitches, witches and shrews’. No one can restrict them. They are independent enough to choose men as their husbands and can “strip random men” (L. 08). The poem liberates women from their subjugation. It highlights them as “we (women) are not the ones you can sentence for life” (L. 14). They do not want the restriction of the society.

She presents how such women are neglected in the society. The male persons, those who abuse them sexually, cannot accept the females as their wives. Fate closes all doors of the society for such ladies. They lose their identity, and are sent into darkness, where they grope for their living. Society debar them to live a life of freedom and they cannot come out of such hellish world. She refers all the males as friends. But such males plot to send them into rotten atmosphere, where others name them as unchaste.

Poetess Kandasamy expresses her grievance on the life of an aged woman. When she was young and beautiful and attractive, the man loves her, but when she gets old, he leaves her. In her poem, “Dead women walking” Kandasamy writes that the lady speaker ruminates her past life, which was sparkling and beautiful. Her glowing youth was used by her passionate husband. When wrinkles came on her body and her beauty decreased, then her husband left her and chose a young one. Since then her life has become mournful and melancholic. She writes:

“i am a dead woman walking asylum corridors  
with faltering of steps, with felted flying hair  
with hallowed cheeks.....”(L1-3)

The ‘hallowed cheeks’ no doubt refers to her old age and she has become mentally weak due to harassment. Hence, she suffers in an asylum, where she laments over her woeful life. Poetess writes: “I wept in vain, i wailed, i walked on my head, i went to god.” (L.20)

This pitiful life has driven her from the social connection and she has become an ascetic and prays god to cross the river of life. Her family members cannot accept her and have left her in such a place of “living dead,” the asylum.

Kandasamy’s another poem, “Eating dirt”, which is included in “Ms. Militancy (Navayana). It expresses about the harrowing condition of poor women. All the dreams of the women get shattered and she is pressed and squeezed under the pressure of work. Even she cannot take care of her beloved child. All her hopes and aspirations are shattered under the “millstone” of life. She becomes helpless to encounter all the “conflicting situation of life, and everything turns into sand.

In the poem, ‘Random Access Man’ she says about a lady, who is tired of waiting for her husband to come to her. She chooses a random man to satisfy her sex as the sex need is not fulfilled by her husband. The poem concludes by giving the reader an insight into her perception of masculinity. Freedom of a lady is sought here. Her sex interest grows. The

denial of sex from her husband increases her sex interest. She becomes lusty and her breasts want sex fulfillment. Kandasamy writes:

“lust rolled on her breasts,  
lust rode her hips.” (L 8-9)

Again she writes how the lady learns sex from the man.

“By the time she left  
this stranger’s lap  
she had learnt  
all about love.  
First to last.” (L. 28-33)

The lady in the poem, “Traitor” is a widow. She is bold and courageous. Being fearless, she moves everywhere and willingly uses her sex with multiple partners. She enjoys sex relation with them. She uses her sex in abroad with her own will. She is untraditional. If man can have sex with multiple persons, then why can’t she. She uses her freedom and enjoys it anyway.

The poem “Mrs Sunshine”, which is included in the anthology “Ms. Militancy” tells about the revolutionary story of a married lady. When she cannot adjust with her husband, she leaves him silently. Her husband was harsh to him. He always tries to subjugate her and torture her. When she could not adjust, she left him for good.

Her separation haunts him seriously. He wants her back and searches everywhere. His “fiery temper” passes away. His health deteriorates and he wants to have reconciliation. But she is not agree and says that she may remember him for the sake of tradition only and not to adjust any more.

Kandasamy’s eponymous poem “Ms. Militancy” reveals about a lady, who seems to be in her menopause. She is sexually harassed and passes time like a dead body. Later on, she becomes a model of protest. The poem follows the epic tradition of Silapathikaram (Tamil).

According to Kandasamy a lady is a mother, who can nurture. She can also become an annihilator and can cause a huge cataclysm. A lady can be like Kannaki, the epic heroine, who devastated the Kingdom of Madurai by tearing off one of her breasts and throwing it at the public, who were there. The city of Madurai was destroyed.

In the poem her husband goes astray and brings a dancer lady for having extra-marital relationship. She keeps silence by giving him her ornaments. He continues his business, but to her ill luck, she gets her dead body after a week.

Though this displays the patriarchal dominance, the rage she shows at the death of her husband asserts her as a bold revolutionist. Queen-in-Exile, Sita “walked out” of her place from her husband Rama, when her chastity was questioned. Sita indirectly avenges her husband for his suspicion on her. Likewise, Meena wants women not to follow the rules

strictly, which are laid by the patriarchal society. They have to protest against the injustice. The lady in “Ms. Militancy” made a bomb of her left breast and blasted the city into ashes. Kandasamy shows the power of a chaste lady. She is no more a frail now. She is a lady of revolt and power. She presents modern lady as a symbol of purity and perfection. They can create peace and can annihilate the sin and sinners.

As a Dalit, Kandasamy’s poetry is also a powerful testimony of anti-caste feminist literature. She empowers Dalits through powerful words and language. According to her a pen in woman’s hand can smash patriarchy, and it can give her power to educate, agitate and militate.

“She was an outcast who had all the marks of a fiery orator who would someday run for parliament, so, a nail was driven into her head on the instructions of her brahmin fiancé and her coffin was set adrift in a wailing river.” (L.10-13, Nailed)

*One Eyed*, the short poem highlights various atrocities committed against the Dalit women. Meena emphasizes the humanitarian attitude of inanimate things which human beings lack. The pot, the glass and the water quench the thirst of a person, while the teacher, the doctor, the school and the press are indifferent to the needs of Dalits.

The poem, “Moon gazers” is included in the anthology “Ms Militancy”. Kandasamy voices for a Dalit school girl, who is very often laughed at when she answers to the questions in a class room. She is treated as a low caste woman and is behaved with contempt.

The adolescent girl of fifteen, while learning Hindi poetry in a class room, gets insulted due to her under caste. The teacher says that the bird watches the moon during the night time. Then the girl asks what the bird does in new moon nights. At this the teacher gets annoyed and sarcastically offends her and says that the bird looks at her face on new moon nights. At this all the students look at her face laughingly. She is ashamed of by the attacking humour of the teacher and becomes a cipher in life.

Next she tells about her love life of twenty two. She gets engaged with her black lover and wants to forget everything in him. She cannot forget the insult of the society and watches the moon with eager like the bird and seeks solace from it. She sings “the saddest song of all time”, which refers that her life is full of insult as she is from a Dalit caste.

Along with desires, Kandasamy also advocates Dalit feminism and the atrocities of caste system. Meena presents the obstructions and impediments faced by lower-caste women. Very often they have to bear the problems as they stand at the intersection of two marginalized identities. In the poem, *Once My Silence Held You Spellbound*, she writes:

“You wouldn’t discuss me because my suffering was not theoretical enough.” (L. 1-2)

Here, one can locate the powerlessness of Dalit women as they are unacknowledged not



only because of their gender and caste, but also because of their inability to voice themselves in the upper-caste dominated world.

In the short poem “Untitled Love”, which is included in the anthology Ms. Militancy, Kandasamy expresses how a lover cheats a lady. He gets interested in sex fulfillment, which is his only goal in love. After having sex, he gets disinterested for marriage. His love seems to be fabricated and fake. Here Kandasamy points out how this man is selfish and aims at sex only. She names him as a hypocrite.

Kandasamy’s poem “Six hours of chastity” is included in “Ms Militancy”. It reveals the painful incident of a lady. Six men abuse her in a brothel without her consent. She is Nalayane. She goes to the brothel to restrict her husband, where she passes time. She tries to explain him about the bad consequence of his relation with the harlots. She remains there for her husband’s return. There she opposes, but becomes the victim of rape. Five men abuse her. Then Kandasamy writes:”After the fifth man every woman becomes a temple.” (L. 23)

Finally, the priest comes and enjoys her. The sexual abuse leads to divinity. At dawn she takes the husband to home, who was like a dead body, who fails even to walk properly.

According to Kandasamy the world is full of suffering. To be saved from suffering and from anarchy one has to follow her recommended eight commandments in the poem, “The noble eightfold path”. They are, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

In the poem, “*Things to remember while looting the burial ground*” she advises one to remain in groups and not to go alone; not to be afraid of police; not to permit animal slaughter, and to remain conscious about health and strength in a fair way. She possesses a strong feeling that a pen in woman’s hand can rattle up patriarchy. It can support her power to educate, agitate and organise. It can provide the power to change the society. ■

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# Beyond Borders: The Evolution of Indo-Caribbean Identity in Shani Mootoo's Literature

Srishti Yadav

Between 1838 and 1917, people from India migrated as indentured labourers to the Caribbean region, settling primarily in Guyana, where they now comprise the majority, and in Trinidad, where they are nearing a majority. Through characters predominantly descended from Indian indentured labourers in Trinidad, Shani Mootoo's work explores the pursuit of Indian descendants to a renewed Indo-Caribbean identity, encompassing considerations of race, class, culture, ethnicity, sexuality, and nationality. This analysis focuses on part of Mootoo's works: a compilation titled *Out on Main Street*(1993)<sup>1</sup>, and novels: *Cereus Blooms at Night*(1996)<sup>2</sup>, *He Drown She in the Sea*(2005)<sup>3</sup>, and *Valmiki's Daughter*(2008)<sup>4</sup>.

**Keywords:** Indo-Caribbean Literature, Indo-Caribbean Women Writers, Shani Mootoo, Gender, Culture, Sexuality, Homosexuality, Marginalisation, Class.

Born in Ireland to parents of Indo-Caribbean descent in 1958, Shani Mootoo spent her formative years in Trinidad before immigrating to Canada in 1977. The trajectory of her own life, as well as that of her parents, reflects not merely the experiences of a singular unconventional family, but mirrors the broader migratory patterns of tens of thousands of Indo-Caribbeans, primarily from India moving to Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago. This demographic, alongside individuals from various ethnic backgrounds in the Caribbean Region, then sought new opportunities in Britain and North America during the post-independence era, particularly after the 1960s. Mootoo's literature delves into the quest for a new Indo-Caribbean identity, exploring aspects such as race, class, culture, ethnicity, sexuality, and nationality through her characters. This theme of identity has also been addressed by earlier Indo-Caribbean authors like Samuel Selvon and the Naipauls (Seepersad, V.S., Shiva, and Neil Bissoondath), who depict the descendants of Indian indentured workers as unsettled—neither wholly Indian nor Caribbean, but rather fluid and ambiguous in their sense of self.

For example in Seepersad Naipaul's *The Adventures of Gurudeva and Other Stories* (1943)<sup>5</sup>, express concerns about preserving Hindu religion and cultural traditions in a Creole

Caribbean setting. Similarly, in Samuel Selvon's novel, *A Brighter Sun* (1952)<sup>6</sup>, which stands as the first comprehensive exploration of Indo-Caribbean life by an author from the community, the protagonist's struggle with identity is evident. He turns to his Afro-Caribbean neighbour, Joe, seeking validation of his Indo-Caribbean identity amidst his social awkwardness and uncertainty. Likewise, in V.S. Naipaul's renowned work *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961)<sup>7</sup>, the protagonist, Biswas, grapples with profound cultural and existential dilemmas, reflecting the complex interplay of competing cultural influences and spiritual uncertainties unique to Indo-Caribbean literature. Similarly, Shani Mootoo's literature too profoundly reflects the enduring complexity of the Indo-Caribbean identity, characterised by its fluidity and continuous evolution. While her characters wrestle with the same cultural ambiguities and identity dilemmas as their predecessors, Mootoo's protagonists exude a heightened level of self-assurance and social competence, signalling a notable progression in the portrayal of Indo-Caribbean experiences.

### *Out on Main Street*

In Shani Mootoo's *Out on Main Street*, the primary characters encompass both Indian families residing in Trinidad and Indo-Caribbeans like Mootoo herself, who have immigrated to Canada. One story within this collection, '*Sushila's Bhakti*', delves into the struggles of Sushila, a young Indo-Caribbean immigrant striving to establish herself as an artist in Canada. Sushila hails from a Brahmin-caste Hindu family in Trinidad, but her father's deviation from caste norms into the upper echelons of British-influenced colonial Trinidadian society has left his children without clear bearings regarding their religion or identity. Consequently, their grandmother ardently endeavours to educate Sushila and her siblings in Hindi and expose them to Hindu sacred texts. However, these efforts to preserve Indian religious and cultural continuity come belatedly, a century after the arrival of Indians in Trinidad. Therefore, the children confront formidable challenges amidst the religious and cultural upheaval of the mid-twentieth century, a time when Trinidad grapples with widespread "national cultural chaos,"<sup>8</sup>(Mootoo 59) as noted by Mootoo. This period, particularly in the aftermath of World War II, witnessed heightened agitation for political independence from Britain in British Caribbean colonies like Trinidad and Tobago. Social issues and ethnic tensions, previously suppressed under colonial rule, intensified, contributing to the prevailing "national cultural chaos"(Mootoo 59). While this phenomenon is evident across the region, its impact is particularly pronounced in Trinidad and Guyana, where ethnic dynamics differ from other English-speaking Caribbean territories with a more predominantly African population.

The seemingly tranquil facade of social order in Trinidad and Tobago during the colonial era may lead one to view the subsequent tensions between Indians and Africans in the Caribbean region as a perplexing phenomenon, perhaps instigated by cunning politicians in the 1950s and 1960s. However, the reality is that when Sushila's father steps outside the bounds of his Hindu caste around the 1960s, he is responding to longstanding ethnic tensions or rivalries between Indians and Africans that date back to colonial times, albeit in a milder

form. His marginalized status as a newly arrived indentured Indian, or ‘coolie’ (a term commonly used for indentured Indians) compels him to vie for positions with African or mixed-race Trinidadians who already occupy prestigious roles in the civil service, education, business, and the professions. It depicts the challenges of adaptation faced by thousands of Indo-Caribbean fathers like Sushila’s, caught in the whirlwind of social and cultural transformation. The change is further complicated by religious assimilation, as both Hindu and Muslim Indians embrace Christianity or attend Christian schools to assimilate into the dominant British-influenced Trinidadian culture. This dynamic is reflected in Sushila’s grandmother, who despite her devout Hindu beliefs, reads her grandchildren Christian prayers from a book given to her by a travelling Christian evangelist.

Although Indians and Africans together constitute a majority of the population of Trinidad and Tobago, the “national cultural chaos” described by Mootoo encompasses all ethnic groups, including Chinese, Portuguese, and Syrians forged from the diverse fragments of empire: various ethnic groups, differing religions, and mixed legacies of slavery and indenture.

Sushila’s identity is further complicated as she feels caught up in between two cultures - Indian cuisine often triggers physical discomfort on the other-hand her family rarely adheres to traditional Indian attire. Consequently, she finds herself unable to firmly establish her place—feeling neither fully rooted nor completely assimilated. This sentiment is captured in her reflection: “People like her were neither here nor there. Roots diluted, language lost. Religion held on to only by the thin straps of festivals.”<sup>9</sup>(Mootoo 63) Adding to her uncertainty, in Canada, Sushila is labelled simply as “Indian” implying she is an immigrant from India, solely based on her name and dark complexion.

Sexuality and gender too play significant roles in shaping the cultural, identity, and national awareness of Mootoo’s characters. For instance, Angenie, the protagonist of *Wake Up*, set in Trinidad, harbours resentment towards her father’s mistreatment of her mother and longs for the freedom and autonomy that men seem to enjoy. She even fantasizes about engaging in a romantic relationship with another woman to avoid feeling constrained by her female body. In another Trinidadian tale, *Lemon Scent*, Kamini and Anita embark on a clandestine lesbian affair, despite the very real danger posed by Kamini’s husband, who could potentially harm them if he discovers their secret. These narratives from *Out on Main Street* underscore the fluid and dynamic nature of the class, racial, cultural, ethnic, and national identity issues faced by Mootoo’s characters, both within Trinidad and abroad.

### ***Cereus Blooms at Night***

In the novel protagonist Lavinia finds herself entangled in a lesbian affair with Chandin’s wife, Sarah, leading to a dramatic escape to the Northern Shivering Wetlands. Through *Out on Main Street* and *Cereus Blooms at Night*, Mootoo unequivocally portrays the changing fluidity of Indo-Caribbean identity and underscores the significance of sexuality and gender issues in its formation. Mootoo’s female characters, in particular, grapple with

suppressed or distorted sexual desires due to the puritanical or traditional norms prevalent in their former colonial homeland. They struggle against the enduring legacy of post-colonial values such as race, colour, class, and patriarchal gender roles remnants of a feudalistic structure that once underpinned Caribbean slave society. The lesbian relationship between Sarah, an Indo-Caribbean woman, and Lavinia, a Euro-Canadian associated with the traditional white master/mistress class, is deemed too subversive for Lantanacamara, precipitating a crisis that ultimately necessitates their emigration.

### *He Drowns She in the Sea*

Like *Cereus Blooms at Night*, Shani Mootoo's second novel *He Drown She in the Sea* also unfolds on a fictional Caribbean island called Guanagaspar, reminiscent of Lantanacamara. Trinidad, historically under Spanish rule for three centuries before British colonization in 1797, shares a similar mixed population composition with Guanagaspar—comprising mainly descendants of African slaves and Indian indentured labourers, alongside smaller ethnic groups like Europeans, Chinese, Portuguese, Syrians, and French Creoles. Against the backdrop of post-colonial diversity, the latter half of the twentieth century witnessed significant emigration from Guanagaspar to Canada, particularly among individuals of Indian descent. However, while migration offers prospects of economic advancement and improved opportunities in North America, it also intensifies existing tensions related to race, class, and the notions of home and exile, all of which are deeply intertwined with identity formation in the Caribbean.

A compelling illustration of these dynamics emerges in the triangular relationship between the novel's central characters: Harry St. George, Shem Bihar, and his wife Rose. Despite their shared Indo-Caribbean heritage, Harry and Rose's friendship originates from childhood, when Harry's mother, Dolly, a woman from humble rural origins, worked as a servant for Rose's affluent family. However, societal divisions based on social and economic status lead Rose to marry Shem Bihar, a lawyer from a similarly privileged Indian background. As Shem ascends the ranks to become Guanagaspar's Attorney General, Harry inherits his stepfather's business before eventually immigrating to Canada, where he thrives as a landscape designer. Across continents, Harry and Rose rekindle their relationship, provoking intense jealousy in Shem. This jealousy reaches a climax when Shem attempts to drown Rose in the sea an event from which the novel takes its title. Yet, in a miraculous turn of events, Rose survives the ordeal and clandestinely flees with Harry on a boat, with hopes of reaching Honduras.

*He Drown She in the Sea* underscores a significant reality: despite contemporary social stratification, the vast majority of Indians initially entered the Caribbean region at a similar economic and social status as indentured plantation labourers in the mid-nineteenth century. Over time, they gradually integrated into the hierarchical structure of Caribbean (Creole) society. This hierarchy was headed by Europeans occupying the elite positions, followed by those of mixed African and European descent, then the more established,

culturally blended African community, and finally, the newly arrived Indians positioned at the lowest rung of the racial and social ladder. Given this historical process of identity formation spanning over 150 years, it is unsurprising that Indians have also assimilated into the longstanding Caribbean or Creole social hierarchy defined by divisions of race, class, and colour. Mootoo's novel skillfully explores and critiques this assimilation, highlighting the complexities of identity within the Caribbean context. As Mootoo's character speaks<sup>10</sup>:

“All of we [Indians] cross Black Water, [the ocean from India to the Caribbean] sometimes six and sometimes seven months side by side in the same stinking boat, to come here. Same-same. All of we. One set leaving something unsavoury behind, another set looking for a fresh start. How, child, how out of those beginnings some end up higher than others and some end up lower, tell me this. Well, God alone know. We come here same time, same boat, same handling. They [the Sanghas] not better than we, and that you should remember.”(Mootoo 75)

In addition to class, ethnicity stands out as a crucial component of Indo-Caribbean identity formation, as emphasized by Mootoo, who refers to it as the “racial divide” between Indo-Caribbeans and Afro-Caribbeans. In *He Drown She in the Sea*, Harry's father, Seudath, is raised as an orphaned baby by an African couple, Uncle Mako and Tante Eugenie. This is corroborated by Mr. Walter, a black taxi driver from Raleigh, the village where Mako and Eugenie reside, who remarks, “They bring up an Indian child, like he's one of us. And you know, in time he becomes truly like one of us!”<sup>11</sup> Seudath is described as “Fair-fair, like Indians from town”<sup>12</sup> but as he grows up, he becomes well-liked by his fellow African villagers in Raleigh. This upbringing of Seudath as an Indian among Africans vividly illustrates the close social interaction among ethnic groups in Trinidad. It also raises the intriguing possibility of Seudath absorbing creolized African cultural elements, which, if adopted on a larger scale by Indians, could potentially transform their Indian identity and help alleviate or mitigate the problem of ethnic rivalry between Indians and Africans. Mootoo's depiction of ethnic (Indian/African) riots in Guanagaspar acknowledged the peril of heightened ethnic tensions, particularly stemming from Younger nationalistic Guanagasparian Indians, infuriated by the divide between Africans and Indians and therefore “the fracturing of the country they consider their sole homeland.”<sup>13</sup> Seudath's interracial upbringing and Harry's reliance on Mako and Eugenie for their escape from Guanagaspar at the novel's conclusion bring attention to the contentious issue of interracial mixing as a potential solution to deeply entrenched divisions.

The novel successfully exemplifies the intricate nature of challenges surrounding race, culture, ethnicity, and identity in the post-colonial Caribbean, which have thus far eluded resolution through dialogue or deliberation. Instead, they persist as a daunting terrain of unfulfilled hopes and a tangled web of contradictions, paradoxes, anxieties, and biases.

### *Valmiki's Daughter*

Mootoo's third novel, *Valmiki's Daughter* explores themes of sexuality and identity within the contemporary setting of Trinidad. Unlike Mootoo's previous works, which were set in imaginary locations, this novel takes place in San Fernando, South Trinidad. The story revolves around the Krishnu family, particularly Valmiki Krishnu, a medical doctor, and his older daughter Viveka. They reside among other affluent Hindu families like the Sanghas and Biharis. San Fernando, situated in a country with two major ethnic groups, is often seen as an Indian enclave in contrast to Port of Spain and the broader 'East-West corridor' of Northern Trinidad, which historically supported the African-dominated People's National Movement led by Dr. Eric Williams during the 1960s and 1970s. However, Mootoo's vivid portrayal of the town recognises its blend of Indian and African cultures, a theme also explored by Ramabai Espinet in her novel *The Swinging Bridge*<sup>14</sup>.

In "Valmiki's Daughter," the author meticulously captures every detail of the Krishnu family's experience in Trinidad, immersing the reader in the sights, sounds, smells, and colours of their surroundings. Mootoo portrays Trinidad as a diverse and richly varied place, likening it to a well-seasoned stew. The Krishnu's and their circle represent the remarkable progress achieved by some Indians in terms of wealth, education, and business success since the days of indenture. Devika, Valmiki's wife, epitomises the importance of social class in defining Indo-Caribbean economic identity within this group. As the wife of a prosperous doctor and mother of two teenage daughters, one of whom is a university student, Devika enjoys a life of luxury in Trinidad. Despite her traditional Hindu background, Devika asserts significant authority within her family, as demonstrated when she opposes Viveka's desire to join a sports club due to its perceived inconsistency with orthodox Hindu values. She attributes Viveka's interest in sports to her friend Helen's influence and firmly expresses her disapproval.

Devika skillfully intertwines race, religion, caste, and class biases to reinforce her claim to a higher social status. In this particular incident, she also criticises Helen's Indo-Caribbean mother, highlighting the divide between rural and urban Trinidadians. Devika's comment reflects a sense of rivalry and superiority over those from Port of Spain, the capital city of Trinidad, whom she perceives as having lost touch with their roots and cultural values. Her authoritative tone leaves no room for disagreement, silencing both Valmiki and Viveka. However, Devika's supposed authority is likely exaggerated, revealing her underlying cultural insecurities about meeting the perceived expectations of an Indo-Caribbean Hindu wife and mother of social standing. As for Valmiki, he doesn't genuinely accept his wife's asserted authority; his silence merely serves as the cost of Devika's tacit approval of his own extramarital affairs, which, like those of other characters in Mootoo's works, challenge societal norms regarding heterosexual relationships in the context of a former Indian heritage.

Devika's struggle with her social and cultural identity becomes evident in her hypocritical response to her husband's clandestine bisexual relationship with Saul Joseph. While she silently tolerates Valmiki's affairs, she refuses to openly acknowledge them. Her facade of racial, class, and colour prejudice, coupled with devout religious beliefs, is shattered by her public shame over her husband's bisexuality, particularly his involvement with an Afro-Trinidadian electrician. The contrast between Saul's wife's nonchalant acceptance of her husband's escapades and Devika's horror and shame highlights her hypocritical awareness of the lack of societal protection in San Fernando's cultural chaos, which she believes she would receive in a more stable and traditional Hindu environment.

Valmiki's bisexuality not only challenges heterosexual norms but also complicates his quest for an acceptable social, cultural, and ethnic identity. He appears sexually indiscriminate and indulgent, as evidenced by his contemplation of an affair with the much younger Anick, whom he views as a mere accessory akin to a luxury car or designer watch. This crude objectification starkly contrasts with Valmiki's outward persona as a caring father and responsible family physician, underscoring the complexity of Indo-Caribbean identity. Valmiki's high-caste professional status is revealed to be as artificial as his wife's hypocritical social standing, highlighting the elusive nature of identity within their community.

### **Conclusion:**

Thus, Mootoo through her works and characters has successfully underscored the connection between caste and class in Trinidad, asserting that they are equivalent. Under the indenture system, which transported Indians of various languages, religions, and castes together on the same ships bound for the Caribbean, individuals were compelled to disregard caste restrictions on diet and social interaction in order to survive during the lengthy voyage. This forced integration persisted when the immigrants were assigned to work on estates upon arrival, leading to ongoing unplanned mixing among different caste groups. Yet, at the same time it depicts the class hierarchy that prevailed within the Caribbean boarders. Mootoo's fiction aligns with the contemporary trend in Indo-Caribbean literature, embracing the fluidity of Indo-Trinidadian identities while also offering a critical examination of its shortcomings, fabricated elements, and misconceptions. ■

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**(Footnotes)**

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<sup>2</sup>Mootoo, Shani. *Cereus Blooms at Night*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1998.

<sup>3</sup>Mootoo, Shani. *He Drown She in the Sea*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2005.

<sup>4</sup>Mootoo, Shani. *Valmiki's Daughter*. Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2008.

<sup>5</sup>Naipaul, Seepersad. *The Adventures of Gurudeva and Other Stories*. 1943. Reprint, London: Andre Deutsch, 1976.

<sup>6</sup>Selvon, Samuel. *A Brighter Sun*. London: Wingate, 1952.

<sup>7</sup>Naipaul, V.S. *A House for Mr. Biswas*. London: Andre Deutsch, 1961.

<sup>8</sup>Mootoo, *Out on Main Street*, 59.

<sup>9</sup>Mootoo, *Out on Main Street*, 63.

<sup>10</sup>Mootoo, *Out on Main Street*, 75.

<sup>11</sup>Mootoo, *Out on Main Street*, 75

<sup>12</sup>Mootoo, *Out on Main Street*, 75.

<sup>13</sup>Mootoo, *He Drown She in the Sea*, 254.

<sup>14</sup>Espineta, Ramabai. *The Swinging Bridge*. Toronto: HarperCollins, 2003.

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# Tribal Literary Works in English Translations Analyzed in Light of Global Identity

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The present study focuses on Dalit and Tribal Literature, either translated from indigenous languages into English or actually written in English, which is an essential part of the New English Literature. The indigenous languages have access to a limited population, while being an international language, English language has access to a large population. Earlier the flow of language was supposed to be from West to East, but now with the emergence of New English Literature, the flow of knowledge has changed from East to West, thus neutralizing the impact of West upon the world literature. Through English speaking people around the globe are getting to know about the rich and varied culture of Adivasis residing in different parts of India. A thousand years of pain, agony, and suffering of Adivasis are being read and experienced by such people who do not have any knowledge of the languages of the Adivasis. The literature of Adivasis is multilingual and all languages have some sort of biasness, which after being translated into or written in English reaches to a variety of populations throughout the world. Thus, it results in a slightly unbiased literary output. Several literary genres like poems, stories, novels, plays, and autobiographies from different tribal languages and cultures come together into English language to form a rainbow that gives rise to a new set of ideas and knowledge within one and all. The translation into English language conveys a sense of shared culture among several tribal communities living in different parts of our country and the world.

**Keywords-** Adivasi, English, Literature, Translation, Tribal.

## INTRODUCTION:

Translation provides a wider platform to any text and it is found more effective in the case of marginal texts. It gives space to one's right, one's voice, one's identity, and one's existence. Translation often provides assistance to form a new space in another culture, another world which is quite different from the origin sphere of the real text. Dalit literature in India in different languages finds its roots far back before the Indian civilization. Translation often opens a new ambit, a wider range for the authors to fulfill their motive of writing. Tribal literature is documentation of tribal life as a whole; it is a wide, inclusive

and complex documentary of tribal oppression, anger, suffering, sorrow, and about their rights and others. Writing has been a part of political activity and it has to a greater extent helped tribal communities to raise voice for their rights and justice in India. Whenever any tribal literature, oral or written, is translated into English or any other major language, it serves as a movement against the exploiter or the oppressor. Most of the tribal communities in India do not have their own script so they have to take resort of other languages to write their own works, to let others know about them and their condition, and to establish their basic human rights. Most of the tribal literature is in the non-verbal form like the paintings, sculptures, or oral form. So, Tribal literature is primarily in translated form, translated from non-verbal to verbal form.

The present paper also shows how Tribal literature originally written in the English language offers a wider platform for the tribal literature to make a remarkable presence in the world literature and thus, constituting a significant part of the New English Literature. The tribal literature written by any tribal individual marks a greater presence of the impact upon the readers' psyche and thus, leaves the readers to think about how the tribal communities and the members thereof lead their lives and the day-to-day challenges that they face. Through such literary output, readers are made to experience the raw and ecocentric culture and lifestyle that the tribals follow. The need for protection and conservation of the environment is also boosted. The readers are brought closer to nature, which is quite contrary in this anthropocentric world. Such pieces of literature are quite effective in fulfilling the writers' wishes of compelling readers to think of and think like them. Such books have the spell to make their readers conservationists and nature lovers.

### **Main Argument**

When we get to read, know, and experience Tribal literature, we cannot assume that all Tribal literatures are same; they have certain remarkable differences in many aspects like social, cultural, geographical, political, ethical, and economic as well. When a tribal literature is translated, it surpasses the cultural or political biasness and it is not just the record of social oppression but it becomes a cultural discourse, where the texts offer comments upon the emerging phenomena. In translation, the Tribal literature becomes the part of a cluster of a cultural discourse, emerging from the several parts of India, and it actually forges a fine literary record. Such texts are open to an enormous mass and thus it possesses the power to encompass the language-bound periphery.

The translation of the Tribal literature into English provides a common language for study to the students reading in different universities across India. Besides, providing a common language for expressing their ideas and viewpoints, English language bestows the writers with a very powerful platform that has access to an extremely large population throughout the world. Many universities have separate independent departments for Tribal studies. Anthropology is one such department which gets help from these translated literary works. Most of the university students across India are often found familiar with their local

Tribal languages but when they have to read about the Tribal literature, totally new for them, the literary pieces in English provide them a source on which they can rely. Most of the study materials they get to study are either originally written in English or translated into English from the Tribal languages. The research scholars get ample support from the translated literary pieces. Earlier, due to non availability of translated texts, many times, they had to skip, knowing the fact that the required information was available in any particular text, because those texts were only available in their original language. Translated texts not only play a crucial role in spreading an idea to a large population, which was earlier confined to some limited readers but also provide substantial data that can be referred to, quoted and cited.

In the Augsburg University's official website of the Department of English and American Studies, we get to read:-

The term New English Literature (NEL) refers to the Anglophone literatures of Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, Oceania, and Canada. The field has direct overlaps with English Studies, for instance by including Black and Asian British literatures as well as travel Writing.

In the realm of the New English Literature, there are numerous literary contributions from different parts of the world. The problems and issues or the questions from the different parts of the world are the subjects of focus in the New English Literature. The major issues upon which the New English Literature focuses are of a wide range, ranging from cultural plurality, diaspora, migration, hybridity, to social inequality etc.

Regarding New English Literature Warwick University has its own concept. It calls the Translated literature a new age requirement that offers the Non-European writers a wide number of audiences. Upon its website, Warwick University writes, "Through the Medium of English, writers from Africa and Asia today confront a (prospectively) global audience."

Many universities are taking Tribal literature in English and other components of New English Literature as their field of study and this New English Literature is identified as emergent literature. The writers, languages, areas, and cultures that were yet aloof from the world literature, which were not much explored in the world academics are now being exhibited in the international platform through New English Literature. The West is taking interest in the culture of the East portrayed in the Tribal literature in English. The European nations produce a sense of respect when they get to know the cultural richness and tribal practices. The proximity to nature and to the outcome of natural phenomena often showcased in the tribal literature gathers wide acclaim throughout the world and it results because of their translation into English language.

The tribal literature in English translation forms a plethora of World literature and thus, provides a huge platform for research scholars. At present a huge gap in literature has been filled by tribal literature in translation. Even in renowned journals and in research articles, reservoirs like Research gate and others, a huge portion consists of research on tribal literature. Research on tribal literature has now become a trend among scholars. This

practice has boosted their confidence and they focus more on either translating the tribal literature into English or originally producing their works in the English Language. Such scholarly practices have brought tribal literary pieces among the renowned literary circles and thus, aided in achieving both name and fame. Translation studies have founded a framework through which the authors, who were earlier unknown to huge masses, have made their reach possible to a wide variety of readers. In doing so, they have become a huge source of both enlightenment and entertainment. The ideas, needs, grievances, and demands of the marginalized authors and people have thus become successful in reaching the desired readers. The tribal authors have thus made their presence felt among the elites. Now they can be seen in literary fests, book fairs, and literary discussions as well. The original authors have also got that fame for which they have been waiting for generations. The call for afforestation, for the protection of nature, for the protection of indigenous tribe and their culture, and the protection of rituals can be felt worthy now. The call for participation in the bulk production of tribal literature has been possible now. Such literary personas have got due respect. They have been well received by the readers and the readers like to read them.

The treatment of precolonial themes makes the Tribal literature different from other contemporary literatures, which is not to be found in other literatures. Initially, the Tribal literature had no author because it was not the product of any individual but of the entire community. The influence of colonialism upon the Tribal literature was not direct, Tribal authors and Tribal Literature were not patronized by the British institutions. Tribal literature was not much affected by the colonialism and it is the indigenous lifestyle and culture that is portrayed in the Tribal Literature. The mainstream modern Indian culture is now a hybrid one; it is the amalgamation of the cultures of both the West and the East. The tribal literature practices a culture that is raw, new, original, indigenous, and unique in itself.

The problems showcased by the Dalit or Tribal literature are not the byproduct of the colonial era but they trace its roots back to the pre-historic era. The incidents and the issues that the Tribal literature depicts are the situation that they have been facing since the pre-historic era, the anti-tribal policies, the anti-tribal polity, and the domination of the mainstream culture. The attitude that the Tribal literature adopts is the postcolonial one to represent the marginal, since it transmits the portrayal of the marginalized, the others, to talk about alternative history or the alternative modernity. According to the renowned Marathi writer, poet, critic, and linguist Bhalchandra Vanaji Nemade's *Nativism*, indigenous cultural essence can be found in Indian Tribal and Dalit communities. The voices that we get to hear from the Dalits and the Tribals are the emerging voices in literature to reestablish their claims and rights and to raise the question of socio-cultural and political equality. In this sense, we can assume this category as Emergent Literature in English.

*Sosobonga*, the creation story of Munda, is written by Ramdayal Munda and co-authored by Ratan Singh Manki. It is a bilingual book in English and Roman Mundari, that depicts the lifestyle and the worship mode of the Munda tribe. This book was published by the Adivaani publisher which is quite famous in India for publishing the Tribal books in

English. On its website it writes, “*Sosobonga*, the prayer of the Soso tree, is the ultimate expression of love and respect for our Mother Earth within the Munda and the Asur peoples.” This line clearly manifests that, the tribal literature is very close to the environment and it deals with the very core elements of the naturally occurring phenomenon. Such writings are a guide to read Tribal literature. This book narrates what was orally narrated earlier by the Munda forefathers and after documentation, especially in the English language, the knowledge about the Munda tribe is reaching now to a larger number of national as well as international readers. Tribal literature is not produced in any one language, since there are many Tribal communities residing in different geographical areas with different language backgrounds so the Tribal literature is also diversified in the terms of language, some of these languages are Mundari, Santhali, Nagpuri, and so on. After being translated into English these indigenous literary pieces are actually translated into a casteless language. In the tribal language system, we can trace caste-based words and when these works are translated into English, it becomes a part of a casteless language.

David Davidar edited a book under the title *A Case of Indian Marvels: Dazzling Stories from the Country's Finest New Writers*. In an interview to **The Wire** David Davidar said:

We need even more Translated Literature... quality translations into English will help writers in languages other than English find a pan-Indian audience for starters. Also, the market for books in English is the largest in the country so they will achieve a wider readership as has happened with some writers.

So, it is easily understood that the translated tribal texts into English can also become a source of earning.

Jacinta Kerketta, a renowned poet from the Oraon tribe of Jharkhand state, through her poetry narrates the struggles of the Adivasi communities and she draws attention to the injustices they face. She writes about the preservation of indigenous culture, indigenous languages and trees, and the ecosystem. Her poems like “Why Are Trees Cut Down?”, “Death of the Mother Tongue”, “Why the Mahua is not Plucked from Tree?”, “Why Women Fight” and more such have been originally written in the Hindi and after being translated into English they have received appraisal throughout the globe. Through her poetic creations, Jacinta becomes a spokesperson for the downtrodden and the Adivasi conservationist. She has chosen the Hindi language as a medium to express her thoughts and opinions in the form of poetry but she was quite aware of the universality and reach of the English language which is why she agreed her poems translated into the English language. Through English language, she managed to spread her viewpoint throughout the nation as well as outside India and Asia.

Nowadays, a good number of Tribal authors and poets are producing their literary texts in English language and not in their indigenous language. These writers are actually bringing themselves together with the hybrid world, where the concept of globalization

is impacting every field of the economy including literary production. Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar, for example, is a well-known Tribal short story writer and a novelist. His novel *The Mysterious Ailments of Rupi Baskey* is famous for the depiction of supernatural elements, magic realism, traditional practices, nature gods, and witchcraft. This novel brings the real ethos of the precolonial Adivasi custom and belief that people have never studied and known earlier. The magic realism that he uses in this novel is quite unique and new in the literary practice ever. The short story collection *The Adivasi will Not Dance* portrays the ten poignant short stories in a very raw form. The stories in this book reflect the predicaments of the Tribal people, especially of the Santhals, which he belonged to. *They Eat Meat* and *November is the Month of Migration* depict the problem that the Santhals encounter.

Mamang Dai belongs to the Adi tribe, her first publication *River Poems* held her as one of the most intensely poetic voices from the North East region. In 2003 she was honored with the Verrier Elwin Award for her book *Arunachal Pradesh: the Hidden Land* which portrayed the culture and customs of her land. She wrote folklores under the title- *Mountain Harvest- The Food of Arunachal, The Sky Queen and Once Upon a Moon Time, Hambreelmai's Loom*. She is widely known for her novels *The Legends of Pensam, Stupid Cupid and The Black Hill*. Most of her works revolve around the environment, the ecosystem and the tribal culture and rituals. Being an Adivasi herself, her works are coloured with the charm of originality in treatment of theme and characters. Some of her characters like Gimur and Kajinsha are quite impressive as they bring forth the original tribal essence in her novel like *The Black Hill*. All her literary pieces have been written in English language and each one has received appraisal from readers worldwide.

## Conclusion

The translation of the Tribal literature into English has offered a great opportunity to the tribal writers to spread their viewpoints to a larger audience. The tribal writers who have intentionally opted to write in English were very well aware of the potential of the language and its reach. The tribal literary works in English helped the tribal writers to make their issues, demands, and identities a global one. Now, through English language, people not only in India but outside India also get to know about the Tribal lifestyle and their socio-cultural activities. This concept of global identity encourages most of the tribal writers to get their works translated into English or to write their works originally in English like Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar and Mamang Dai. Through translation, the rich and varied culture of Adivasi people is being transmitted to such people who had never known the indigenous Adivasi language and culture. The Adivasi belief system, their festivals, rituals, gods and goddesses, and their intimacy with nature and the environment are becoming universal and people take keen interest in reading them.

There are many publishing houses that publish works on Tribal literature by Tribal writers in the English language. Some of such publishing houses are Adivaani, Oxford

University Press, Orient Black Swan, Navayana, Katha, Speaking Tiger, Stree-Samya, Zuban, and others. These publishing houses provide a platform for such authors to get their works known to a large number of audiences throughout the globe and to earn a handsome amount.

There are many writers who have produced amazing literary works in their indigenous languages. Many of such works have been awarded and loved by the readers and there is a need to get them translated into English language so that people outside the periphery of those indigenous tribal languages can read them and know about the problems and sufferings of the tribal communities, rich and varied culture that they have preserved and carried forward from generation to generation. ■

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# Queer Identity in *The Mahabharata*: An Appraisal

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The very word 'Queer' is an umbrella term under which the entire LGBT community and other spectrum of genderisation and sexuality come. *Queer* is not only modern or western representation for sexual identities in open term rather it is very ancient and mythical in diverse ways. Before thousands of years, this was incorporated in Hindu mythology, Puranas and rock inscriptions in the ancient temple surface. Even if it exists from very perennial of human civilization, this Queer Identity has not only been found in the Hindu mythology but in other cultures like Christian, Islamic, Zoroastrian, Mesopotamian, Greek, Buddhist, Jain and others. Specially, this paper is to explicate the various queer identities found in *The Mahabharata* briefly. Most probably the Hindu Epic *Mahabharata* is richly depicted of Queer Concepts such as Tales of Shikhandi who became a man to satisfy his wife. Mahadev, who became a woman to deliver his devotee's child Chudala. Also, these Queer Concepts are not confined in the Hindu Epics it is playfully found in the stories of Mesopotamian, Greek, Roman, Chinese, French, German and other cultures. The idea of a spectrum of gender and sexuality is strongly embedded in the tantra's and even the Hindu law Book *Manusmriti*. It is believed that male children are born when male seeds are stronger, females are born when female seeds are stronger and queer children are born when both male and female seeds are in equal strength. This may not be scientifically correct or not but queer people are in physiological form not pathological. Most of the episodes in *The Mahabharata* are embedded in the identity of Queer Concept. It can be found if it is both biologically and physically analyzed.

**Keywords:** Queerness, LGBT, genderisation, Manusmriti, biological seeds, pathological

## **Introduction:**

Most of the religious Hindu epics-*The Ramayana*, *The Mahabharata* and other Puranas are richly fabricated with the episodes and stories bearing queer identities. These episodes are also elemented with other forms of genderisation and sexual identities. This present study is to focus the light on the concept of queerness projected in the grand Hindu Epic-*The Mahabharata*.

The *Hijra* have become a part of South Asian culture for centuries with distinct genderisation and sexuality that is sufficiently found in the Epic *Mahabharata*. It can also be said that same sex desire is found in pre and post-colonial culture which is either legalized or illegal depending upon the culture of the nation. The ancient South Asian nations have heterosexuality and homosexuality in different forms.

Etymologically *Ardhanarishwar* is the combination of 3 words –*Ardha*, *Nari* and *Ishwar* means half woman and half man(lord) which means the lord-half-male and half-female. It is believed that the half part of God is Shiva and the other part is woman that is goddess Parvati or Shakti. The *Ardhanarishwar* represents constructively or biologically the generative power. This may relate to the combination of LGBT which conveys the unique opposite in one. The male half stands for ‘Purusha’ and female half *Prakriti* which may be transferred into one Shiva-Shakti. In Shikhandi Episode in *The Mahabharata*, Pitamah Bhishma told “we will try to kill Shikhandi because he was long before a female. Virtually she is now considered as a female also to kill her is not inevitable...”

(*The Mahabharata*, Vol-6,page- 53. )

There is another reference in *The Mahabharata*, Odia Version which suggests the LGBT theory. The son of Subala, Sakuni, Jayadaratha, Binda- The king of Avati and Arabinda, Kambajadhipati, Sudakhyana-The king of Kalinga, Shrutayudha, Jayashena, etc are born from different mystical gender transformation for which their birthday are miraculous and mysterious. This is referred in the ‘Bhishma Kanda’. The son of Shantanu, Bhishma is considered to be energetic and heroic in personality for his masculinity. He is cursed to be killed when he becomes (sperm less) the moment he looks at Eunuch, Shikhandi. This is elaborately described in the ‘Bhishma Parba’. The birth of Karna is also held in peculiar manner which relates to the LGBT. He is said to be born from the ear of Kunti Mata with the blessings of the Sun God.

There is another reference of queerness in the episode of Mandhata and Ashwini Kumar in *The Mahabharata*, ‘Drona Parba’, Vol-1, Chapter -62.

“...Narada said, “Hey Mrityunjaya Junbanayasaputra King Mandhata was dead just after that the world of Deva, Asura and men all were victorious by this Triyoloka Bijayi. Ashwini Kumar gave birth to Mandhata just after his father’s death. He was wondering in the wild forest freely. In the meantime, he ate prushadhajya (yagnaarna) out of hunger. Consequent upon that a male gave birth to a male child. This indicates that being a male it is impossible to give birth to a child out of his womb which actually happened. This relates to the queerness.

“...all the god and goddess, having seen the male child on the lap of his father, they began to speak from which this child would suck the milk, Indra told, this will be done from me...” (Mahapatra Gobinda Chandra *The Mahabharata*, Page-206.)

There is an episode-I, *The Mahabharata* that relates the story of Manu and his wife Shraddha who performed a *yagna* that *yagna* had some of fruits which would be eaten by

them to have a girl child. Then Manu and Shradha were disappointed and again performed yagna to please Mitra and Varuna to get the sex of the child interchanged. Therefore a son was born named Ila. This relates the theory of transgenderization.

Another reference is there where both Shiva and Parvati were wondering in the forest in the human form. They wanted to mate each other thinking or to transform all male into females.

“... Let all the male creatures in this forest remain as female except me...”

(Pandalain Gayatri, ‘*Quora*’)

There is another episode in *The Mahabharata* that Amrutayasa’s son Gaya Raja was dead in the battle. He was living on *yagna Arna* for 100 years. He was granted boon by Bramha that he would be able to create 100’s of male and female children when he would desire. This concept relates to the LGBT which is described in the *The Mahabharata*, ‘*Drona Parba*’, Chapter -66, Vol-7, Page-214.

There is another reference in *The Mahabharata* in the story of Jayadaratha, whose father was very popular King of Sindhu. It is said that, he got his son Jayadarathain a peculiar manner. It was unseen voice from Meghagambhira Dundubhi that his son was not from any womb of union between any male and female conjugation. This shows that the Transgender can also be from imagination. It is told in *The Mahabharata*, *Drona Parba*, Volume-7, Page-44.

It is told that when an adult man appreciates to live with another adult he is publicly deemed to be a gay in US but not in India. For understanding queerness, cultural filters are necessary. In the Epic *Mahabharata* several instances of queerness and LGBT are found. Basically Hindu Mythology narrates constantly the queerness, maleness and femaleness. The stories of men who became women and children without women and women who create children without men. There are so many words in Sanskrit, Prakriti in Tamil such as Kliba, Napunsaka, Sanda, Panda and Pandaka as well as pedi.

The ancient Egyptian Mythology tells the story of set who after killing his elder brother Osiris goes on to have sex with Horus, the son of Osiris. He deposits his semen between his nephew’s thigh to which Horus casts into river. He then eats a lettuce without his knowledge made up of his own semen. In this way seems are casted into the womb of different feminine and masculine genders. This is the symbol of homosexuality. In this way Japanese, Chinese, Christian, Persian and Mesopotamian Mythology are full of queerness.

The celebration of queer ideas in Hindu epics is symbolically and ritually casted but some of the mythologists condemn queer communities as a criminalizing art. When the political freedom is finally given to the gay in 20<sup>th</sup> Century, it is frequently seen to be happening in the Hindu society. Many Hindu’s believe ‘*Hara -Hari*’, the fused image of *Hara -Shiva*, *Hari -Vishnu* can be seen simultaneously a union of two male deities. They

created a child together called *Hara -Hari* suta as a union of two rival sex of *Shiva* and *Vishnu*.

Most of the stories in India may not be original as they are retold. For example, *Gita* we read today may be narrated by Sanjaya to Dhritarashtra. The narration of Sanjaya about the battle of Kurukshetra is about the activities of Krishna and Arjuna. This '*Mahabharata*' the sacred Hindu Epic maybe a modern interpretation and translation of 700 verses and 1 lakh original Sanskrit version. This *Gita* can be seen through queer eyes which is considered as sacred instead of sin. Since, *Gita* is the wisdom for all humanity and for all ages to come. Actually, Mythologies, Puranas and Pothi's maybe the subject of study to find out truth of life rationalizing the irrationality. The interpretation of mythic stories and characters are strongly influenced by human beliefs which are known as an objective interpretation.

The biblical mythologies, Greek mythology as well as any scientific analysis for truth are intellectual discourse to safeguard modern Indian life. Modern academic discourses on queerness and LGBT are rooted in Greek mythology and Christian philosophy. As it is said:

“...All things queer are not sexual  
All things sexual are not reproductive  
All things reproductive are not romantic  
All things romantic are not queerless...”

(“Shikhandi and other Queer tales they don't tell you”, Part-II, Page .no-37)

There is a story which runs behind Princess Amba who wants to marry a man Shalv. On the day is to choose his as her husband, a warrior named Bhishma abducts her and her sisters to the city of Hastinapur for their marriage to his much younger far less competent half brother Vichitrabirjya. Amba begs to be allowed to marry a man of her choice. Then Amba goes to Bhishma and begs to marry her. Amba is denied to marry just because Bhishma Pitamah had taken an oath to be brahmachari. This made Amba insulted and furious for being rejected at her proposal in front of others in the swayamvar ceremony and she was left with disgrace. She took an oath to take revenge on Bhishma for the rejection. She cursed Bhishma and took her own life so that she could be able to take revenge on the next birth. In the next birth she was born as king Draupad Kanya Shikhandini who later becomes Shikhandi. As it is referred:

“...She was reborn as Dhruv's daughter. But Dhruv wanted a son and had been promised one by Shiva. Convinced that Shiva couldn't lie to him, Dhruv claimed his daughter was actually his son and ordered her to be raised as one...”

(Pattanaik Devdutt, Page-41)

This genesis behind *Shikhandi -Shikhandini* and Shikhandi relates to the 'concept of transgender' of union of male and female like '*Ardhanarishwar*'. Also another story is related to this Shikhandi's story that Sthuna lent Shikhandi his manhood for one night.

Thus Shikhandi could prove his masculinity to anyone who could test. Hiranyavarna sent his court man to trace the truth concluding that his daughter had made a mistake. Hiranyavarna made an apology to Dhruvad and sent his daughter back. This story also narrated the concept of transgender though it is for a night.

Kubera was king of Yaksha who got fired with Sthuna for lending out his manhood which went against his desire. When Shikhandi came to the Yakshato return the borrowed organ, Kubera was so pleased with his integrity that he allowed Shikhandi for use of Yaksha's manhood as long as he lived. It would return to Sthuna only after Shikhandi's death.

The above said narration relates the frequent change of gender for the transformation of gender definitely conceptualizing the theory of queerness.

Considering Shikhandi as *Yunuch* (neither male nor female) no use for revenge, King Dhruvad invited a *yagna* because his kingdom Panchal was invaded by Kauravas. The purpose of *yagna* was to get a child for Dhruvad. Out of *yagna*, Draupadi emerged as a perfect woman and Drishtadyumna as a perfect man. This episode conceptualizes the LGBT that Draupadi and Drishtadyumna were born out of *yagna* without the union of male and female. It is also referred in the *The Mahabharata* for the cause of Bhishma's death.

“... Dhruvad then offered his eldest child Shikhandini who was born as a woman and later becomes a man. Bhishma will see him as a woman. But we will contest his view, for now he is a man with a wife who no longer doubts his masculinity...”

(Pattanaik Devdutt, *ibid*, page no.- 45)

At the end of *The Mahabharata*, Pandavas were victorious and kingdoms of Hastinapur and Indraprastha came under their control. It was not a happy ending then. On the very night of victory, Dronacharya's son wanted to take revenge upon them and attacked Pandava's camp where all soldiers were sleeping deeply. Drona's son killed all soldiers in the camp including Draupadi's son along with his twin brother Drishtadyumna and Shikhandi. Then Shikhandi was split into two.

*The Mahabharata* is the greatest Hindu Epic written between 300 BC and 300 CE which tells the Puranic as well as Monastic, Buddhist doctrine to celebrate human life having queer lens somewhere. As it is referred by Devdutt Pattanaik:

“...Shikhandini, who became Shikhandi is what modern queer vocabulary would call a female to male transsexual, as her body goes through a very specific change genitally. But retellers avoid details and tend to portray him/her either as eunuch (castrated male) a male-to-female transgender (a man who wears women's clothes as he feels like a woman), an intersexed hermaphrodite, or simple a man who was a woman (Amba) in his past life. It reveals a patriarchal bias even in the queer space...”

(Pattanaik Devdutt, *Ibid*, page no. 46)

*Draupadi* is the complete woman. *Drishtadyumna* is the complete man. *Shikhandi* is in between two- neither complete woman not complete man. In this context transforming gender alternatively -one night man and one night woman crystalizes the concept of queerness. *Bhishma*'s other name was *Debabrata* because he wants to remain as *brahmachari*. *Bhishma* was promised by his stepmother not to inherit the Kingdom and his promise should be kept till his last breath. *Bhishma* was granted a boon by *Indra* not to be defeated by any other than *Shikhandi*. *Bhishma* was destined to die by embracing his own desire of death when he would see *Shikhandi*.

In the devotional literature God's take female form-Sometime to serve as 'go-betweens' to bring lovers together, some time to stand for a missing wife and some other time to serve as a devotee. These 'Queer' stories are not actually supposed to be sexual but this is a challenge idea of gender. This queering is unique and unchallenged in the devotional tradition of Indian epics. Sometimes gods tend to be women goddess and sometimes women to be men God. It is referred as:

“...*Basavanna*, the twelfth century Kannada mystic, poet and devotee says ‘ I wear these clothes only for you. Sometimes man, sometimes woman, I make wars for you, O lord of the meeting rivers, and will even be your devotee's bride.’ Thus gender makes no sense in the world of devotion. Queer vocabulary helps break the fixed structures of humanity and flow into divinity...”

(*Pattanaik Devdutt*, *ibid*, page.no.52 )

In *The Mahabharata* there is an episode of King *Sikhidhwaja* whose wife was named as *Chudala*. She was a *yogini*, was well versed in Ancient occult. She has ability to transform according to her own will. But her husband was quite chaos to this ability. King *Sikhidhwaja* wanted to live an austerity to go to forest leaving *Chudala* alone. To follow her husband *Chudala*, transformed her form to a man known as *Kumbhaka*. This concept clearly says the transformation of gender. In this way, *Kumbhaka* shares his wisdom as a safe with her husband *Sikhidhwaja*.

*Vashishtha* the guru of *Ramachandra* used to tell various episodes relating to devotional *Dharma* that shares the queerness. Most of the Indians reject sex in *dharma* and some others idealize it.

The idea of bisexuality is embedded in *Kamasutra* that is written shortly after *Mahabharata*. When it speaks of men but not exclusively give pleasure to other men out of affection. It is told in the mythology especially in *The Mahabharata* that women are 80 times more sexual than men that the story of *Chudala* speaks.

In this way, if the entire Epic *The Mahabharata* is analyzed, most of its episodes and tales may be seen the spectacular display of 'queerness'. ■

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## POEMS

### When the Sun goes down

Original in Odia - \*Nanda Kishore Bal

Translation - Susanta Kishore Bal

When the sun goes down,  
shadows becomes longer,  
larger than life size.

Pair of two cute pigeons go flying,  
up above the sky,  
captivates my heart no-end.

I exclaim towards the celestial  
creatures -  
Why not alight down to my stoney  
Stairs, sit and relax,  
Make throaty coo and gruntle here.  
I promise them my best hostship,  
being my novel guest;  
I offer them  
Fresh green coconut water to eat,  
pure water from the lotus-ponds to drink,  
hire bed from the local carpenter to sleep.

The beds are just not ordinary; those are  
Interwinged with thin bamboo strips.  
Both the mother and daughter have  
diamond-studded foot-anklets.

The jackson(male parrot) asks the  
joshine (female parrot),  
which way to follow?  
The male suggests –  
“Grand Road” (Bada danda).  
While passing by the Grand Road,  
they encountered a lump of cowdung.  
With this, clean and mop the clay-floor  
to a finesse and skill;

And worship and philanthropic  
divine mother,  
the store-house of cosmic power ! ■

the translator is the grandson of \*Palli-Kavi  
Nanda Kishore Bal, a legendary Odia Poet.

### Thoughts on Mother's Day

\*Bishnupada Sethi

In a late afternoon time  
We had huddled around  
A dhoti clad bespectacled goldsmith,  
Seated in an open area  
Of our village market.

While our faces looked sullen  
My mother was beaming  
With certain pride  
And great happiness.

She had taken there  
Her last piece of jewellery-  
A few plated beads of gold  
In the shape of ivy gourds.  
Pieced together on a black thread.  
She would wear it  
Considering its sacredness  
On account of her marriage.

There was no option-  
She wanted it to be sold  
To arrange some money  
For my studies.

I saw the smith cut open mercilessly  
All the beads one by one  
After removing the thread.  
Upon cleaning the gold plates



He put those on a weighing balance  
And made payment in exchange.

It was a lot of money  
More than what I needed  
For about a year  
That made my mother jubilant.

The scene of that day  
Etched in my memory-  
Kept me sad  
For several years.

Years later I earned enough-  
But never sufficient  
To buy the ornament  
She sold away that day. ■

---

\*the poet lives in BBSR, Odisha.

## Woman

**\*Saroj K Padhi**

A woman is  
the sweetest creature on earth,  
man's eternal breath;  
a blend of soulful love and tears  
(sometimes false though),  
bold like a bull  
but like flower, beautiful;  
tough like a dictator  
but inside sweet as nectar;  
love her, she will love back  
all the more,  
hate her, she won't turn sore,  
ignore her  
she won't try to be bore;  
she is fire and she is ice  
she is sour and she is peace  
she can be the door to hell

if at her you yell,  
but she is sure door to salvation,  
man's lust, love, passion  
destruction and devotion. ■

---

\*the poet lives in Cuttack, Odisha.

## Fisherman's Wife

**\*Sulekha Samantaray**

My man goes out to sea in a small boat  
when from east spreads a streak of silver;  
with the waves his boat dances dangerously  
and then sails smoothly on distant water.

With rippling waves touching my feet,  
I watch the boat  
becoming a dot in faraway horizon;  
I retrace my reluctant steps slowly  
homeward as sky gets splashed  
with radiant colours of sun.

I pray the Sea God to protect my man  
and thank him for giving us a livelihood;  
To Sun and Sand I offer my thankfulness  
for fostering our love from our childhood.

My man is my best friend and guide  
deep as the sea is our mutual love ;  
When he returns with boat full of fishes  
we prefer to sit at home like a pair of dove. ■

---

\*the poet lives in Nayapalli, BBSR, Odisha.

## Loneliness

**\*Anwer Ghani**

I am that story that breathes  
the face of the wind,  
and bends with love

towards its cold sidewalks,  
 for estrangement is a bare tree  
 whose memories are filled with ghosts.  
 When its songs fall on my shoulder  
 in the midst of that desolate darkness,  
 I know that the night is a bitter companion,  
 and that the foggy city  
 that I once passed through  
 was made by hearts that migrated  
 before the morning.  
 Yes, my friend,  
 this is how I find myself immersed  
 in the darkness of my loneliness,  
 a faint sound that came down early  
 with the rain.  
 I know, you do not see my heart,  
 nor do you see its pulses that hide  
 behind the curtains  
 like a rural bride  
 dreaming of the savagery of the evening.  
 You do not see the very soft branches  
 as they sway so delicately.  
 Yes, my friend, this is not a dream,  
 but rather a bitter death that knows no end,  
 and many years have passed quietly  
 over my back.  
 You do not see its hands  
 because you are not free  
 like the birds of dawn,  
 like my loneliness. ■

\*the poet lives in Hillah, Iraq.

## Drops of Peace

\***Ramachandra Palai**

**D**rops of peace  
 lie hidden on the still waters  
 of an island bay  
 wrapped by beams  
 of the waning moon.

The shade and shine  
 under that coconut tree  
 look like a blanket  
 strewn with flowers  
 of many colours.  
 The wind blowing over the waves  
 touches the leaves  
 like a gentle kiss  
 on the shivering lips.

A weary boat sails past,  
 sniffing peace  
 from the shining waves .

Someone somewhere blows his pipe  
 heralding his presence  
 from above the hills. ■

\*the poet lives in BBSR, Odisha.

## Articulation of A Pseudo Love

Original in Odia - \***Bijay Ray**

Translated by - Himanshu Parida

**T**ake this, take this axe  
 Take this, my feet  
 Take this, my possessions  
 Take . take the noisy river mouth  
 Take also the fishes with bargain  
 Take, take from me the smogy blind horizon  
 Take also the soundless sound of words  
 Take also the song of the cowherd  
 Which is yet to qualify as words.

What remain are dry twigs  
 after the forest get burnt  
 Heaps of dust are leftovers  
 of the whole mountain dug  
 The beak is empty after throwing

pieces of stones  
The field of millet is left as soily grey  
with the Graph of mournings.

Give me to my empty hands  
I have also some mild pride  
Some maledictions  
Some rolling tears  
Also some inadequate rainfall  
And malnutrition  
Also there is some skill to effect  
Limited lifetime.

Here there is a life without birth  
For Life and for the whole world  
Also there are few drops  
of unenjoyed essence.  
While dancing unattentively  
My hands Slip away from my waist.

In the binocular of view  
While climbing a tree dried to its core  
A red ant falls down from the beak of a crow.  
A trumpet is blown inside dull skin  
With a thrilling sensation  
The hairs on my skin stand  
But nether my feet get ready  
Nor my mouth utter a single word. ■

---

\*the poet lives in BBSR, Odisha.

## Everything in Dreams

\*Gajanan Mishra

I am happy and I am smiling  
who told you I don't know.  
I am living and I am crying  
who told you I don't know.

I am living and I am dancing  
with time that I must say so.

I am crying and I am smiling  
at the same time  
to prove I am learning.

I am learning and I am living  
to prove life is enchanting.  
I am sitting and I am walking  
at the same time  
to prove I am dying.

I am living and I am dying  
at the same time to prove  
I am loving and I am planning to do  
so many things with my feelings.

My feelings I show in my writings  
and I am staying with me always  
to express I am everything in dreams.  
I am what I am in smiling and in crying  
while living and while leaving. ■

---

\*the poet lives in Titilagarh, Dist. Bolangir,  
Odisha.

## History

\*Dhrubajyoti Das

History wafts in the air  
Making it unshroudable  
by the house of molehill  
Where did they learn  
Only on the page of a book  
History can be found

History is a hill that cannot be  
devoured by moths  
The birds and rocks  
That keep the hill as a hill  
Each and every leaf of a plant  
Growing on the hill

Is its permanent address  
With the warmth of its greens  
A river gets heated up  
As the seat by the rudder of the boat  
Pushed by the vapour  
Lay tied an ensign of the future

Where did they learn  
History means just the past  
or the silence after the past  
the present would also rest under  
the shadow of history some day

One thing is true  
The hill named history  
Shakes in earthquake  
Moves in the air  
Gets drenched in rain  
With passing time  
All these are  
The last resort of history. ■

---

\*the poet lives in Guwahati, Assam.-

## No Need to Colour

**\*Tanuja Rout**

I have already been painted  
with all your favourite colours  
come to me and implore  
the rainbow of your desires  
My forehead shines with shining touch

of your lips  
My cheeks are blushing  
with your aromatic essence  
My whole body fragmented  
with your intense passion  
My feelings became crimson  
with indulgence  
And my soul is signaturred

with the name of yours  
on my flesh  
You fill all the dense shades, my beloved  
For that is what I am  
A woman of sweeping desires  
No need to colour me  
on This colourful Holi  
Becoz the rainbow in me,  
Still blooms crescent in memories  
and the artist in me  
Years to be blushed with its own shade. ■

---

\*the poet lives in Cuttack, Odisha.

## Life Travels Further and Farther

**\*Bibhudutta Sahoo**

Life is not a weeded stagnant reservoir  
It is melodious dancing singing river  
The pleasurable is there  
where living the life fullest  
Mobility is the other name of true success.  
The ink of belief and trust never ever to stop  
When one thinks he is not  
on the saturated top  
Let's drench ourselves totally  
in poetic symmetry  
The twists and turns, the ups and downs,  
create beautiful tapestry.  
Jealousy is the breeder of satanic norms  
Makes the oar of the vessel broken often  
Life is short my friend.....  
Let's fly in the infinite sky  
with the valour of Eagle  
Surpassing the storm  
without blowing the bugle  
Pacifying our spirit with an ounce of bliss  
With aesthetic regalia sans venomous kiss ■

---

\*the poet lives in Kantabanji, Dist. Bolangir,  
Odisha.

## from Baby Falak to Nirbhaya

\* **Bharati Nayak**

Every day  
There are stories of Baby Falak  
and Nirbhaya.  
'Ravana', 'Dushasan' and 'Sakuni'  
Still roam freely without restraints.  
Nothing has changed  
Thousand years after killing of Ravana  
Or uprooting the hands of Dushasan  
Or smashing the thighs of Duryodhan  
No kingdom of Ram has been established  
Nor a woman has become 'Devi'  
She is still a doll.  
At home she is 'Baby Falak'  
Outside she is Nirbhaya.  
Thanks to those fathers and brothers  
who fought for Nirbhaya in Delhi  
Thanks to those men  
who can see a sister or mother in a woman  
Thanks to those writers and poets  
who can understand a woman's emotions  
Thanks to the judges who give fair  
judgments.  
And thanks to friend 'Krishna'.  
who always extends his hand of help  
At the time of distress. ■

---

\* the poet lives in Khandagiri, BBSR, Odisha.

## A Noble Person

\* **Malati Kumari Natha Sharma**

An ideal man can't say  
his idealness  
The kind person can't describe  
his kindness.  
A flower can't see

her beautifulness  
A bee can't say  
it's sweetness.  
The moon can't express  
it's pleasantness.  
The sun can't express  
it's brightness.  
The breeze can't speak  
it's coolness  
The tree can't mark out  
it's usefulness.  
The water can't show  
it's beneficence.  
The soil can't refuse  
to walk excess  
A noble person  
is always dutiful  
And he is also always  
helpful. ■

---

\* the poet lives in Keonjhar, Odisha.

## Love for Love's Sake

\* **Harihar Mallick**

Several times I have hurt my hand  
while holding a blue rose.  
I have also hurt my heart  
while beholding its blue beauty.  
The more I have loved,  
the more I have bled,  
and the more I have bled,  
the more I have felt  
as if I have been tied  
somewhere there  
by an unseen thread.  
But the moment I started believing  
in its beauty,  
the moment I started worshipping  
its scenic serenity,  
its classic simplicity,

all this bleeding and pain  
became a divine gain  
for my aesthetic thoughts,  
for my aesthetic ink,  
for my artistic pain and pen.  
And in this existential suffering,  
it has been an artistic rain  
to cleanse all those dirt and dust  
which covered there a layer of darkness  
to this poetic heart and poetic brain.  
Since that enchanting day,  
since that enchanting moment,  
for this blue rose,  
for this blue beauty,  
I have been a poetic priest,  
and it has been my artistic duty  
to love this love only for love's sake,  
nothing more, nothing less.  
In spite of so many terrible thorns  
that it has been surrounded with,  
which teaches me a very simple truth to  
take:  
to see love as love for love's sake,  
to worship it as a guiding goddess  
of beauty and of truth,  
as a classic religion of life.  
And beyond this,  
I don't want to know anything extra,  
as extra inquiry is extra nonsense.  
And for this classic course,  
if I have to go to hell  
holding all the curses, all the risk,  
there I will attain certainly  
a definite devour of divinity,  
a definite blessing of heavenly bliss... ■

---

\* the poet lives in Sambalpur, Odisha.

## The Dove

\*Satya Sundar Samanta

Disguised doves appear often  
Only before harvesting season;  
With mastery in camouflage,  
Promises like balloons, and gestures,  
And with intimate voices  
Silently thief people's opinions.  
Sometimes, they create groups,  
Pretend to be each other's enemies,  
Play in the colourful fair  
And after game they disappear.  
But, their promises glimmering  
As their dresses dazzling,  
However, they move on wheel or wing  
Attitudes seem, as if, unearthly being.  
Audiences come to watch their play  
Walking on everlasting clay,  
Wearing clothes faded  
And slippers ragged.  
They see and inspire the leaders,  
Who after game return to  
'Dove's Palaces'. ■

---

\*the poet lives in Ramnagar, West Bengal.

**Clash of Two Cultures in Chinua Achebe's  
*Things Fall Apart, No Longer at Ease and Arrow of God***

Author - Dr. Veena Nare

Published by - Pencraft International, Delhi

Reviewed by - Dr. Nikunja Bihari Mohapatra,  
Associate Prof. in English, S. G. College, Jajpur, Odisha

The book, *Clash of Two Cultures in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart, No Longer at Ease, Arrow of God* is an excellent observation and delineation of Dr. Veena Nare over Achebe's literary outputs, devices and achievements in narrating the process of colonization over the Nigerian people and their culture and its impact and effect in degenerating the Igbo culture, community and tribe of three generations. In the book, Dr. Nare has brought into focus the clash of White Man's Culture with that of Igbo Tribe, Culture and its effect ultimately on Igbo Tribe in the community.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> Chapter of the Book, Dr. Nare has evaluated and depicted the development of Nigerian Novel from the past to the present and how it has survived through ages with major contributions of Chinua Achebe's with the publications of the Trilogy: *Things Fall Apart, No Longer at Ease and Arrow of God*. Achebe, according to Dr. Nare, is a prolific writer in the sense that he has successfully bridged the gap between the local oral literature and the far reaching English Language. Moreover, Dr. Nare has succinctly reflected and highlighted Chinua Achebe's proficiency in the use of the English Language, his literary devices such as the use of folk-tales, proverbs, myths, narrative techniques in his novels to understand African Society and Culture. Dr. Nare's approach to Achebe as a novelist and post-colonial writer is undoubtedly fantastic, fabulous and thought-provoking .

In Chapter II of the book, the author has pointed out the impact and effect of clash of Igbo and English Culture in Achebe's Trilogy : *Things Fall Apart, No Longer at Ease and Arrow of God*. Dr. Nare's critical approach to the effect of clash cultures has brought to lime light Okonkwo's suicide in *Things Fall Apart*, Ezeulu's downfall in *Arrow of God* and a confused and puzzled Obi Okonkwo in *No Longer at Ease*. Dr. Nare is of the opinion that there are clashes and conflicts found at different levels. There is in fact cultural clash, religious clash, moral clash, social clash and clash due to trade.

Chapter III of the book however talks of the impact of colonization that degenerates the Igbo Tribe and leaves it in total chaos. Dr. Nare has highlighted quotations by Achebe from W.B. Yeats' poem, "The Second Coming" and T.S. Eliot's, "The Journey of the Magi". The theme of the trilogy, Dr. Nare points out is – "Things fall apart" and "Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world". There is hybridization at the level of individual characters and degeneration at the level of community in the trilogy. The impact of colonization has undoubtedly shattered and battered the belief systems of the Igbo Tribe.

In Chapter IV, the author has paradoxically and ironically exposed the internal and external conflicts of individual characters and has shown how the White have managed to establish their Empire by exploiting the faults and follies of the Igbo community and entered their world of peace and harmony. It is in fact observed by Dr. Nare that the clash of two cultures also operates on the inter— personal relationships of the characters/ people in the trilogy and causes degeneration of the Igbo Tribe.

In this book, Dr. Veena Nare has taken a post- colonial approach to the study of Achebe's Trilogy. In her attempt of analysis of the trilogy of Chinua Achebe, Dr. Nare has given too much effort to find out the valid / authentic reasons for degeneration and disintegration of the Igbo Tribe, Culture and Community and she has finally concluded the book by revealing the truth behind such degeneration and disintegration. This book by Dr. Veena Nare is highly laudable and it will be a great source of influence and inspiration for the scholars and the critics for undertaking research activities on Chinua Achebe's novels. ■



## **Our Guest - Referees**

**Dr. P C Kambodia**, B S R Govt. College, Alwar, Rajasthan

**Dr. Dayanidhi Pradhan**, Principal, Jaleswar Women's Degree College,  
Dist. Balasore, Odisha

**Dr. Arun Kumar Mishra**, Lajpat Rai P G College, Sahibabad, U P

**Dr. Nandini C. Sen**, Bharati College, Delhi University

**Dr. J. Jayakumar**, Govt. Arts College, Salem, Tamil Nadu

**Dr. Bikram Ku. Mohapatra**, Brahma Barada College, Dist. Jajpur, Odisha

**Dr. R.P. Lokhande**, Principal, Mahavir College, Kolhapur, Maharashtra

**Dr. Shobha Sharma**, NBBB Govt. College, Gangtok, Sikkim

**Dr. Sajal Dey**, EFL University, Shilong Campus

**Dr. Namita Laxmi Jagaddeb**, Mahima Degree College, Jharsuguda, Odisha

**Dr. R.C. Sheila Royappa**, Seetalakshmi Achi College for Women, Pallathur,  
Tamil Nadu

**Dr. Dhrubajyoti Das**, Cotton University, Guwahati, Assam

**Dr. Amrendra Sharma (retd)**, C M College, Darbhanga, Bihar

**Dr. Sayeed Abubakar**, Sirajganj Govt. College, Bangladesh

**Dr. Amar Singh**, Govt. P G College, Chhindwara, M P

**Dr. Radhashyam Dey**, Yogoda Satsang Mahavidyalaya, Ranchi, Jharkhand

**Prof. K. Sripad Bhat**, Goa University, Goa

**Dr. Binu K. Devasy**, Govt. Law College, Thrissur, Kerala

**Dr. Syed Wajahat Hussain**, Govt. Degree College, Poonch, J & K

**Dr. Anuradha Chaudhuri**, Lanka Mahavidyalaya, Dist.- Nagaon, Assam

**Dr. M.S. Wankhede**, Dhanwate National College, Nagpur, Maharashtra

**Dr. Rajendra Padhi**, B.B. College, Chandikhole, Dist.- Jajpur, Odisha

**Prof. P. Kannan**, Davangere University, Karnataka

**Dr. Subash Ch. Rout**, Bhubaneswar, Odisha

**Prof. Neeraj Kumar**, Magadha University, Bodh Gaya, Bihar

**Prof. Pinaki Roy**, Raiganj University, Uttar Dinajpur, W. B.



# THE HINDU

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.