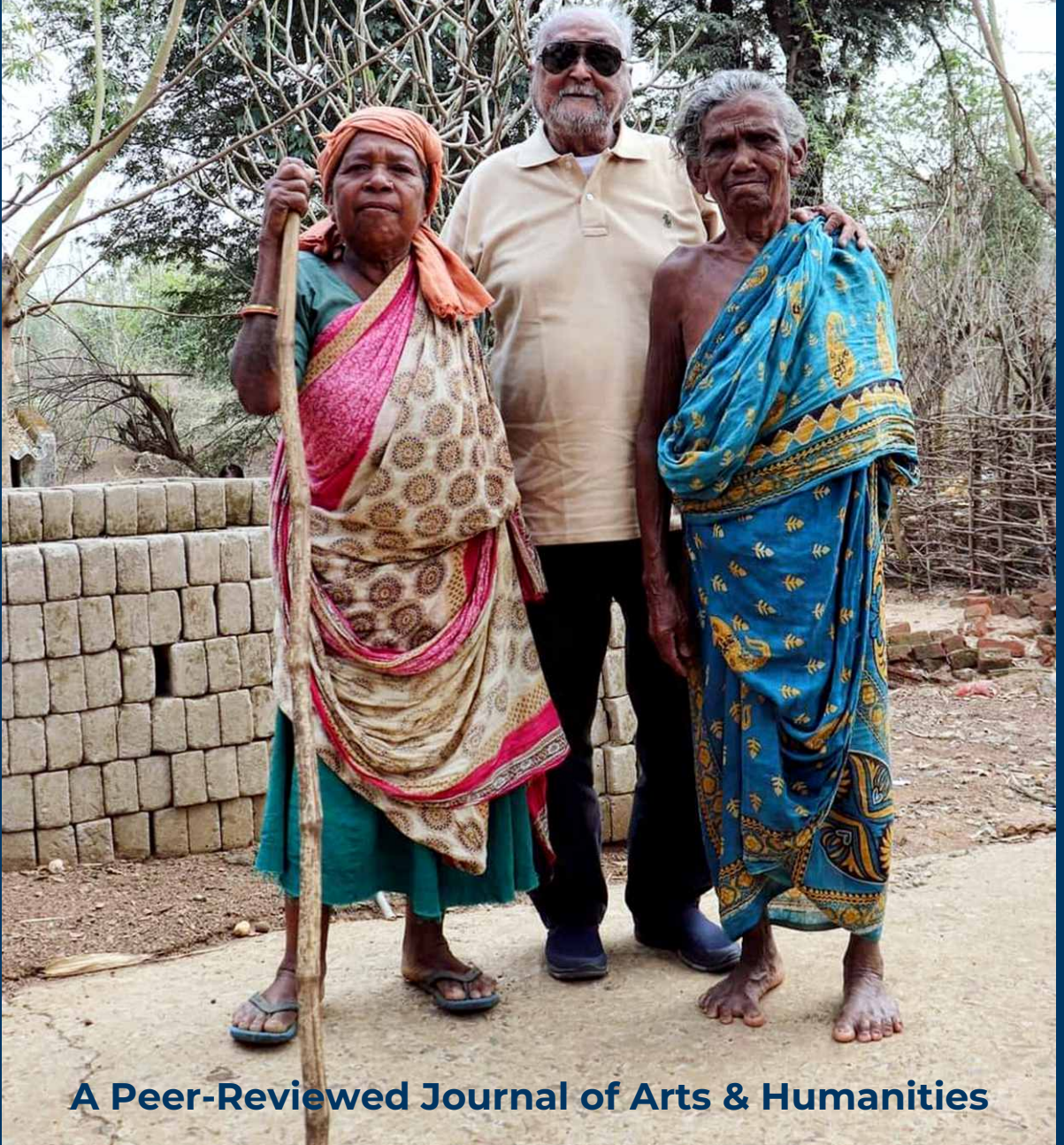


ROCK PEBBLES

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A Peer-Reviewed Journal of Arts & Humanities

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People's Poet

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Editor Speaks.....

The moon is a silver shield, the lamp
of heaven, a fairy godmother, and a goddess -
Luna, Astarte, Isis, Phoebe and Diana. The moon
can therefore represent pagan, natural, elemental
forces which lie outside the strictures and
traditions of organised religion. Of course, the
moon has often been viewed as a symbol of wild,
uncontrollable forces: men turning into
werewolves on a full moon, for instance.
However, the moon has been a firm favourite
with poets and writers down the ages. It has been
a powerful symbol in religion, literature, and art
for centuries – indeed, for millennia. But delving
into the history of moon-symbolism reveals some
surprising things about how poets, philosophers,
and religious writers have viewed the moon.
Nevertheless, the moon, a celestial object,
blinking in our imagination has finally been
conquered by ISRO with the landing of
Chandrayan-3. This flight to the moon will
certainly give a new dimension to world of
literature. The poets, and artists will try to see
the moon from a different perspective. This
advancement of science will give a new
definition to the ever-changing phenomenon of
the Universe. This will give rise to scientific
literature as well.

While the country celebrates this
success, the dark clouds appear in the literary
sky with the sad demise of Jayanta Mahapatra
and Gita Mehta. In fact, both the writers are great
literary figures and they will be cherished for a
long time for their contributions to literature.
Both were closely associated with *Rock Pebbles*
Journal.

Rock Pebbles' family pays tribute to the
great literary personalities of Global
reorganisation.

At the end, we wish all a very *Happy*
Durga Puja and Vijaydashami. ■

- Editor

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A Tribute to Jayanta Mahapatra

Basudeb Chakraborti

The theme I intend to pursue in this article is to explore the possibilities of considering Jayanta Mahapatra as one of the Trios of Indian Poetry in English. I will first refer to the meaning of the word 'Trio' and then to Poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra. A trio is a bunch of three people as one, especially musicians or singers, or a group of performers or writers or poets or playwright that has something in general. The saying, something in general is important. When we think of Indian literature written in English, we first remember three novelists and they are Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan. One of the major reasons to address these three novelists, as the Trios, is that there must be certain similarities in their narratives. I here attempt to comment on Jayanta Mahapatra and to finally establish him as one of Trios of Indian poets, Jayanta Mahapatra. The two of the Trios are Nissim Ezekiel and A.K. Ramanujan. Jayanta Mahapatra is one of the Trios of Indian Poetry in English. This is the hypothesis of this article. There are certain points of common characteristic features among these three Indian poets

The poetic sensibilities of Jayanta Mahapatra definitely equal the poetic sensibility of Nissim Ezekiel, and A.K.Ramanujam. It is pointless to say that Jayanta Mahapatra requires any foreword or any introduction as one of leading trios of Indian poetry in English.

The well-known serious maxim, particularly in the context of art and literature is that "All good art is contemporary". A careful thought on this cliché comment reveals the fact that any great piece of creative art requires to be relevant not only to the present but also to the past and to the future. To know the present one requires the knowledge and the close familiarity of the past. And the knowledge of the past and the present helps a great artist to foresee the future. Though the present is related to the survey of the past and desire to foresee the future, the present occupies a major role in the Politics of the present modern India. Jayanta Mahapatra has wisely made a wise comment in this connection:

Poets, probably, watch the game of politics from the sideline. We are spectators, when we are poets: not players,

(The Hindu, 18th March, 2001: Jayanta Mahapatra's Views on Poetry.)

The poet was deeply shocked by the gruesome events that took place around him. Let me quote three lines from one of the poems from Mahapatra's *Random Descent* (2005), the first person narrator says:

I want my government to hover
Like a butterfly over a garden,
Not be, as it is, like a warp or snake

But it does not mean that the poet was unaware of the sufferings and the dispossession of the people, of the overall life around him. He was an enthusiastic observer even of the trivial events in life. The context again demands a quote of some lines taken from Mahapatra's poem, "A Growing Ground":

Like the nameless black tide
That leaves no trace on the sands,
Or the diamonds sparkling in Elizabeth's necklace
And the slow spirals of Kitchen smoke
In Orissa's starvation—twilight

The poet employs two important phrases – "Elizabeth's necklace" and "Orissa's starvation twilight". These two phrases are juxtaposed here with view to showing intolerable sufferings of the poverty stricken people and their excruciating conditions arising out of the all out exploitation. The irony revealed through these two phrases is conspicuous.

Jayanta Mahapatra who started his poetry career, primarily wrote his poems, the essence and themes of which were basically Odisha-centric. His major collections of poetry are *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten* (1971), *A Rain of Rites* (1996), *Waiting* ((1979), *Relationship* (1980). Frequent references to the Temple of Lord Jagannatha at Puri come to readers' notice. Meena Alexander's observation on the importance of Stone in Mahapatra's poems seems to be very important. According to Meena Alexander, "Stone is very essential to Mahapatra's idea of the origin of the universe". This idea is also concerned with the solar system in general and 'cosmological system' in particular in the universe. In one of his poems, the poet says:

. . . The autumns of a thousand years
spread out like leaves, filthy and veined with blood,
over the smooth dark stone of our lives:
What can save us now
But the miracle we have been waiting for?

Life to Jayanta Mahapatra is a happy blend of the past, the present and the future. The "dark stone" which is indispensably connected with our lives is a symbol of the Timeless eternity. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar makes a brilliant comment in this context:

Relationship is a sustained long poem, an expansion of the private lyric voice into a chain of meditations embracing a region, a tradition, a whole way of life. The theme and

its half hypnotic articulation alike compel respectful admiration. Jayanta enters into the spirit of the wonderful testament in stones in Orissa's temples and exchange heart-beats as it were with the forgotten artists and their unfolding works of sculpture and architecture. Distantly paralleled by Keats's "Grecian Urn", Jayanta too seems to be teased by the untamable phenomenon of men and gods, Time and Eternity. (Iyengar, p.713)

Indeed Orissa is one of the Indian States that is full of temples. And those temples are made of stones. A careful study of Mahapatra's poems reveals that the theme of tradition, culture, myth, sensibilities and immense agony of Orissa is discernible in his poems. Mahapatra underscores that the identity of a man is associated with the pedigree of his family and the history of his ancestors and at the same time the place where he is born and brought up.

So the role of stone is indispensable in his poetry:

My existence lies in the stones which carry my footsteps from one day into another Down to the infinite distances." (Relationship, p-10)

Stone represents the ancient past to Mahapatra.

Mahapatra observes stone as a representation and mark of permissivity. He owes loyalty and stoops to his father and grandfather with symbol of stone. He derives spiritual existence in it. Myth, Culture and tradition are Mahapatra's passions which have been revealed in his poetry. The influences of these three have directed his poetic mind towards the environment to which he belongs. He is attracted very much by the Indian myths, culture and traditions in general and myth, culture and tradition of Odisha in particular. As a man and an Indian poet in English he mingles himself with the social and cultural atmosphere of Odisha. In an interview with Makarand Paranjpe, Jayanta Mahapatra says:

Odisha is a religious place. We have a number of festivals getting on throughout the year. And one cannot shut oneself away in one's room and write something else. . . . Myth is there, history is there, and myth, history and rituals do become the stuff of poetry. Because that's the way of life in Orissa and poetry is a way of life for me.

(Quoted from R. Shankar, Jayanta Mahapatra, The Poet Quest for Identity, New Delhi: Prestige Books, 2003, p.37)

In one of his poems, A summer Night, the poet with all his sincerity says:
This is the town where I was born; here with others,
Year after year I celebrate the joyous festivals.

The merriment of festivals around his surroundings ignites the flames of his poetic sensibilities in his mind and he bursts into his candid indebtedness to all these festivals in Odisha.

But the sublimation of his poetry from the regional to the National, from the particular to the universal like the two other poets of the Trios of Indian Poetry in English is a very important celebration in his poems.

Monolithic and unitary Indian ethos is conspicuously present in all these three poets. These three poets' poetic vision is inseparably connected with one another. They are not only the common in their attitude to the Indianness but also in their use of images and various types of rhetoric, based on the principle of associations in their Indian English variant. These three poets are hardly influenced by any western trend and aesthetics like apocalyptic characteristics of Dylan Thomas and his school or Surrealism of English painting and poetry of the early decades of the twentieth century. These three poets uphold the Indian aesthetics in their poems.

One question comes to our mind to this context. Are not other poets like Kamala Das, K.N. Daruwalla, R. Parthasarathy, and Arun Kolatkar Indian poets? They are definitely Indian poets but their poems often look a mix of both the western and Indian views of life.

Let me mention one of the most popular poems, Introduction, written by Kamala Das. Gender discrimination is the cardinal essence of this poem, Introduction, the concept of which is Euro-centric. Indianness never believes in gender hierarchical patterns. Gender hierarchy is a social construct. A close study of Indian myth, culture and tradition reveals the fact that woman empowerment is a millennium old pillar of Indianness. The poem Introduction is a clear feminist slogan which champions for free alternatives for every woman. The concept of Feminist movement in modern India has come from the west.

R. Parthasarathy's poems make "the quest of the self for an identity". But the ancient Indian Holy Scriptures like the Veda and the Upanishad aim at man's annihilation of self identity through the knowledge of the self or Soul. I here refer to the attitudinal difference between the Indian and the Western. R. Parthasarathy's belief in "the quest of the self for an identity" is west-centric. The nuance of "the quest of the self for an identity" has nothing to do with the Indian concept of "Annihilation of ego".

Most of the poems written by Arun Kolatkar are surrealistic in nature. An examination of certain images Kolatkar has employed in some of his poems shows how he is influenced by the French surrealist Andre Breton in 1920s in France.

We hardly find any western focus in the poems of Jayanta Mahapatra, Nissim Ezekiel and A.K. Ramanujan. They are the home-grown poets of India. Nissim Ezekiel may be Jewish or Jayanta Mahapatra may be a Christian but the fact is that anybody who believes in Indian culture, Indian tradition, and the glorious pedigree of Bharatiya ethos or anyone who believes in Indianness can be a true Indian. These three poets may be addressed as Trio of Indian Poetry in English. ■

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Dr. Basudev Chakraborti, formerly Professor of English, Kalyani University, West Bengal.

Remembering Jayanta Mahapatra

K.V. Raghupathi

I'll begin this brief essay by reflecting on my time in university. There was no paper on Indian writing in English when I was a student at Sri Venkateswara University in Tirupati studying for my master's degree in English literature between 1977 and 1979. Many English departments were adamant about sticking with a colonial attitude and emphasizing teaching British literature. The teachers (professors), many of whom had returned from abroad, primarily from the UK with highly sought-after Ph. Ds, propagated this notion and fervently supported British literature. They maintained the same colonial perspective and made English departments more English-centric (British) than what is apparent today with more democratisation in the curriculum. Many of these teachers with UK training had a prejudicial perspective on Indian writing in English.

Because it was still in its infancy, these professors with UK training did not support it. The literature that had blossomed in the UK was widely believed to represent what was meant by English literature at the time. They didn't think much of other English literature works. Within this hostile setting, Professors MK Naik, CD Narasimaiah, and KR Srinivasa Iyengar worked arduously to develop Indian Writing in English (IWE) as a subject and make it an integral part of English departments at all universities. They fervently argued for the cause of Indian writing in English through their writing and publication of several articles and speeches. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar's seminal work *Indian Writing in English* (1984) and M.K. Naik's *Dimensions of Indian English Literature* (1984), *Indian English Literature: 1980-2000: A Critical Survey* (1982), and *Studies in Indian English Literature* (1987) have strengthened the case for writings in English in India. They were all successful in having IWE included in the study of English literature. Many English departments in the universities didn't start providing IWE as a course or even as a component of the curriculum until the 1980s. The new group of professors, which included the aforementioned three professors along with Professor P. Lal, who supported IWE, had replaced many earlier professors who had a limited perspective on it. It eventually evolved into an autonomous course over time.

In this light, I'd want to think back on a comparable experience I had in 2011, when I joined the Central University of Tamil Nadu in Thiruvavur as a regular faculty. At that time, a paper on IWE was not offered as part of the MA in English Literature. I had a terrible experience when I asked how the students could graduate from the university with a degree without having studied IWE. I claimed that such a degree lacked credence. In one of the Board of Studies meetings, I passionately argued in favour of it and won approval.

The result was that it was transformed into an independent course, integrating with the core curriculum. I taught this subject, which included poems by Jayanta, until my departure from the institution in 2019.

Lal did a fantastic job advancing Indian writing in English. In Kolkata, he founded a publishing house called Writers Workshop, where he encouraged a number of new budding poets to write their works in English and submit them for publication. In his book *History of Indian English Literature*, M.K. Naik notes that only P. Lal published the first books of contemporary Indian poets who achieved success in Indian and international English poetry. It was true. All of the poets that Lal published under the Writers Workshop imprint became well-known figures around the globe. It was thought that any poet who was published by the Writers Workshop would become well-known in their field. Of them was Jayanta.

As a Post-graduate student, I read and studied only three Indian English poets—Nissim Ezekiel, A.K. Ramanujan, and Kamala Das as well as two novelists, R.K. Narayan, and Mulkraj Ananad. These were all part of the Commonwealth Literature (now New Literatures) paper, which covered the full range of post-colonial texts. This was my first introduction to Indian writers who wrote in English. For reasons best known to the group responsible for formulating the syllabus, Jayanta Mahapatra was excluded from the curriculum. I had no knowledge of Jayanta and had never read any of his poetry. I didn't read two of his widely anthologized poems, "Indian Summer" and "Hunger," which are recognized as classics in contemporary Indian English literature, until after I had finished my post-graduation. This served as my initial exposure to Jayanta's poems.

I was fascinated by his writing after reading these two poems, especially because of the two components of imagery and elegant diction. I looked through other collections of his poems. By chance, I discovered a venerable anthology called *Ten Twentieth Century Indian Poets*, which was chosen and edited by R. Parthasarathy and published by OUP. At the time, this was the sole anthology on the market, and all universities required students to consult it when discussing Indian poets who wrote in English though other anthologies followed later such as, *Indian Poetry in English* (1993), edited by Makarand Paranjape, *The Oxford Anthology of Modern Indian Poetry* (1994) edited by Vinay Dharwadker and A.K. Ramanujan, and *Twenty-five Indian Poets in English* (1995), edited by K.S. Ramamurti. The poets who were included in the anthology were acknowledged as having achieved popularity and recognition on a global scale. It was a canon-like text for reference. It contained "A Missing Person", "The Whorehouse in a Calcutta Street", and "Indian Summer" from Mahapatra's collection, *A Rain of Rites*, and "The Logic", "Grass", and "Lost" from other anthologies. I eventually had to look for his poetry collections after this reading. Luckily, my hands fell upon his two collections: *Svayamvara and Other Poems* (1971), Calcutta: Writers Workshop and *Relationship* (1980), New York: Greenfield Review Press. I read them avidly.

At that point in time, I read Jayanta purely for enjoyment. I wasn't really taking his poetry very seriously. I never tried to review any of his poetry books or to write an article

about his poetry. Despite this, I still thought highly of him, but I never had the chance to visit Cuttack and meet him in person since I was too busy attending to my academic obligations and immersed in my career. The most wonderful news was that I had been chosen for the 2014 Rock Pebbles National Award for Creativity, instituted by the Rock Pebbles Trust, which would be presented to me in Bhubaneswar by the legendary poet Jayanta Mahapatra. I realised that my dream was actually coming true.

He was already 85 in 2014. I arrived at the location considerably earlier in order to see this poet in his physical appearance. I had heard of him and read about him in books up to that point. Now I could actually communicate with him and see him in person. I was watching him approach from where I was standing by the venue's entrance. He arrived at the location at precisely half past ten, joined by a couple of event organisers. Despite his ageing appearance, he was nimble and exuded the assurance that, due to his asthma, he would live for a few more years despite whatever happened. I did not hear any gasps as he was moving. He was hospitalised, but he managed to survive the coronavirus. The ten years that passed between then and August 27, 2023 were a tremendous adventure in his life as a writer in general and as a poet in particular. He was engaged throughout the proceedings and talked for fifteen minutes, albeit a little erratically. Even so, I could understand what he was saying. A poet with a scientific background could sound like an English professor. He had a thorough understanding of Indian poetry, and he spoke with authenticity and assurance. He was distinct from the other poets since he was not a poet from the Bombay school. Over time, he was able to distinguish himself from his peers by developing a serene, peaceful poetic voice of his own.

He acted in this manner, and I was so moved by him that I asked for his blessings at the conclusion. He generously bestowed his blessings upon me, and I was so overjoyed that I continue to treasure them for the rest of my life. I always mentioned his name whenever the topic of Indian poetry in English came up in conversation and discussion. Even though he was a poet par excellence and the recipient of numerous national and international honours, he was such a modest being that he never showed any arrogance or pride. I observed this humility in him, and I had the impression that he could communicate it not just with words but also with his actions. He was so worn out at the end of the event from travelling from his home in Cuttack to Bhubaneswar. Despite my intention, I did not continue talking to him after realising the circumstances. I recognised him, and I felt so happy that I received the award and the honour from his hands. This was sufficient for me, I reasoned. I could learn the rest by reading his poetry! I must express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Udayanath Majhi, editor of the journal, for including me in the celebration and giving me the chance to meet the great poet by conferring me with the Rock Pebbles award and honour, a wish that had been gnawing at the back of my mind for a very long time and was finally realized. ■

Dr. K.V. Raghupathi, poet, critic & reviewer, former academic in the Dept. of English, Central University of Tamil Nadu, now lives at Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh.

The Critical Backdrop: In Defense of the project, Translation of *Mo Jiban Anya Eka Upanyasa* (Santanu Kumar Acharya, 2023)

Gangadhar Mishra

Sumitra Misra

The pantheon of the Odia literature is a multi-storeyed complex. If it is based on the self-regenerative legacy of the pre-modern litterateurs of Odisha, its podium houses the hall of fame that honours the modern authors of Odisha. However, the floors above the podium in the ascending order of their structural situatedness, beacon the literary glory of Odia maestros, like (i) Gopinath Mohanty, (ii) Kanhu Charan Mohanty, (iii) Surendra Mohanty, (iv) Mohapatra Nilamani Sahu, and (v) Krushna Prasad Mishra. For reasons yet to be ascertained no special floor was made available for the works of Professor Santanu Kumar Acharya. This has jolted the Odia postmodern deconstructionists. And they have taken up the gauntlet to establish the literary glory of Santanu Kumar Acharya, the Grand Master of the literature of Odisha.

In recent times, one comes across a spate of critical studies on and about the qualifying attributes of the Santanu Kumar Acharya canon. Yet, there are many vistas still unexplored. To widen the orb of Santanu Scholarship, the deconstructionists have taken up the project of literary renderings of the texticons in the oeuvre of Santanu Kumar Acharya in various languages, such as Gujarati, Tamil, Telegu *et al.* Some of the iconic works of Professor Acharya have already been transcreated in English, Hindi, Gujarati, and Bengali. Despite its evident literary merit, “*Mo Jiban: Anya Eka Upanyasa*” (the autobiography of Professor Shantanu Kumar Acharya) is not yet transcreated in English. So the Santanu fan-club has felt the pinch and this transcreator has been entrusted with the duty of rendering this epic in prose.

The autobiography of Professor Santanu Kumar Acharya has been whetting the critical acumen of scholars and critics right from 2013. So one has to burn mid-night oil to pin-point its unexplored areas. In my considered opinion, till today, no one has studied this magnum from the perspective of :-

- i) *nouveau roman*,
- ii) narratology,
- iii) critical discourse analysis of the systems of administration outlined in elaborate details in this historical chronicle,
- iv) nuances of effective administration at the HEI level, and
- v) the ways and means of making one's presence felt in an obnoxiously victimizing world.

If the scholars in and off Orissa take up critical studies of Santanu Kumar Acharya canon from the perspectives suggested above, while drawing illustrative material from the translated version of *Mo Jiban Anya Eka Upanayasa*, Santanu scholarship would definitely get the fillip it deserves. Let us do justice to "Santanu Studies".

A Straight Talk - *Marma Katha* (Odia)

Prime Writer: Professor Shntanu Kumar Acharya

Transcreation: Professor Dr. Gangadhar Mishra,

Dr. Mrs. Sumitra Mishra

In my opinion, "The story of my life: It's a different kind of novel" (2013) is not a novel; it's my autobiography. That's why, all that I have described in it – places, peoples, events, and time-flows are absolutely historical and factual. Verity (truth/veritas) is, therefore, its quintessence.

Many a time, I have honestly asked myself, "Why the autobiography? Why??" And after some deep deliberations, I have been able to find a convincing answer. I have duly dwelt upon the aforesaid pertinent question and its answer in the first chapter of the autobiography.

I was born in 1933. Then India was not free. Like myself, most of my contemporaries – Odia poets, writers, and intellectuals, were also born in the British Raj over India. Then "they" were getting themselves ready for World War-II. In the very year of my birth, to be specific in 1933, Hitler, the exponent of Nazism, assumed the office of the Chancellor of Germany. And in 1939, just six years after the commencement of his Chancellorship, he launched World War-II. However, just three years before my birth, Mahatma Gandhi had wound up the Salt Movement/ Satyagraha in 1930. This Satyagraha had really shaken the very foundation of the British Empire in India. As a natural sequel, under the leadership and banner of Mahatma Gandhi, the Quit India movement was launched on 09.08.1942. Consequently, throngs of the Indian freedom fighters, including Mahatma Gandhi, Jawahar Lal Nehru, and Sardar Patel, were put behind the bars. So the public was agitated. They plunged themselves into the Quit India Movement. And this, in no time, became a peoples' movement. Even commoners in the remote villages of India, without any hesitation, joined the fray. Young boys and girls formed units of resistance and agitated. They became Satyagrahis (non-violent agitators). They were assaulted by the British administration; some of them were arrested. Yet they did not buckle down.

Quite strangely, during this period, Netaji Subhas Ch. Bose marched on to the centre stage of the Indian struggle for liberation. Disapproving the tenets of the Gandhian non-violent Satyagraha, he gave the clarion call in favour of direct military resistance. The Indian youth was rattled/confused at the “Y” junction of the struggle for liberation. They had to choose one between Mahatma Gandhi and Netaji Subhas Ch. Bose, one between non-violence and violence, and one between peaceful agitation and military counter-attack. The entire country was in dole drums. No wonder, some of the Indian teens were also influenced. Eventually World War-II came to an end in 1945, that too with the horrendous nuclear bombing (by the U.S.A) on Japan. So it is quite logical to conclude that I stepped into my puberty in the nascent state of the global age of nuclear warfare.

Despite the tumultuous victory of the Allies, spearheaded by the U.S.A. and well supported by the U.K., in World War-II, the sun of the British Empire in India set in 1947. And on 15.08.1947, India became a Sovereign Republic. So we, the Indians who were born in India before her independence could become the citizens of India, a Sovereign Republic of people. I was just a 14 year old young boy in 1947. Along with thousands, I had also cherished this independence of India. Obviously the attainment of Independence had made me quite elated but very soon my euphoria died a poor death: I was, again like thousands of the Indians, shocked and shattered. In the contrast, there was no eddy in the colonialist mind-set, rather the Indians born before 1947 were disappointed and in acute pain. In reality, they were in a devastating dilemma: to be a follower of Mahatma Gandhi, the apostle of non-violence, or not. Gradually the cross-currents of post- independence predilections dented the psycho-ethico-political foundation of the Indian thoughts. Indian-ness was alarmingly eroded. What World War II had failed to do was ultimately caused by the consortium of forces working against the Indian ethos. India was virtually entrapped from all the sides.

Gradually people of India became more impervious to Gandhianism. They, instead, jumped into the wagons of Marxism and Existentialism. So they yielded to the forces of violence and acrimonious jealousy. Then we were adolescents, young students in schools. We became prone to believe in scientism and empiricism. We questioned the concepts of theism, fatalism, and patriarchy. Hence the young mass of the then India got themselves ensnared in the cob webs of doubt, skepticism, and nihilism, in other words, alienation. All these ideologies had not only told upon our psyche but also the literatures of the time-period under study. Hence it is quite prudent to infer that the then Indian literature entered its modern phase in the wake of the onrush of existentialism into the intellectual environment of the then India. We were dead against the concept of existentialism. Yet the corrupt politicians in the post-independence India had pushed the then youth into the cesspools and bottomless dark dug-wells of the agnostic existentialism. That's why, Marxism could upstage Gandhianism in India in the 1950s. Consequently the Indian mind-set was enchanted by the impactful ideology of materialism and did ultimately give up spiritualism and pietism.

In such a climate of psychological cross-currents I grew up and, in due course, I completed my education both at the secondary level and tertiary level. Even today I fail to pin-point the reasons for which I was regularly bunking classes, I was eager to drop myself out from the college to join the Royal Navy as a cadet, with a view to becoming a monk, I had hitch-hiked again and again, being anxious to scientifically establish the existence of God, I had helped myself with tablets of Potassium Cyanide, despite my mental preparedness to be an MBBS, I had eased myself out of the prescribed course, inspite of my proclivity towards scientific researches of superior kinds, I found myself not suitably inclined towards research, and though I could concede to be an employee, I failed to be a stooge. Though I was a failure in various fronts, I managed to keep myself afloat despite the swells of frustration and hopelessness blighting my mind. Resultantly I became resilient and, motivating myself, I could find the golden key to the lock of success. Eventually, with the Grace of God, ultimately I could become a litterateur. I wrote copiously and prodigiously; in the process I churned out many stories, short novels, and novels. With the publication of the *Nara Kinnara* (1962), my maiden creative work, I found myself in the lime light. With its success as a peerless novel, I became a front-line novelist. *Nara Kinnar* gave me my own identity, crowned me as a litterateur. It earned name, fame, and literary awards for me. Yet, with humility, I would say, the evolution of my creative self deserves a separate serious study, right from the burgeoning of my creative talent till its total fruition.

“*Mo Jiban: Anya Eka Upanyasa*”, as suggested above, is a nouveau roman; so it is not a traditional novel. It’s my own life-story, my bildungsroman. Still then, in it I have not covered my entire life-span. It does principally deal with the growth of my litterateur’s mind (right from my school days), some of the sign-posts of my professional career (till my retirement on superannuation as a Professor of Chemistry), and hosts of spots of time relating my struggle for success. I can dare say, my life story is iconic. Luckily, the very seed from which it has sprouted has not wilted despite its anchorage in some of the cruel world around me. And in due course, it had engendered a multiple-branch-banyan tree.

In my entire career as an O.E.S. college teacher, I was frequently transferred without any valid reason, from college to college and from place to place. I was frequently catapulted from higher heights to lower heights. Even “they” had forced me to go on long leave, without any dereliction of duty on my part. “They” had tried to strip (literally) me naked on the floor of the Legislative Assembly of Orissa. “They” had even instituted many vigilance cases against me. And “they” had put my services under suspension. Frankly speaking, I was tried again and again in the tongues of fire. However, I had had miraculous reprieves. Perhaps, just because of my innate righteousness and inviolable faith on God, the Super Lord, I was unscathed. Even to my utter disbelief, most of my fire-belching detractors had admitted that God had been always protecting me. Yet their envy was never satiated. They hatched many schemes to thwart bestowment of awards for literary achievements upon me. And to some extent they were successful in their nefarious schemes. However, ultimately “they” recognized my literary output. All these did not happen in a year or two, but in thirty

years of my tenure as an O.E.S. College Teacher I had encountered many trials and tribulations. The epic, describing my struggles as a college teacher, is therefore, the heart of my life story.

I retired on superannuation in 1992. And I heaved a sigh of relief. I got enough time and opportunity to pursue my literary career. I could introspect and analyse life from various perspectives. Since the date of my retirement, I have not deviated from the path my cherished literary pursuits. In the meantime, 20 years has elapsed. And these two decades (1992 to 2002, & 2002 to 2012) have witnessed the total efflorescence of my literary career. In these 20 years, I have a spate of creative works to my credit – many stories, many novels, and many pieces of speculative literature. I have also been crowned with many diadems of literary honour and glory. And I have been humbled.

After my retirement, I have travelled a lot. I have visited many far off countries, including the U.S.A. I was always keen to undertake overseas tours. And before 1992, I was not able to do so because I was not at all free. But, in 1993, I was luckily invited by two cultural associations in the U.S.A. to grace the functions which they were organizing in the States as the Chief Guest. Between the two cultural associations under reference here, one was the Shri Jagannath Society, Nashville, Tennessee and the other was “The Orissa Society of America”. I honoured their kind invitations and could acquaint myself with their socio-politico-cultural problems as NRIs in the U.S.A. On the basis of my deep understanding of the salient issues, I penned my “The Quest: The U.S.A. still unexplored” (2000). A blend of novel and travelogue, it was taken well by one and all, especially the discerning target readers.

Since 1993, I have been flying frequently to the U.S.A. I was fortunate to grace the Car Festival, organized under the auspices of the management of the temple of Lord Jagannath in the States as the Chief Guest. Really I have undertaken many tours across the States, from all the sides and have enjoyed a lot. And I have expressed my feelings as a clinical explorer of the un-explored beauties of America in a throng of articles, in general, and in my “America Diary”, in particular.

By God’s Grace, now I am in my ripe old age (you may, call me a 90 year old Ulysses). Time has really crafted many a good, tasty, and delicious recipe, making use of the basic facts related to my protracted struggles for existence and success (up to 1992). I have tried to give a taste of the delectable dishes, straight from Time’s Kitchen, to my dear and dear readers. Please bear with me.

Mo Jiban : Anya Eka Upanyasa : 2nd Edition (2023)

Preface

Really no life-story does end conclusively. No narration can really wind up any life-story.

However, in the context of art and craft of novel, it can be said that much like the skein of the spider’s web, episodes in a novel get themselves mostly actualized without

much effort on the part of the fabula-maker. No doubt, some of them, also without any deliberate effort of the novelist, get self-rescinded from the text- in- formation. Again the process of spinning is initiated.

Unlike the novelist, no autobiographer enjoys the type of opportunity mentioned above. Once she vents out her own feelings and observations related to her own life-story, there remains no scope for any sort of revision and/or emendation. Again this kind of re-narrativization is also not acceptable. No autobiographer should be a revisionist because truth is always absolute and the autobiographer does simply deal with truth. That's why, I have never dared to re-write any portion of my autobiography, published in 2013. Here and now, I am trying to submit my own explanations vis-à-vis some of the issues pertaining to the first edition of my autobiography.

First explanation:

In the end-note (Page No.755, *Mo Jiban Anya Eka Upanyasa*. 1st Edition), I have mentioned, "I will deal with the remainder span of my life in the second volume of my own life-story". Many have complained that I have not kept up this promise. And now I'm responding to this oft-repeated complaint. As my readers know, just two years after the first publication of my autobiography, my travel book, running into 500 pages, has been published in 2015 by M/s Grantha Mandir, Cuttack. The title of this travelogue is, "Exploring America, the land of wonders". And in it I have inhaled most of my experiences which I have gathered while exploring and re-exploring the U.S.A. By 2015, I have visited the U.S.A. five times, and have visited many places, have met many people, and have closely studied their mores and manners. I have tried to make some in-depth analyses of the American socio-cultural, systems. I have felt how the Americans have been sensitized to comprehend and appreciate the legacy of the Jagannath Culture and Heritage. While taking part in various activities/ events, organized by the Puja Committees of various Jagannath Temples in different parts of the U.S.A. (even sometimes as the Chief Guest in the Car Festival), I have understood the inner being of the U.S.A. And naturally in the 2015 travelogue, I have irradiated on all these sundry issues. So, in my humble opinion, my kind readers should not clamour for the second volume of my *Mo Jiban Anya Eka Upanyasa*.

Between 1933 (the year of my birth) and 1956-57 (the year in which I worked in various academic/administrative capacities in different non-government organizations), I had fledged my wings. In 1958, I was appointed as an O.E.S. Officer (Lecturer in Chemistry) and I retired on attainment of superannuation in 1992 (after serving the Govt. of Orissa in the Deptt. of Higher Education for 34 years). And in the travelogue, mentioned above, I have dealt with all the major happenings in my life between 1992 and 2015. So I entreat my readers to allow me to consecrate my travelogue as the second volume of my own autobiography. I'm sure, I will not be disappointed.

I'm quite conscious of an important lacuna, adversely affecting my autobiography. When I retired, I was 58 years old and when I was writing my life-story, I was a 90-year-old

super senior citizen. One can, therefore, deduce that I have left out almost thirty years of my life in this life-story of mine. I know, I can't address this issue now. I am not trying at all to update my autobiography. However, in the light of all the books I have written (novels, short-story collections, children's literature and YAFs between 1992 and 2013). I request my dear readers to take stock of some of the major events in my life (in the said time-line). Among my works, published between 2003 and 2022, the three mentioned below could be (very) helpful in this regard:

1. Anomara Kanya (Anoma's Daughter) (2003),
2. Jeje mala pare (After the death of my Grand Pa) (2020), and
3. Bahu Bahu Janma (Cycles of Birth) (2022)

“Anoma's Daughter” was adjudged eligible for the prestigious “Katha Foundation” award (2003). The central idea of this novel is very pulsating – it unravels a less explored aspect of the medieval history of Orissa. It investigates into the birth of Lord Buddha (Gautam Buddha) in a less known hamlet in Orissa. In this book, it has been proved that Gautam Buddha was not born in Nepal but in Orissa. To defend this thesis, beyond any cavil, strings of convincing arguments have been made in this revisionist study of the history of Orissa. Perhaps, that's why, this “Anoma's Daughter” has been deservingly basking itself in the approbation of overseas readers.

“After the death of the Grand Pa” (2020) is a full-fledged novel, made up into more than 200 pages. This novel is woven around the Quantum theory that has been agitating the minds of science-buffs right from the first day of its articulation. It also does deal with the traditional Indian notion/philosophy that deals with the concept of rebirth. This novel is based on an authentic social event suggesting a lot.

Kinshuka, an Indian-American, is a student of a High School in America. He finds the T.V. set in his study beaming something even though he has not switched it on (and nobody else in his home handles it). He finds the T.V. remote in the dysfunctional mode. To his surprise, the T.V. set has been still beaming. As he does keenly observe, he finds a face with resemblance to that of Mahatma Gandhi being flashed on the T.V. screen. And he finds the on-screen old man saying something to him through gestures. He fails to make out any thing.

Parents of Kinshuka have been working in the NASA as Computer Scientists, but that morning they are at their home. So Kinshuka calls out. They reach the study room and recognize the old man on the T.V. screen. The gentleman on the screen is none other than their very own Grand Father, a veteran (100 year old) Gandhian political leader in a small village in Odisha. Father of Kinshuka fails to make head or tail of this weird experience. He becomes apprehensive; he fears the worst. He calls his family in Orissa. He is told that the Grand Old Man is battling for his life. To both Kinshuka and his father (Baikuntha), the entire episode appears uncanny and unnatural. How can one, about to die in a far-off village in Orissa in India – at least 10000 miles off America- could be seen on their T.V. set, still

switched off. Baikuntha pays no heed to this event, but in no time Kinshuka manages to look beyond the apparent and he decodes the event. He infers that after the physical death of the body of his Great Grand Father, the soul of the deceased is trying to pass on a piece of vital information to his grandson and, that is why, he is trying to ask them to join the obsequies in Orissa. Because of the callousness of his father, Kinshuka, just a 17 year old boy, insists on flying to India, unescorted. In his opinion, if Charles Darwin, in his adolescence could embark a sailing ship and voyage unescorted to gather evidences in support of the theory of evolution, why he cannot visit India, unshepherded. He has understood how Darwin's Theory of Evolution had shaken the religious base of the then human societies and how man had become an agnostic to announce the death of God. And he is also sure of the fact that agnosticism has spawned stinking materialism in the cesspool of nihilism and that both the world wars in the 20th century are offshoots of the macabre joint forces of atheism and agnosticism. He is excited to fly to India and to rediscover his own spiritual roots in the cultural sub-soils of India. He has the foreknowledge that India has been waxing eloquent about the immutability of the human soul: Man's body dies but not his soul. He is sure; the soul of his great grandfather has taken the pain to enable him to see to the nature of human soul and to advise him to attend to his family duty in India. He decides to do his bit in the ensuing funeral ceremony in honour of his great grandfather in India.

As it is evident, "After the death of the Grand Pa" is based on the scientific analysis of a spiritual concept. Yet it is all about tangles of family relationship. In it, one can also find clinical analyses of the contemporary disoriented politics in India, along with those related to some of the abstruse concepts and unsolved puzzles which are discernible in the Buddhist scriptures of ancient India. Having read this 212-page-dramatic novel, Dr. Debakanta Mishra, one of the astute Physicists in Orissa, (India) has observed, "Had this "Jeje Mala Pare" been written in English, it would have been definitely appreciated as a texticon by the global intelligentsia and would have been crowned with an international award for being a piece of rare-earth intellectual creativity."

After its publication, my "Jeje Mala Pare" (2020) has caught the fancy of the readers. I have ventured to (re)try my skills as a novelist after about a 17-year-old period of stasis (my "Anoma's Daughter" has been published in 2003) and, between 2003 and 2020, I have written no other novel. That is why, some of the readers have been stunned. As an author, I am not required to respond to such off-the-target questions. And my next creative work, "Bahu Bahu Janma" (2022) has spoken quite eloquently to prove that I have not lost my talent as a novelist.

"Bahu Bahu Janma" (Cycles of Birth) is my 17th novel. It is based on a scientific theory and also on a scriptural concept on the human soul (as enumerated in the Upanishadas of India). In this novel, running into more than 200 pages, the bond between Raghunath, a snake-charmer and Sundari, his pet King Cobra is highlighted. Driven by the force(s) of love and the resultant anxiety caused by the longing of his heart, Raghunath does not bother much for Sundari's poisonousness. Yet he is bitten by his Sundari again and again and dies

in no time. After the death of his body, his soul is incarnated and re-incarnated again and again and so it experiences a spate of births. In this novel, I have tried to scientifically interpret the phenomenon of consecutive births in physical form.

After his death due to snake bite, Raghunath is re-born in the Hell and there he has lived with Sundari. After his demise in the hell, he is again born in a cultured Brahmin family in Puri, the holy centre of pilgrimage, dedicated to Lord Jagannath in Orissa. He has ultimately become a highly qualified and high caliber skin and plastic surgery specialist in the pay roll of the Govt. of Orissa in a Govt. hospital. To the public, he is known as Dr. Haridas Sarangi. Quite unexpectedly, one day he has to attend on a critical acid-burn case. Jharana, the student leader, has been targeted by a gang of barbarous political opponents who have master-minded the plot to eliminate her from the centre-court of politics by throwing acid on her face. They have really intended to make a living ghost out of Jharana's feminine frame. And Dr. Harihar Das has to exert himself to do the best to save this victim.

Dr. Das, the Plastic Surgery specialist, is able to make the disfigured face of Jharana get back much, much of its hallowed beauty (before the attack). Yet he gets the jolt of his life. He is able to detect a pin-prick on the patient's throat and he is able to visualize Sundari, his beloved in his previous birth as Raghunath. After the cosmetic surgery, both of them get romantically inclined to each other and ultimately they marry. Yet, this marriage is found to be a jinxed one. Even after her marriage, Jharana is not spared. She has been assaulted again and again by her political adversaries, hell-bent to harass her. They create problems for the couple. In the end, they kidnap Jharana, subject her to a gruesome gang rape and mince her moral courage. Jharana tries to commit suicide, but her lover-husband manages to save her life. Consequently Jharana loses zest for life, she gets bitterly disenchanted. Her conscience does not allow her to live the life of a married lady. She resorts to an unapprehended strategy; she disappears. In the very night of the consummation of their marriage, she melts into the thin air, leaving Haridas lovelorn and forlorn. Haridas fails to get any trace of her. However, after sessions of prolonged coaxing, Haridas manages just to hear her voice:

I have folly destroyed myself. I have fully immersed myself in the idol of Radha, you have kept under the table. You can't subject me any more to the cycle of births. You can't revive me. Please forget me." Haridas asks, "How could you do that? Where is your biological body?" The scientific temperament of Haridas is inquisitive; Dr. Haridas is eager to reach the heart of the matter. "At will I can contort my own physical body and, at will, I can hide myself any where. You know, my dear, I am a wily snake", Jharana replies.

Consequently Haridas becomes sure of the phenomenon of the cycle of birth (samsara) to which the unredeemed human soul is vulnerable. He becomes sure of the fact that in this life he has got back his snake consort in the form of Jharana. With this understanding, he starts a series of scientific probes. He undertakes a retinue of off-the-world cosmic voyages into the unexplored pitruloka, swarga, maha, jana, tapah, satyaloka,

and finally Vishnuloka. In no way, the story of all these long super-space journeys in the uncharted void is less engaging and less dramatic than the voyages of Columbus, Vasco de Gama, James Cook, and Anderson in the past. Ultimately Dr. Haridas is able to decode the science of propelling man into the Vishnuloka, the farthest and the most hallowed supra-space. He himself reaches the deca-dimensional Vishnuloka and rescues Jharana and with his wife returns to this tetra-dimensional mundane world. The novel ends very much like a festive comedy with notes of connubial joy.

In my “Bahu Bahu Janma,” I have deliberately made use of a new technique of narrativization and also a new system of stylistics. Hence it does go well with my own “After death of the Grand Pa”. In both these fictions, I have blended the oriental concept of cosmic creation with the scientific theory of quantum mechanics and have used a “modified mythic style.” I have been persuading myself, right from my juvenile days, to make use of my own style and technique, essentially original in their tone and tenor. That’s why, Mandakini the maiden anthology of my poems in Odia, is qualified by an innovative style.

Let me make a cursory attempt to shed light on some of my iconic creative works, such as Mandakini, Kathare Kathare Biguyana, and Sakuntala.

Mandakini (2022) is my juvenilia. In it, one finds 58 original poems along with six stories written by Pradyumna Acharya, my younger brother. It is published by Bharata Bharati, Kanchan, Gajapati Nagar, Sutahat, Cuttack-I. All the poems, anthologized in the Mandakini, express “spontaneous over-flow” of my “powerful feelings” at the age of 12. Then in the 1944-1945 academic year, I was a student of Class VII in Banki, Subarnapur M.E. School. One beautiful morning, while bathing in the river Mahanadi, I was lucky to watch a scintillating sun-rise. I was thrilled. I was excited and sensitized in the extreme. I have described all these in my *Mo Jiban Anya Eka Upanyasa*. After this experience, I had composed the poems. I had festooned together all the poems, hand-written by myself, with care and confidence, and had presented the collection to my dear and loving father, as a gift. My father had treasured this maiden anthology of my Odia poems in his treasure-box almost for four decades. He had also preserved many of my compositions in Odia and English and my copy books in class IV. My father passed away in 1985. Before his sad demise, he had himself bequeathed his treasures to me. Since 1985, all these manuscripts were gathering dust in my custody. After many years, Sri Umesh Prasad Sahu, one of my publisher friends in Cuttack, got a glance of the “Mandakini” manuscript. He requested me to entrust him with the assignment of getting “Mandakini” duly published. And Mandakini was published by Sri Sahu in 2022.

I do owe a lot to Umesh Prasad, my friendly publisher. He has brought out all of my articles for children in the form of Kathare Kathare Bignyana (a children’s Book) in 2019. In it, one finds my “Mo Katha Godha Katha Kahe” and “Akasha-ku Satoti Pahacha”, duly honoured by the Deptt. of Education in the Government of India as prize-winning Children Literature in 1961 and 1963 respectively. In this anthology, the entire bunch of Children’s

Literature, to be specific 12 in number, written by myself, has been given prominence. Eventually “Kathare Kathare Bignyana” a volume of literary works running into more than 500 pages, has materialized.

After my retirement from the O.E.S. in 1992, by God’s Grace, the creative writer in me was rejuvenated. I could motivate myself to plenish the trove of my creative writing. My creative afflatus soared high. I wrote copiously and prodigiously. My works were on demand. And they were regularly published in various magazines. I got my works published regularly in various Magazines.

I was encouraged to get some of my works translated in different languages, but I have not been that successful in this area. I have been told again and again even by some experienced and astute translators, “It’s not easy to do justice to your peculiarly distinctive style and technique in the translated version, especially in English rendering.” Perhaps, that is why, till today, my Nara Kinnara, the “gem-stone in the crown of my literary accomplishments” (I quote) is not yet translated in English. Even some of the front-line translators who have been keen on translating my Nara Kinnara into English have left the project after some sorts of brave initial attempt. However, it’s a matter of great joy that Sakuntala (1987), one of my major works, has been rendered into English by Professor Lipipushpa Nayak, a veteran translator. The English version of Sakuntala has been published by Mr. Banoj Tripathy, the proprietor of M/s Pakshighar, BBSR, in 2014 and again in 2022.

After my retirement on superannuation in 1992, my social activities have increased in leaps and bounds. I have to attend many a cultural function, sometimes against my own will because of my advanced age, but invariably as the Chief Guest. And I have always tried to address the wise audience thoughtfully and insightfully. Some of my addresses are showcased by the “You Tube” for the benefit of the public at large.

Between 1992 and 2023, I have become a more active culturalist-cum-humanist. I am now more intimately and spiritually bonded with human society and with the world of wisdom, apotheosis, and mellow fruitfulness.

And I know, God is immensely kind to me; He has been showering His blessings on me. No doubt, much before these years of my crowning glory as a litterateur, even in the days of my excruciating struggles for bare existence, I was a devout spiritualist and a diehard believer in the Grace of God. Now I am absolutely ready for my cherished imparadizement in God’s “paradise”. Amen. ■

Santanu Kumar Acharya

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George Orwell's Vision of Life

Arati Sinha

George Orwell was one of those writers whose name and fame included in their lifetime. It is only when the times changed and when the revaluation of existing literature was needed that Orwell's worth as a philosopher on life and things could be established. His two eponymous works 'Animal Farm' and 'Nineteen Eighty Four' were insufficient to establish him as a moralistic and individualistic thinker who honestly and brutally wrote against the British Empire. Several of his other essays, generalistic writing and letters bring about his frank thoughts about the falsity of religion, snobbishness of English people and writers, the ills of human suffering and social injustice. The moralist in him became the novelist for individual freedom and freedom of a nation as well. The imperial England for him became the symbol of 'totalitarian state' which he has cynically and satirically projected in 'Nineteen Eighty Four' this version with Fascism and Nazism took the shape of 'Animal Farm'. The terms used by him in the works like 'Big Brother' is watching you' has become cult phrases and to be 'Orwellian' is simply understood as being authoritarian and totalitarian. As such the aim of this article is to bring about the vision of life and matters of George Orwell,

Keywords: Individualism, Socialism, Totalitarianism, Decency, Moralism.

Introduction: George Orwell's fame rests mainly on the publication of his two novels 'Animal Farms' in 1945 and 'Nineteen Eighty Four' in 1949. Besides those two memorable works, he has written seven more novels, a number of essays of literary, political and sociological nature, letters and volumes of journalistic works of high artistic order. His literary career covers chiefly the period of 1930's and late 1940's. Throughout his life he wrote in one form or the other what he thought honestly or felt deeply, be it the falsity of religion or the snobbishness of English people and writers. Although, very few books of reviews or criticism were published on him in his lifetime, he gained much acclaim and appreciation posthumously. Through his two eponymous novels and other literary works Orwell comes before us as a philosopher who reflects on life and things what he honestly believes in. E.M. Forster has said correctly:

To have a philosophy – even a poetic and emotional philosophy like Hardy’s and Conrad’s – leads to reflections on life and things. And this is how a common link between the vision of a novelist and the thinking pattern of the readers is established. But the thinker in Orwell did not run counter to the moral artist in him. And it was this preference for ‘moral’ concern which limited the fictional art of Orwell (63).

At the earliest, he discovered dual worlds of human society- the moneyed and the impoverished. The world of poverty, sickness, fear, guilt and want which he explored, because of the basic pattern of his own life. His sad experience of ‘cross gate’ and his posting in Burma strongly influenced the growth of a social conscience in him. His love for the pre-war England, the intensive industrialization and urbanization of the English Countryside filled in him a feeling of ‘paradise lost’. Consequently, a deep sense of gloom and dismay became the dominant strain in his life and works.

The moral vision of Orwell, the novelist is truly shaped against the background of Orwell, the man. And he was obviously, a man of ambivalent nature. He hated the experiences of his childhood but loved the time for its colorfulness and generosity. What repulsed his good sense was sure to be opposed by him. If he attacked the Left wing politicians vehemently he did not spare the Right for their wrongs. He was chivalric in spirit like Quixote. He searched after the ‘truth’ very diligently without caring for the offense it might bring to others. To Quote George Woodcock: ‘What made him exceptional – and more than a little eccentric in the eyes of his contemporaries – was the fact that he also tried to work out his theories in action and then to give his actions shape in literature’ (13).

He valued the freedom of a nation as much as he loved the freedom of an individual. When he was working in B.B.C and as an editor in ‘Tribune’, he forcefully advocated his liberal views in favour of the Indian people. In ‘As I please’ column of the ‘Tribune’, Jan 28, 1944 he protested against the arrest of Mr. Suresh Vaidya, an Indian journalist living in England who had refused military service in his essay ‘Reflections on Gandhi’, Orwell promised the nationalistic feelings of Gandhi, who, he said, was capable of shaking the ‘Empire’ by his spiritual power. He was highly impressed by the ‘Mahatma’s courage, ethics and honesty.

Orwell’s Burmese experiences might have unleashed his bitterness against the English society and its ambivalent values but his patriotism for the British soil and culture was unflinching. In his famous essay ‘England your England’ written during the war he asserts that it is your civilisation, it is you. However much you hate it or laugh at it, you will never be happy away from it. He was against the insensitive following of ‘Stalinism’ by the intellectuals of his age. He raised his voice against the social and moral implications of his belief. According to him the English people’ had the characteristic inability to think ‘Logically’. In spite of being a bitter critic of the English society, he loved the English landscape, Scenery, and literature very passionately.

On closure perusal of Orwell's life and writing, four distinct phases of growth and shaping of his vision of life comes on the surface. First and foremost characteristic is his rebellions nature like Prometheus he seems to be defying and challenging the existing ways of the universe where the innocent has to suffer and the righteous suppressed. He sets out with a definite intention to raise his voice against the ills of human suffering and injustice. Secondly, his thought pattern was such that he never allowed his personal opinions to cloud his respect for the men at responsible places. If he criticized Kipling on matters of colonial imperialism, he also appreciated him for his discipline, order and patriotism. Thirdly, he was basically like an 18th century English 'Moralist' who laid much emphasis on the 'enlightened rationality' of a writer. Fourthly, his romantic spirit could not be missed out in his works which always takes him back to the fishing springs and the whirling pools of his childhood days. Rachael Reese has rightly observed: 'These four strains were combined in him to form a well-balanced and harivonious character, which might have been happy one in spite of his philosophical pessimism, if the times... had been less unpropitious' (11).

Like Dr. H. Lawrence, Orwell showed a great respect and love for family life. For him 'family' is an integrating force in the life of a man. It is vital for the right growth of an individual and a cordial society. However, boring and painful a family may be, it feels pleasing and satisfying to come back to its folds after much wondering. Although he disliked his childhood family days, in his essays 'The Road to Wigen Pier' and 'Coming up for Air' he has idealised his parental life. In his most melancholic essay 'Such, such were the Joys' he has described his home as "a place ruled by love rather than fear". This feeling of family love became the basic of his socialistic philosophy and the want of which in the modern political administration created in his mind the image of the totalitarian society in 'Nineteen Eighty Four'. In this novel Orwell has described most horribly, a world, where the very essence of domestic spirit is lacking within a family and where children work as spies for the state against their parents.

Orwell regarded sexual appeal as a natural source of human pleasure and a necessary part of creativity. In the society of *Nineteen Eighty Four* the Profs lead a free sexual life as against the ruling class. In the opinion of the novelist, this is the real pleasure of life. In the essay 'The Art of Donald McGill', Orwell has appreciated the sexually suggestive pictures of the artist as highly creative. Actually the writer interconnects marriage and domestic love with the love of the society and the state. This chain of life represents harmonious indestructible force of human civilisation running down from the past to the future. In 'Nineteen Eighty Four,' Winston, just before his arrest views a sight which reaffirms his belief in continual force of life : 'The woman down there had no mind; she had only strong drive, a warm heart, and a fertile belly. He wondered how many children she had given birth to over thirty unbroken years. At the end of it she was still singing '(124).

The parole woman stood as a symbol of family in the social terms, the unit of reproduction and growth. The family life is symbolic of vitality set against the earthly features of state life in Oceanic. His deep affinity with primitive design of life shows a

close affinity with D.H.Lawrence. Such a man who genuinely believed in the natural charms of life and essential dignity of man can never be a pessimist, although labeled as such by critics.

Orwell as a writer was essentially devoted to a struggle against imperialism, inequality and fascism. His political insights forever demanded a worker's government which he aimed at achieving through 'democratic socialism' As against the Marxist socialism, it aimed for a Russian pattern of socialist government. It was supposed to curb massive employment and 'growing menace' of Hitler. Orwell's experiences of the Spanish civil war had taught him that communist society had failed to emancipate man from the real evils and that real socialism was still far off. He believed that in such a state of crisis there is no importance of individual loyalty. It must owe to the state only which disallows roughly all human passions and emotions. This was a complex philosophy and as such practically not viable. Still in keeping with this belief animals in 'Animal Farm' follow this principle in letter, but in the long run it turns out to be a failure in the absence of a moral base. It points towards the fact that Orwell wanted this change not by destroying the established fabric of the society but by introducing moral methods. John Atkins has rightly observed:

Orwell stuck to the simple and positive conception of socialism based on general ideas of brotherhood, fair play and honest dealing and he distrusts the involved metaphysics of Marxist thought... He did not believe in deliberately destroying a relatively happy society simply because it was notorganised in a particular way 13).

In other words, Orwell advocated for a world where there will restriction on the accumulation of power and property in the hands of individual and will be governed in a democratic way by selected members of the people.

Orwell believed that class-distinction in England was the greatest enemy in the way of socialism. To break this system people have to change their habits, tastes and prejudices first. The "book trained socialists" of England, the so called 'Bourgeois' were inwardly clung to their class character. In spite of raising their voice against it from a pulpit they felt disgusted to come close to the workers/laborers. They helped indirectly in suppressing the worker's revolution. In 'The Road ToWigen Pier' he has described 'mechanical growth' also as an inimical force to socialism. Machines cause the growth of unemployment among workers and thus give more teeth to the capitalists to exploit them. He has called this machine worship as 'the stupid cult'. Actually Orwell's philosophy of socialism is merely limited to economic justice but extends up to cultural and moral change in general outlook of man.

Orwell's views on the socialistic revolution in England were really those of a moralist, of a social saint who pleaded for a change in the existing pattern of society not through a revolutionary seizure of power, but only through the spiritual operation of reason in man. No revolution can succeed without a change in human heart. The animal rebellion

in 'Animal Farm' remained a failure as the rulers were devoid of moral sense. Throughout his works, he proposed the belief that the modern politics has lost its contact with religion, literature and morals. The world of Oceania in 'Nineteen Eighty Four' is devoid of emotional sense and has least careers with morals and principles. Hence, he was always nostalgic about the past society for its culture, religion and decency. Orwell's fear of a totalitarian government is based on the point that politicians keep their people in the dark and suppress liberal thinking. It helps in bringing about a political chaos in the state with a deliberate extermination of language and literature. The totalitarian state of Oceania in 'Nineteen Eighty Four' has introduced 'New Speak', a language devised to meet 'Ingsoc'. It is basically meant not to extend the range of thought but to control it. In this world, words such as 'honour', 'justice', 'morality', 'Internationalism', 'democracy', 'science' and 'religion' have completely vanished. Huxley also portrayed a world like this in the novel 'Brave New World'. The dystopian world of 'Nineteen Eighty Four' was actually a satiric depiction of the intellectual and political crises of his time which had angered Orwell. Throughout his writing career he dedicated his life in the defense of individual liberty and freedom of Speech.

Nineteen Eighty Four as such can be also regarded as the document of Orwell's growing bitterness and feeling of frustration against the loss of political liberalism and cultural decency. In this regard Alan Sandison has observed: 'In Orwell it is unquestionable the negative conscience which predominates the obverse of his fierce individualism being an almost obsessive preoccupation with guilt and sin (55)'.

Conclusion: On deeper analysis of Orwell's life, his mission and his literary works it is observed that he was neither a defeatist nor a pessimist. In fact he loved humanity and had a passionate desire to live in a state of full freedom. His pessimism was only a means of giving warning against the prevailing evil situation tending toward totalitarian dominance. He was afraid that there was a lack of human feeling in the writing produced after the First World War. He disliked Rudyard Kipling for his imperialistic attitude but he certainly appreciated his humanitarian instinct. His love for feelings of the common man made him prefer Charles Dickens. Orwell protested against the dominance of reason in the life of man. He believed, like Lawrence, that "My blood is always wiser than the intellect". The contemporary modern world of 'big brother' and 'black moustache' had disillusioned him and in his concern for humanity and decency he might appear cynical to critics. But as Bertrand Russell suggests, this feeling for common man has prevented Orwell from becoming a prophet of his age. ■

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The Impact of Gandhian Ideology on Indian English Literature

Dayanidhi Pradhan

Indian English literature, after passing through many vicissitudes and ordeals has achieved the literary acme today. Moreover, Indo-Anglian Literature in the twentieth century and onwards is largely influenced by Gandhian thoughts and his ethical ideals. Hence, the period is rightly called Gandhian era. In the wake of independence on 15th August, 1947, Gandhian socio-political ideals and principles significantly contributed to Literature, art and culture. Gandhi's image, his dynamic personality and his philosophy inspired millions of people in India and also abroad, including a large number of poets, novelists and other men of sensibility.

The present paper is an attempt to examine the impact of Mahatma Gandhi's lofty ideas and ideals on Indian writings in English in general. Further, it also endeavours to portray extensively the basic tenets of Gandhian thoughts and philosophy in terms of the prevailing social, political, educational, religious cultural and economic issues etc. relating to Indian English Literature both in pre-independence and post-independence period.

Keywords: Gandhian ideology, image, philosophy, literature.

It is significant that Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi emerged like a colossus on the literary and political horizon of India during the first half of the twentieth century. Such a great man was born in Western India in 1869, a child of the Victorian age, at the heyday of British imperial rule in India. Gandhi cast his impact both on national politics and national literature just after his return from South Africa in 1915. In fact, M.K. Gandhi has a multi-faceted and complex personality. He combined in himself, the dual role of a saint and an active politician. He found keen interest in studying the Indian epics, the Vedas, the Gita, the Vaishnava and the Jain Literature. Besides that, he also went through the Bible, the Koran and some other holy books. Gandhiji's thought had its root in Hindu ideology. We find in his person numerous influences of the western writers like John Ruskin, Leo Tolstoy and David Thoreau. He was much impressed by studying the books such as John Ruskin's *Unto This Last*, Plato's *Apology*, Leo Tolstoy's book, *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, David Thoreau's essay, *Civil Disobedience*.

Gandhiji was an iconic writer who has captivated the imagination of writers of different genres, such as poetry, prose, fiction to non-fictions. Mahatma Gandhi, an epoch-making personality who has been much discussed and written about, authored many works of Literature. Notable Literary works of Gandhiji include *Hind Swaraj*, *The Bhagavad Gita*, (translated as *Anashakta Yoga* in Gujrati), *An Autobiography*, *My Experiments with Truth* and a few books. His style of writing is simple, precise, clear and devoid of artificialities as his own life. His journalistic writings upheld him as a classic media man. A.S. Ayengar aptly remarks, “There was not only a new thought, but new language in newspaper writing and what he wrote was the best in political thought and finest in journalistic writings. No editor could escape being influenced by Gandhiji’s writings.” (P.85)

Indian writings in English is the historical encounter of two cultures, both Indian and Western for nearly hundred and ninety years. With this, Indian people experienced the impact of western culture. Moreover, Gandhian era in Indian writings in English began in 1920. Gandhi gave a new direction and dimension for Indo-Anglian writers in matters of style and subject matter. Furthermore, Gandhi has inspired writers of various indigenous languages like Hindi, Gujarati, Bangla Tamil, Telugu, Odia and so on. It is pertinent to note here that the urge for social reform was a significant contribution of the Indian Renaissance of the nineteenth century. Consequently, the novelist turned to the living reality of the contemporary socio-political scene for inspiration. Gandhiji’s message for peace and truth, nonviolence, his ethical idealism and the saint-like austerity of his personal life, counter-balanced the foreign domination and awakened among Indian writers a new sense of national pride and purpose. To the masses, Gandhi became a legend, a tradition and an oracle. They regarded him as an aviator, who descended upon the Earth to destroy the monster of foreign domination and to set Bharata-Mata (Mother-India) free from the ‘Ferungi Sarkar’ (the British Government). It was this magical and magnetic impact of Mahatma, and his image on India’s mind that captured the imagination of many Indo-Anglian novelists and poets. They regarded him as their literary champion and spiritual mentor.

The prominent Indo-Anglian novelists who wrote under the influence of Gandhian thoughts and ideologies are Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Jawaharlal Nehru, Manohar Malgonkar, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Chaman Nahal, Ahmad Abbas, Nayantara Sahgal and K. Nagrajanand a few others. Some of them belong to pre-independence and some others belong to post-independence period, depending on when their works on Gandhi have been created. Not only Gandhi is alive in Indo-Anglian literature, but also he has opened up new chapters of literary and critical discourse in post nineties. Major writers of the Gandhian era were fascinated by the dynamic personality and noble ideals of Gandhiji. A.K. Mehrotra rightly observes:

“The novelists of the 1930s and 1940s owed their inspiration and the conditions for their emergence to two contexts: the social and political upheavals of the ‘Gandhian whirlwind’ and the era of late-modernism in Europe.” (P.191)

In fact, Gandhi gave a clarion call for achievement of freedom for India through his inspiring speech and pragmatic approach to life. In fact, he gave life to every segment of nation like politics, economics, education, religion, social life, language and literature. Consequently, it enlightened the literary field along with the political arena. In this context, K.R. Srinivas Iyengar observes:

“To Gandhi, national realization included the ending of political subjection and economic degradation, the removal of social inequalities and abuses like untouchability, caste arrogance, occupational prejudice, the reform of education and giving new life to Language and literature.”(P.258)

The eminent poetess, Sarojini Naidu, in her sonnet on Gandhi describes him as an eternal lotus, who is a guiding star for billions of people: “Oh mystic lotus, sacred and sublime.....”

As far as Indian fiction in English is concerned, a Gandhi novel was written by each one of its three founding fathers. Mulk Raj Anand’s novel, *Untouchables* (1935), revolves around Bakha, a young scavenger, an untouchable. The young boy goes to hear Gandhi address a public meeting. What Gandhi says, to the effect that the problem of untouchability should be resolved through ‘love’ and ‘persuasion’ and it leaves Bakha deeply moved, but then, on his way to home, he happens to overhear a young and radical poet offer a more modern solution to the problem, ‘the flush system’, which Bakha prefers. It indirectly hints that Gandhi loved the untouchables, whom he called Harijans and worked long for their emancipation. *Waiting for the Mahatma*(1955) by R.K. Narayan highlights Gandhi’s philosophy of life and its influence upon a revolutionary. The novel humorously narrates a fitful love story involving its feckless hero and devotedly Gandhian heroine. Gandhian scholar, Vashist Bhardwaj finds the works of R.K. Narayan critical for his exploration of Gandhiji as subject. He aptly observes, “Known for his direct approach in handling his subjects, in Gandhi’s case too, Narayan has used his wit at its best to ‘demahatmise’ Gandhism. For instance, Gandhi is seen as an oblivious yet dominating character in *Waiting for Mahatma* with eyes closed to what is around and busy playing the dynamics of self.” In contrast, *Kanthapura* (1938), the first novel by Raja Rao towers above all other Gandhi novels in English and probably in any language. It describes with fine inwardness, the initially resistant, but then euphorically transformative process through which Gandhi’s message reaches the simple tradition-bound inhabitants of a small and remote village through a surrogate figure, the young Moorti who is called ‘Our Gandhi’. The novel reverberates with Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai! (Victory to Mahatma Gandhi). It is significant that Raja Rao’s rigorous Gandhian devotion and adoration probably propel him to idealise and eternalise Gandhi and Gandhianism perceiving him through his Indian eyes.

Jawaharlal Nehru’s autobiographical book, *The Discovery of India* sketches a fine picture of Gandhi, as the need of the time. Acknowledging Gandhi as the “Symbol of India”,

Nehru has elevated Mahatma for his principles of truth and non-violence. Considering the versatility of Gandhiji as a writer and as a “formative influence on writers of the time” (K.R.S. Iyengar), Nehru puts his remark in *The Discovery of India*:

“Gandhiji’s influence on India’s mind has been profound in present age: how long and in what form it will endure, only the future can show. That influence is not limited to those who agree with him or accept him as a national Leader; it extends to those who also disagree with him and criticize him.” (P. 197)

It is no hyperbolic to state that the charismatic personality of Mahatma Gandhi affected the people of India as powerfully as his pen. It exercises a potent influence on our language and literature, both directly through his own writings in English and Gujarati, and indirectly through his movements generated by his revolutionary thoughts and practice. The leadership of Mahatma Gandhi spurred up new political and social ideas in India. In the wake of Independence on 15th August, 1947, Gandhian socio-political ideals and principles significantly contributed to literature, art and culture. The trend of literary activities continued to influence the trend of Indian English writings. Indian English literature, after passing through many vicissitudes and ordeals has achieved the literary acme today. Moreover, Indo-Anglian Literature in the twentieth century and onwards is largely influenced by Gandhian thoughts and his ethical ideals. Meenakshi Mukherjee aptly observes:

“It is believed that the independence movement in India was not merely a political struggle, but an all-pervasive emotional experience for all Indians in the nineteen twenties and thirties. That was an experience which was national in nature.” (P. 14)

No Indian writer of the then time could oversight the national upsurge. The ideology of Gandhiji was the moving force for the national upsurge during his time. The subject matter and scope of new writing in English expanded significantly and contributed to ideas, experiences, hopes and aspirations of the post-independence literature, especially Indian writing in English. The ideology of Gandhi not only remained on the paper, but it became the epitome of hopes and aspirations for the bright future of India. When Gandhi appeared on the national and political scene, Indian society needed a radical transformation and reformation. No doubt, Gandhiji actively dealt with the economic, political and social problems. As a devout karma-yogi, he struggled hard to ameliorate the economic status of have-nots and reform some evils, dogmas prevailing in the then India society.

Coming over the main focus of the paper, it may be noted that the relevance and importance of Gandhian principles of truth and non-violence has been finely delineated in significant novels like *A Bend in the Ganges* by Manohar Malgonkar, and *The Gandhi Quartet* by Sahitya Academy awardee, ChamanNahal and a few too. It is noteworthy that ChamanNahal’s best novel, *Azadi* bagged SahityaAkademi Award for the year 1977. Moreover, *The Gandhi Quartet* is a significant historical work consisting of four novels which deals with India’s freedom movement and its socio-political consequences. The image of Gandhi as portrayed in the novels is dynamic, secular and manifold. Gandhi is held with

reverence not only by common men of India, but also by eminent literary figures. For instance, just after being assassinated by Nathuram Godse on 30 January 1948, Harivansh Rai Bachchan, the lecturer in English at the University of Allahbad and probably the most popular Hindi poet of the twentieth century, wrote 204 poems paying tribute to Gandhi. The first poem began, “Today our Bapu has passed away/Today our flag is lowered in shame” and concluded “Today he has died and became immutable/Today he has died and became immortal.” (P. 448)

Gandhi’s life is a vital message, which has been a monumental source of inspiration to writers not only in India but abroad also. He is a great experimenter and hence, he fascinated the inquisitive western minds and diasporic writers. Early foreign writings on Gandhiji include the creative works of French writer Rolland Romain, American and English writers George Orwell, Edmund Jones, Ruskin Bond, Edward Thompson and to mention a few. George Orwell, puts Gandhi to trial until proved innocent, describing him as “humble naked old man, sitting on a praying mat and shaking empires by spiritual power.” (P. 91)

Viceroy Mountbatten aptly remarks expressing his dread: “India, indeed, the world as well, will not see the like of him (Gandhiji) again, perhaps for centuries.” (P.161) The most outstanding contribution of Gandhiji lies in his successful transformation of the golden principles of non-violent resistance into an effective technique for promoting the democratic values-liberty, justice and peace. Thus, there develops a common understanding between the East and the West as they continue to seek inspiration from Bapu.

The tremendous impact of Gandhiji on natives and also westerners is realised from dramatic reconstruction of his life in film and fiction. The two films on Gandhi that have had the biggest popular impact and won many awards must be Richard Attenborough’s *Gandhi* (1982) in English (released in India also in a dubbed Hindi version), and a Hindi film, *LageRahoMunna Bhai* (2006). It is significant that *Gandhi* won eight Academy awards while *LageRahoMunna Bhai* won four national film awards in India. But both these films were great box-office hits which earned popularity among the worldwide diaspora.

To conclude, it may be inferred that Mahatma Gandhi is universally acknowledged as the greatest man of his age. No one can deny his tremendous ideological and philosophical impact on Indian English literature in pre-independence and post-independence era. It is significant that Gandhiji as a writer was against the norm, ‘Art for Art’s sake’. Rather he emphasizes on ‘Art for Life’s sake’. According to his view, only art and literature based on truth and realism help men to rise upward. Thus, all his voluminous writings cherish truth, non-violence and lofty moral values. Gandhiji appears as a global figure as well as the leader of nationalism. He is also revered by many as a towering spiritual leader and saintly personality who worked for peace and harmony in the world. Moreover, despite his failings and shortcomings, Gandhiji is a fountain of immense inspiration to people and writers belonging to India, Pan-American and Afro-American nation. Of course, all regard him as a great soul, but not sure of relevance in the modern globalising world. Probably, as a

freedom fighter, as a philosopher, as a moralist and a spiritual practitioner of truth, Mahatma Gandhi stands as an immortal figure, unparallal in human history, not only for the succeeding generations, but also for all time to come. ■

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Exploring Feminist Anger and Resistance in Mahima Sethi's Anthology *Ink from Night Skies*

Provakar Palaka

Ruchika Gulati

“If any female feels she need anything beyond herself to legitimate and validate her existence, she is already giving away her power to be self-defining, her agency”.

- Bell Hooks

This paper aims to examine the satirical exploration of various feminist issues, such as gender equality, the objectification of women, and patriarchy, in the poetry of Mahima Sethi. A prominent theme in her collection *Ink from Night Skies* is the exploration of the female body as a locus of oppression. Sethi's poems effectively highlight the diverse ways in which women are compelled to navigate their bodies to survive within a society dominated by patriarchal norms. Furthermore, her poetry sheds light on the objectification and commodification of women in this societal context.

Sethi's work serves as a testament to the enduring relevance of feminism as a crucial movement that warrants recognition and acceptance in contemporary society. The female body, in addition to being a physical entity, also carries profound political implications. Sethi's poetry aptly reflects the feminist strain and underscores the necessity of acknowledging women's fundamental human rights. Moreover, this study argues that the cathartic nature of anger empowers the poet to reconstruct a positive self-perception, ultimately fostering the emergence of a liberating and forward-thinking feminist dialogue.

Keywords: feminism, feminist literature, Mahima Sethi, *Ink from Night Skies*, Odia literature, patriarchy, equal rights, objectification, female body, oppression, societal norms, women's experience.

Introduction:

Undoubtedly, feminism is a modern concept. While India was struggling with the female education, Odisha has witnessed the emergence of some of the finest women writers: Kuntala Kumari Sabat, Sarala Devi, Rama Devi, Sailabala Das, Nandini Satpathy, Pratibha

Ray to name a few. When we talk about feministic voice in contemporary Odia literature, one name that stands out is that of Sarojini Sahoo. On how women issue becomes the central point of her writing, she speaks in an interview, “I am not consciously trying to write feminist writings. What I want to portray only the feelings of woman from her pre-schooler days to the post-menopausal days. I think, there are some feelings, intricate mental agony and complexity which a man couldn’t feel any day and these should be discussed in our fictions. I portray the feelings of a pregnant lady (*Waiting for Manna: Amrutara Pratikshare*), hysteria (*Burkha, Deshantari*), fear of being miscarriage (*Sakal: The Morning*) False pregnancy (*Tarali Jauthiba Durga: The Melting Castle*), agony of and annoyance of menopause (*Damppatya: The Couple*), Lesbianism (*Behind the Scene*). I have also portrayed the shaking situation of a sixty years old lady, who is still waiting for her menopause and in every month her embarrassing situation when she finds herself in bleeding (*Aparanha: The Afternoon*). Even in my story Jahllad (*Butcher*) I have told the story of an infant who finds herself being raped by a caretaker servant”. (Sahoo, 2011: 3). Among the young women writers, Mahima Sethi seems to be taking the lead to talk about women’s issues.

Within the realm of contemporary Odia poetry, Mahima Sethi’s literary journey unfolds as a tapestry woven with multifaceted threads of influence and individuality. As the daughter of Bishnupada Sethi, a distinguished civil servant and a poet whose name resonates with critical acclaim, Mahima’s poetic evolution carries the weight of legacy and the fervour of innovation. While the corridors of her childhood were filled with the sonorous cadence of literary discussions, Mahima’s poetic debut in the form of *Ink From Night Skies* unveils a distinct voice that transcends the confines of familial influence. Her verses, born from the depths of personal contemplation and artistic exploration, evoke an ethereal ambiance, enticing readers into a realm where imagination dances with introspection. This artistic maturity and audacity have not gone unnoticed, as evidenced by Mahima being honoured with the coveted Sarala Yuva Puraskar in 2022 by the esteemed Sarala Sahitya Sansad. In the evanescent landscape of Odia poetry, Mahima Sethi’s presence emerges as a constellation, gleaming with individual brilliance amidst a sea of poetic luminaries.

Within the anthology titled *Ink from Night Skies*, Mahima Sethi embarks on an exploration of the intricate interplay between feminism and anger through her poetry, skilfully crafting a collection that is both impactful and thought-provoking. The significance of the title itself lies in its symbolic nature, “Ink” representing the act of writing and the profound expression of thoughts and emotions through words. This medium allows Sethi to delve into her tumultuous inner world, presenting narratives of pain, fear, and angst that mirror the tempestuous ambiance of the nocturnal sky. The anthology’s poetic style exhibits a highly varied and accessible approach, engaging readers through its strong physicality while prompting moments of introspection and contemplation. (Danaher, 2022: Foreword xi).

Sethi challenges the conventional notions of poetry, redefining its meaning and purpose on her own terms. She rejects the notion that poetry is a mere overflow of spontaneous emotions or a retreat into the solitude of nature, as embraced by the Romantics.

Instead, she sees poetry as a tool for navigating the chaotic world, bleeding emotions onto the page, and striving to establish order amidst the prevailing anarchy. Sethi's poems resonate with the idea that poetry arises from suffering, echoing the sentiment expressed by Pablo Neruda. Through her words, she internalizes the experiences of others, shedding light on societal struggles and the deeply ingrained biases of patriarchal systems.

Unapologetically embracing her feminist voice, Sethi confronts these biases directly, challenging the societal expectations imposed on women and embracing her identity without remorse. Her poetry dismantles conventional standards of beauty and seeks to redefine it based on inner strength, compassion, and resilience. With each line, Sethi asserts her resistance against oppressive forces, declaring herself invincible and refusing to conform to the molds set by a patriarchal society. Drawing inspiration from potent metaphors such as ink as a hurricane or an ocean, Sethi's poetry delves into the agonies and tragedies of life, aiming to ignite the systems of evil.

Ultimately, Sethi's poetry serves a noble purpose—to express anger, fear, and suffering, while simultaneously envisioning a better society founded on principles of gender equality, freedom, hope, and peace. The anthology stands as a testament to Sethi's distinct and commanding voice, establishing her as a contemporary feminist force from Odisha whose poetry captivates and challenges readers in equal measure. As the blurb suggests, *Ink from Night Skies* is a poetry book that delves into the expression of emotions, depicting our connection to people, objects, and intangible elements belonging to the universe.

Patriarchal dissent:

Patriarchy is a social system in which men hold the primary power and dominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of property. Patriarchy has been a prevalent issue in various societies, leading to the oppression of women and other marginalized groups. Social justice, on the other hand, refers to the concept of equality, fairness, and human rights. Sylvia Walby in *Theorising Patriarchy* calls it “a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women” (1990). Similar idea has been put forward by Zillah Eisenstein in *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism* (1979) argues that male supremacy and capitalism are the core relations which determine oppression of women. She defines patriarchy as a “sexual system of power in which the male possesses superior power and economic privilege” (Eisenstein, 1979: 17).

Sethi's poetry explores patriarchal dissent through the celebration of individuality and personal autonomy. In the poem “My Old Address,” the speaker reflects on the loss of a physical space but asserts their continued presence and identity. Despite no longer being physically present in a familiar place, the speaker's memories and experiences are deeply ingrained. This defiance against erasure and displacement reflects a resistance to patriarchal systems that seek to diminish and control women's identities.

Michel Foucault in *The History of Sexuality*, emphasizes the presence of multiple silences, which he deems essential components of the underlying strategies and pervasive nature of discourses. As Foucault puts it, “There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses”.

It is imperative for us to comprehend that anger encompasses more than a mere emotional response to perceived historical injustices pertaining to gender equality. It frequently serves as a response to what may be interpreted as a dearth of solidarity within our social networks or professional settings. The poem emphasizes the importance of personal agency and self-definition, presenting a form of dissent against patriarchal forces that attempt to silence and marginalize women. As penned by Sethi:

That house is no longer yours.
Yet, you remember each corner,
each crevice,
yet, you see yourself by its window
in your dreams each night. (IFNS, p.25)

Dissent of patriarchal patterns is visible through the themes of strength and resilience. In poems such as “Armour” and “Red High Heels,” the speaker embraces pain and adversity as sources of empowerment. The imagery of tragedy sewn into the skin, wearing agony like armor, and devouring bloody apocalypses with style signifies a refusal to be defined by suffering. Instead, the speaker finds strength and resilience in their ability to endure and overcome challenges. This defiance against patriarchal notions of weakness and fragility asserts a powerful form of dissent, reclaiming agency and resilience in the face of adversity.

The words of Audre Lorde can help us understand the idea of pain and agony from her book *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* as it provides a powerful reflection on the experience of anger and yearning. Lorde states, “I know the anger lies inside of me like I know the beat of my heart and the taste of my spit. It is easier to be furious than to be yearning. Easier to crucify myself in you than to take on the threatening universe of whiteness by admitting that we are worth wanting each other” (Lorde, 1984:153). The poet’s words echo:

The world was crashing for me,
and I bought a pair of red high heels
to complement my red satin dress. (IFNS, p.26)

In *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?*, Judith Butler investigates the profound influence of normative frameworks on how we perceive our bodies, how others perceive us, and how governments allocate resources and protections. Butler contends that prevailing ideas of normalcy significantly shape which bodies are prioritized for governmental support and protection, while those diverging from these norms are seen as potential threats to the established order and the state itself (p.53). She also highlights how these ideologies of

normalcy create a distinction between “real” bodies, considered deserving of resources, protection, and mourning in the event of death, and “abnormal others” whose suffering or death often goes unnoticed or is even celebrated when they challenge hegemonic norms.

In the poem “Lessons,” the speaker reflects on the lessons taught by their parents about kindness, while recognizing the absence of guidance on dealing with vultures who prey upon them. In the poet’s lyrical lines, it is proclaimed as:

Now, I’ve lost all my limbs,
yet, I can be anything,
but unkind. (IFNS, p.18)

This acknowledgment highlights the insufficiency of societal teachings that prioritize women’s kindness over self-preservation. By urging individuals to resist harmful influences and protect themselves, the poem challenges patriarchal norms that perpetuate gendered expectations and the exploitation of women. It emphasizes the importance of asserting boundaries and rejecting oppressive gender roles.

Patriarchy implies that women are maltreated in all civilizations as “a sexed being” or rather “an accidental being” (Beauvoir, 2010: 25), responsible for unleashing the evil that destroys human existence. An intensive analysis of Sethi’s poetic works accentuates the societal framework by means of which patriarchy diminishes the human worth of women by compelling them to acquiesce to the perpetual dominance of males as the fundamental decree of existence. In essence, the very objective of patriarchy is to fortify the position of men as authoritative figures while debasing women to the status of subservient individuals. This recurrent motif shapes the thematic architecture of Sethi’s poetic accomplishments.

The poem “Dancing On The Moon” delves into the aspirations and dreams of the speaker, particularly their childhood desire to dance on the moon. However, as they grow older, they come to realize the harsh realities and limitations imposed by society. The lines of the poem reverberate with the words:

After growing up,
I realised,
that all dreams do not come true. The world is harsh and
to survive, you have to be too. (IFNS, p.20)

The poem serves as a critique of patriarchal systems that stifle individual dreams and potential, forcing individuals, especially women, to conform to societal expectations and abandon their aspirations. By expressing a longing for the freedom to pursue their dreams and live authentically, the speaker challenges patriarchal structures that restrict and confine women’s ambitions.

Even in contemporary times, the concept of anger continues to have relevance, as feminist philosopher Marilyn Frye asserts that women are frequently criticized for expressing anger towards trivial or insignificant matters (referred to as “the wrong things” in Aristotle’s

terminology). Frye argues, “It is a tiresome truth of women’s experience that our anger is generally not well received. Men (and sometimes women) ignore it, see it as being ‘upset’ or ‘hysterical’, or see it as craziness. Attention is turned not to what we are angry about but to the project of calming us down and the topic of our ‘mental stability’ (Frye, 2000: 85). Frye explains that a set of unwritten rules governs how people interpret women’s anger.

The poem “Nyctinastic” portrays the speaker as being withdrawn and forgetful, yet resilient and hopeful. The imagery of shutting oneself off, wilting, and encountering multiple sunsets suggests a journey of self-discovery and growth. The verse captures the essence of the poet’s perspective, asserting:

A little withdrawn,
a little naively forgetful.
I shut myself off, wilt,
as I look at
the brazen sun fade. (IFNS,p.31)

This portrayal challenges patriarchal norms that dictate women’s behaviour and emotional expression. The speaker’s resilience and ability to rise each morning with hope exemplify a form of dissent against societal expectations that often limit women’s emotions, pushing them to conform to prescribed roles and behaviours.

In this sense we can refer to Jagger’s (1989) description of emotions as social constructions. We do not have intrinsic reactions to an object. We do not fear something because the object itself is inherently scary. We are socialised to fear the object. Therefore, for our fear to be validated it must be based on a commonly held belief. In the same way, we feel anger based on what we have been socialised to see as an injustice or wrongdoing.

Overall, Sethi’s poetry engages with various aspects of patriarchal dissent by challenging stereotypes, critiquing body standards, celebrating individuality and resilience, questioning gender roles, and reclaiming personal autonomy. Through her poetic expressions, Sethi offers a powerful critique of patriarchal systems, inviting readers to question and challenge oppressive norms while advocating for individuality, self-acceptance, and the pursuit of dreams and aspirations.

The Dualities of Rage and Peace as Feministic Expression:

Despite the fact that the portrayal of an enraged female has existed since the time of Euripides’ *Medea*, Sethi’s contemporary contemplation on anger and writing is characterized by self-awareness and explicitness. Sethi deeply explores the intricate nature of anger, encompassing its diverse manifestations and its impact on individuals and society. Sethi’s revelation of anger in *Ink from Night Skies* is multifaceted, as she acknowledges that anger can possess both positive and negative qualities.

As Tomlinson (89-90) suggests that each poem can be interpreted as an illustration of “textual vehemence,” wherein the persona strategically incorporates anger within the

text. Textual vehemence refers to the use of passionate and forceful language or writing style within a text. It involves employing strong and intense expressions, often driven by emotions such as anger, outrage, or moral conviction. Additionally, it explores how this anger intersects with various other emotions. According to Tomlinson (110), textual vehemence serves as a means of expressing moral responsibility and revulsion, emphasizing the significance of the ongoing debate. It can function as a call to arms, uniting individuals who already share the same views or have been convinced by the argument. Moreover, it can appeal to those who have not been influenced by other methods of persuasion.

The complexity of anger is further highlighted by its different expressions, from a silent force that simmers beneath the surface to a forceful and vocal emotion that demands to be heard. The poet suggests that anger can be a powerful tool for expressing emotions and driving change. For instance in “Fireworks,” Sethi presents a vivid image of anger as an explosive force that defies containment. The persona is described as fireworks that cannot be restrained, representing the refusal to conform to societal expectations. This expression of anger emphasizes liberation and resistance against attempts to suppress one’s identity. By embracing anger, Sethi highlights the power of female autonomy and the rejection of imposed limitations. As the poet writes:

She will explode in your palms
blow off your thumb,
outshine, blind and deafen you. (IFNS, p.6)

Sethi’s poetic compositions frequently serve as portrayals of rage that serve as a catalyst for societal transformation. By embracing anger as a powerful emotion, Sethi actively urges women to channel their frustrations into actionable endeavours, thus challenging prevailing power structures and fervently advocating for equality. Through the harnessing of anger, women are able to reclaim their agency and assert their inherent rights, ultimately making significant contributions to the overarching feminist movement.

In the poem “Prayers,” an emphasis is placed upon anger’s transformative potential within the realm of feminist exertion. The speaker’s poignant yearning for anger to manifest in such a way that it nurtures and sustains the very termites that erode their inner being signifies a profound desire for anger to initiate a process of internal healing and profound personal growth. She says:

I am not asking you to fade away,
the anguish gnawing in my gut. (IFNS, p.21)

Amidst Mahima Sethi’s poetic discourse, anger assumes the role of a galvanizing force, compelling individuals to recognize and address the injustices faced by marginalized communities. By demonstrating empathy towards the anguished and expressing anger in response to their plight, the persona in the poem “With the Anguished” mobilizes readers to actively engage in feminist endeavours. This anger-fuelled call to action encourages

individuals to challenge oppressive systems, advocate for equality, and actively strive for transformative social change. The inclusion of anger as a motivating impetus within Sethi's verses underscores the significance of collective action and solidarity in feminist struggles. The persona's unconventional preferences, as depicted in "With the Anguished," such as finding beauty within unsightly thorns and broken birds, serve as a subversive response to societal expectations. Through this anger-driven act of resistance, conventional notions of beauty and power are disrupted, dismantling dominant narratives that marginalize and suppress certain groups. The poetic exploration of anger as a tool for resistance within Mahima Sethi's works underscores the indispensability of feminist endeavours in dismantling oppressive systems and advocating for justice and equality. The poet states:

Ugly thorns of roses,
she admired more
than luscious red petals. (IFNS, p.61)

Mahima Sethi's poetry illuminates the multifaceted role of anger in understanding and engaging with feminist exertion. Through her exploration of anger as a catalyst for transformation, a reflection of internal turmoil, a response to betrayal and self-doubt, a means of challenging societal expectations, and an expression of resilience and empowerment, Sethi underscores the complex emotional landscape of feminist struggle. By incorporating anger into her poetic narratives, Sethi invites readers to recognize and embrace their own anger as a powerful tool for personal and social change within the context of feminism.

Expressing anger against a system of injustice may in some ways unite a movement, but knowing what to do with that anger can be tricky. "It is on the 'now what?' stage that the fate of anger depends" (Tavris 1982, p.248). By expressing anger towards the unjust circumstances that contribute to their suffering through poetry, Sethi amplifies their voices and demands attention and change. This use of anger as a tool for amplification aligns with feminist exertion, as it seeks to challenge the status quo and create space for marginalized perspectives. By openly acknowledging and effectively channelling their anger, individuals are empowered to actively confront both the internalized and externalized forms of oppression that permeate their existence. This transformative power that anger possesses serves as a catalyst for personal evolution, endowing individuals with the strength and resolve necessary to challenge and ultimately dismantle the oppressive systems that persist, thereby making significant contributions to the overarching feminist movement.

Conclusion

Mahima Sethi bluntly explores patriarchal superstitions, shortcomings, and fanaticism embedded within the fabric of gender inequality, patriarchy, social justice, and the female experience. The work emphasizes the need for feminism to be intersectional and inclusive of all women's experiences. Sethi's poetry embodies feminist ideals of equality, freedom, and empowerment, and provides a counter-narrative to patriarchal norms that

seek to silence women's voices. As put by Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "feminism must account for the ways in which the experiences of women in the Third World are shaped by multiple and intersecting oppressions".

The paper highlights the strategies Sethi employs to give voice to women, including the use of metaphors, symbols, and imagery that represent the complexity of women's lives. Sethi's poetry empowers women to reclaim their voices and resist dominant discourse that seeks to keep them oppressed. Through her work, Sethi calls for a more just and equitable society where women are seen as equal to their male counterparts.

The research paper concludes that Sethi's poetry is a significant contribution to the feminist discourse in Odia literature. It serves as an inspiration for women to resist the dominant discourse and to reclaim their voices, reminding us that feminism is not just a political movement, but a way of life that seeks to empower women and create a more just and equal society. ■

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A New Wave of Resurgence: An Evaluation of Avinuo Kire's *The Last Light of Glorydays*

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Asharani.V

Literature is a reflection of a nation as it possess linear link with its society. Though literature embodies universality, a nation's history, social, economic, physical, and political conditions have a significant impact on the literature of that nation, hence in order to cognize a nation's literature, one must consider its socio-political milieu. The north-eastern Indian state of Nagaland is no exceptional to this; while attempting to truly comprehend and appreciate its literature, it is crucial that we learn its history and socio-political setting. When pertaining to Nagaland's history most of them drawn orally, it is of paramount importance to address the ramifications of armed conflict with independent India along with the impact of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) on Nagas. Numerous writers, both Naga and non-Naga, have attempted to capture in writing the effects of the Indo-Naga war has had on the general populace. AvinuoKire, a young writer from Nagaland is one among them, the present paper tries to study the repercussions of armed conflict on the skin and psyche of female characters of Kire s short story collection *The Last Light of Glory Days* and also tries to explore a renewed ray of resurgence infiltrating in the narratives for better future through the contextual study of three short stories of Kire chosen from the above said anthology and also taking into account the half-century old military battle of blood and tears between India andNagaland.

Keywords: Human Suffering, Indigenous, Incarcerated Voice, Naga Insurgency, AFSPA,armed conflicts, violence and women, The Last Light of Glorydays.

“Never think that war, no matter how necessary, nor how justified, is not a crime”. One of the greatest writers of the twentieth century, Earnest Hemingway, famously said, proclaiming the criminality of the war. Humanity consistently has misunderstood that the heart of every religion is kindness, despite the fact that our religions articulate that violence is never the proper course of action. It's incredible that humanity comprehended the dynamics of the universe beyond the Earth while failing to grasp their fellowmen's pain. India, the cradle of diversity, has experienced countless such hypocrisies; in the vast Indian past, more people were swept away thansurvived.

Despite the fact that history has taught us that the fruit of war or any armed struggle is not sweet, human's lust for power has kept them engaged in armed conflicts over and over again. India has been a silent observer of numerous such wars, whether between its princely realms or against a foreign invading force. However, the story of India's military battle with its north-eastern component after independence is a blot on humanity, a painful saga of human suffering. People of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Nagaland, the seven sister states of north east India, have continuously advocated for their indigenous identity and the roar of gunshots have drowned out such voices.

Among her sister states, Nagaland stands distinctively apart for her social, geographical and cultural eminence. Nagaland shares barely four percent of the region with mainland India and ninety six percent with neighboring countries. Nagas, noted for their distinctive folklore, rely on oral narratives to reconstruct their history for the lack of written sources. Battle of Khonoma brought Naga under the control of the British Empire, exposing them to education and Christianity. During Japan's invasion of India in World War II, Naga highlands stood as the major entryway to India, and Naga people supported the British forces with true faith. However, the evacuation of the British from India, placed Naga on a new trajectory and at the threshold of seven decades of future Indo-Naga Armed conflict, which forever changed the image of the land. In the absence of the British, the Naga people claimed to be an autonomous country, citing

historical evidence that the Naga highlands were never subjugated by any Indian kings and asserting social, cultural, and ethnic differences. On the other side, India, then newly independent, upheld its right on the Naga Hills as its own extension and claimed to be under control for defense grounds as Nagaland serves as India's frontier, as well as to provide modern governance to the "unsophisticated", tribal masses. The Naga people, who are proud of their heritage, did not require India's assistance. Thus, the political impasse between India and the Naga people set the ground for a history of violence and forced occupancies. Failure of dialogues between leaders of both parties, the boycott of the 1952 general elections, and the outbreak of violence between the Indian army and the Naga armed group resulted in the enactment of The Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) in 1958, sanctioning search and seizure and arrest without warrants, as well as shooting even to the point of causing death, with complete legal protection for the military and paramilitary forces.

Many writers and human rights activists have been vocal about the consequences of AFSPA and fought legal battle for its repealment. In their narratives, authors Temsula Ao and Esterine Kire discuss how the AFSPA has made inequality legal. Kire writes, in her poem *Our Story*

The tears the bitter tears
Of a people for amnesty
Professes, generous, on their return
That was no amnesty
But camp of concentration
Concentrating
On the strangulation of Naga spirit
By torture, rape and genocide

Of Naga man, woman, child, all
In whose veins flowed blood Naga (Iralu,2017;44)

Recording the atrocities of Indian army Kaka.D.Iralu writes,

In the eyes of the caste-conscious Indian soldier, the Naga tribal was still one step lower than the Sudra. As far as he was concerned, the Naga tribal was a casteless non-entity, a savage who was even lower than the animals . It was not surprising then that the average Indians older influenced by his religion and social beliefs and protected by his constitution ran amok amongst thousands of unarmed Naga men, women and children, raping, torturing and murdering them as non-entities. (Iralu,2017;48)

Commenting on the media, the fourth pillar of our democracy, and its erroneous and superficial portrayal of Nagaland Irlu says,

But their cries were never heard expect by their tormentors. They bled, they cried and they died, but the world never heard their cries of agony. Every Naga family was desecrated and almost every village of every tribe was burned to ashes. In total, out of approximately eight hundred sixty villages that were then existing in Nagaland, more than six hundred forty five were reduced to rubble along with their granaries... (Iralu, 2017;49)

The system got ingrained with a military reaction to a political problem. The complete suspension of the judiciary resulted in undemocratic and unconstitutional laws, further alienating Naga population and individuals who were not in any way profoundly devoted to the notion of India or being a part of it. Another blow was factionalism, which divided the Naga community into many armed factions, adding further turmoil to the current military inferno and contributing to the loss of almost two lakh lives. The Naga freedom warriors' divergent ideologies gave rise to factionalism. While talking about faction, may be in an American context James Madison says,in his *The Federalist Papers* that factionalism in a political setting is natural and unavoidable, and it can only lead to despotism within its own group. Hewrites,

The latent causes of faction are thus sown in the nature of man; and we see them everywhere brought into different degrees of activity, according to the different circumstances of civil society. A zeal for different opinions concerning religion, concerning government and many other points, as well of speculation as of practice; an attachment to different leaders ambitiously contending for pre-eminence and power; or to persons of other descriptions whose fortune have been interesting to the human passions, have in turn, divided mankind into parties, inflamed them with mutual animosity and rendered them much more disposed to vex and oppress each other than to co-operate for their common good. (Madison, 2008 :37)

Factionalism fueled the fire and gave Nagas the label of "Terrorists", and accelerated the internal wars and violence. Though armed conflicts bring many consequences upon, irrespective of gender, class, race and creed, the aftermath effect of the conflicts is immense

on womankind. The Naga nationalist movement, Naga consciousness, was so strong that even women joined the underground and battled along with the men for many years, demanding vengeance for the deaths of their brothers and fathers at the hands of the Indian army. Even though their daily lives were severely constrained by curfews, military surveillance, and subjugation, those who were left behind, such as wives, sisters, and mothers, quietly carried the burden of caring for the family's children and elderly parents. As Milton famously said, "They also serve who only stand and wait," so too did the Naga women contribute to their National movement".

Avinuo Kire, a young writer from Nagaland who brings such narratives of Naga womenfolk who "stood and waited", bearing the burden of structural violence. Kire, through her anthology published in 2021, *The Last Light of Glory days*, the three short stories in the part one segment of the collection, 1. *The Last Light of Glory days* 2. *Flower Children* and 3. *Sharing Stories*. She has allowed suppressed emotions, strangled aspirations and collective memories of trauma to be expressed. These narratives characterize historiographies and bring forth many unspoken aspects of armed conflicts and its resistance. The trauma inflicted on the characters and narrators of these three narratives is the common ground that links them.

According to Prof. Ann Cvetkovich, Carleton University, "Stories of trauma challenge dominant narratives, disrupt linear time and demand a new way of understanding the complexities of human experience". Kire's narratives reflect the psychological ramifications of decades of armed struggle and its impact on the psyches of individuals, communities and societies. The story intersects with the birth of the Naga National Council (NNC) to fight against the Indian army which was deployed in Nagaland at the failure of dialogues and the course of events led to its faction National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN). Neimenuo, protagonist of the first narrative, loses her spouse to Naga's internal conflicts, factionalism. Zhabu, a prominent member of the NNC, gets killed by the comrades of the NSCN, he undergoes assassination by his own countrymen with polarized thoughts. Neimenuo's anguish was compounded by the knowledge of treachery of her own people. She says, "I felt nothing but rage and revulsion at the sight..". The second tale recounts the experience of a little girl who observes the trauma, her younger sister Pete, endures after being taken away by Indian soldiers who suspect her of acquiring information about the Naga Undergrounds. The third narrative, takes us back to Neimenuo from the first tale, now a grandmother who had lived through the unlawful conducts of Indian soldiers, who had ripped the skin off her younger brother's body, condemns her granddaughter's matrimonial relationship with an Indian soldier. Perhaps fifty years had healed her wounds, however the scar clanged on the walls of her consciousness as an image of the blisters.

All three stories portray the scars that people, particularly women, have on their skin and psyche. War and conflicts have devastating effects on various aspects of society, but women are disproportionately impacted by them. The consequences of existing inequalities and injustice are intensified, and even long after the conflicts end, Women

continue to bear the greatest burden. War increases the vulnerability of women to violence and exploitation, as social networks disintegrate and the institutions that protect against violence collapse. Shahnaz Bashir in his novel *The Half Mother*, depicts the heart wrenching story of a mother who never stops looking for her son, arrested by the militants amid armed conflicts in Kashmir, mirrors with multiple stories of Naga mothers. Easterine Kire's novella *Life on hold* attempts to expose the crucial world of Naga undergrounds. It recounts the realistic tale of Naga youngsters who were the fallen respondents of factional society in pursuit of the freedom alongside the emotional torment women face who put their lives on hold or the men who are in a quest to achieve their collective dream of sovereign nation.

“The greatest sufferings bring the greatest hopes, the greatest miseries greatest patience, and the greatest uncertainties lead to the greatest quests..” As Bashir quotes, though women endure the most load, nevertheless it is they who have the greatest potential and the vision to get back on their feet after each fall. Avinuo Kire through her narratives also extends the theme of “greatest hopes after greatest sufferings”, Neimenuo, suggests one of the younger comrades who was following the path of her husband that, “Neisto, spend time with your wife and children”, implying no cause is greater than the life. Towards the ending of the second tale, a young girl who got to witness the trauma of her life, apprehends that ego of some people may cost lives of many, comments, “I felt nothing but gratefulness for this dear unchanging reminder of our glory days”, the third storyline ends with the hope where granddaughter wishes that her grandmother would accept her relationship, waits in patience and says, “Somehow, some day, I would share stories with grandmother again”. These narratives reveal that even after experiencing the most devastating blows of their lives, her characters remain staunch champions of peace and hope. Kire a contemporary writer, representative of young generation of Nagaland, captures the mood of people after repealment of AFSPA from Nagaland as a result of unremitting efforts of prominent leaders, human right activists and the intervention of United Nation Organization. In the changing political scenario, Indian military has slacken off its grip in Nagaland and India has outgrown from its nation building infancy in which it was during 1950s into one of the fastest developing economy of the world, on the second thought Naga leaders, according to Sanjoy Hazarika, are saying that in the contemporary era, no nation can be truly sovereign considering the concept of globalization. These views assert the notion of seven decades of military solution to a political problem an absolute stupidity. Kire's narratives though very much committed to its indigenous roots, weave new contours of social change along with political and attempts to fabricate past with present visioning better and peaceful future. Though these are the incarcerated voice of Naga Women, it preaches the new religion of empathy to the world. New tribe of young Naga writers like Toinali Sema, D. Dorothy Chasie, K.B. Veio Pou, Anungla Zoe Longkumer etc., write the prologue of new history, telling the world that their land is not just about armed conflict, not just about gun shots, cries, burning of villages, rapes and murders and savage tribal people but the casteless and classless landscape has much more to offer apart from the selected view of Nagaland subscribed by the world. ■

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Mysticism in Akka Mahadevi's Poetry : A Study of her Translated Works

Pragya Bajpai

The canvas of Indian literature has garnered a wide range of women saint poets across the history of the nation which had a huge impact on discourse, writing and emerging voice on women empowerment and their rights. Bhakti poets of medieval south India like Andal (9th century poet devoted to Vishnu), Akka Mahadevi (12th century poet devoted to Shiva), and Lal Ded were among the earliest exponents of the bhakti movement. They candidly wrote powerful poems on a wide range of sensitive issues like women's struggle, suppression, identity and the dire need for social reform. All three of them were bold enough to walk out of their homes naked, thus rejecting the absolute control of the orthodox community to preserve and assert their space. They fought their own battles and faced the odds all alone against patriarchy in public sphere which contributed immensely to the radicalised society. Their feminist writings mirrored a rising consciousness of the need for equality, reformation and empowerment, thus paving way for the thriving generation of feminist scholars across the nation. Like Akka Mahadevi, Meerabai is also a 15th century mystic poet, also celebrated for her lyrical songs of devotion to her divine lover, Krishna. The present paper aims at analysing the elements of holy mysticism and nuances of feminism in the poetry of enchanted Akka Mahadevi who takes Shiva to be her husband both in spirit and words.

Keywords: Consciousness, Orthodox, radicalised, exponent, empowerment

Akka Mahadevi (c.1130–1160), a strong liberated spirit and an ardent Shiva devotee who considered Shiva to be her husband was one of the well-known in spirational female poets of the Kannada literature in the 12th century. She was a gifted poet and a master of Vachana poetry (simple stanzas) which is a form of spontaneous mystical poems in praise of God and sharing experiences in the process of God awareness and consciousness. Her poems were deeply imbued with instinctual feelings and profound emotions. Akka's contribution was immense with 430 poems written purely in love of Chenna Mallikarjuna or "Lord as white as Jasmine" as AK Ramanujan translates. Vachana means 'speech' or verbal promise and its literature evolved in the 11th century with writings in Kannada and thrived in 12th century as an important part of Sharana movement.

Akka's parents were followers of Shaivite sect of the Lingayats and believed in the philosophy of Trividhi that encompasses Shiva Linga, Jangama and Guru. The philosophy implies sacrifice one's life in the service to society, aim for true knowledge and give up on worldly joys, worshipping the Lord Shiva, writes Purandhya. Being a daughter of parents devoted to the Veer Shaivism movement, the spirit of bhakti was inculcated in her at an early age. By 16, Akka was already a budding religious saint when she began to believe that her life belonged to Shiva, nevertheless, her marriage to King Koushika was enforced on her. Considering her past and spiritual journey, the disenchantment towards the concept of forced marriage and her bold dissent seemed inevitable. The king later challenged her assertion in his palatial court and claimed his right over her and everything that belonged to her, to which she responded with firm conviction and readily relinquished the riches, social position, and the possessions, including her clothes and stepped out of the palace. The influence of her parents' philosophy is quite apparent in her life. She asserted her individuality and freedom by shocking the onlookers with her boldness and her act of defiance in the king's court.

Swinging in the joy of Shiva-love
Uniting with the truly devout;
I become shameless and join you. (174)

The nakedness became an expression and devotional compositions became a form of woman's voice.

As a strong feminist, she resisted anything that attacked her therefore, she covered nakedness with her long hair and went straight to the capital of western Chalukya dynasty, Kalyan, a paradise for Shiva devotees where she became a part of 'Veer Saiva' cohort. Purandhya rightly observes, "She (Akka) was questioned for her nakedness that exemplified a deliberate rejection of womanly modesty. It was impudent for a woman to abandon her clothes even though for saints it was a natural practice." Much later, her fearless speech on social reformation at various occasions during the debates in the open platform, the 'Anubhava Mandapa' earned her the title of 'Akka' (elder sister). Thereafter, she grew as an enlightened enthusiast and a matured saint in association with Veerashaiva saints like Basavanna, Chenna Basavanna, Prabhudeva and Madivalayya during the Bhakti movement. The influence of these saints who embraced her is quite apparent on her being and thus, proud Akka sings a tribute in admiration of the saints for having shaped her into a zealous devotee of Shiva:

Born in the hands of the guru,
I grew up in the kindness of innumerable devotees.
The milk of creative imagination, the ghee of right knowledge,
And the sugar of ultimate meaning, they fed me;
Feeding me this threefold nectar till I was full they brought me up.
They gave in marriage to a husband who was as myself;

To send me home, the devotees all came together.
I will live there to please Basavanna... I bow to you. (176)

The significant role of her guru can't be undermined in her evolution process. Her verses are peppered with the praise of Basavanna, the founder leader of the assembly of devotees. Akka honors her guru for providing the strength of character. It was her guru who dispelled darkness in her life and guided her to the path of Shiva; thus she calls him "the mediator." (95) She has not failed in expressing her deep respect for him:

Having seen the feet of Basavanna, your devotee,
I kept bowing in adoration, again and again.(133)

"Real renunciation is giving up this craving for the pleasures of the flesh and greed for lucre, and not merely giving up of some possessions, relations or food. This in short is the essence of true religion according to Sri Ramkrishna." (Editorial, The Vedant Kesari) This is similar to her philosophy which she imbibed from her guru. She says:

I defeated Kama, the god of desire,
O Basava, by your strength.
By your grace, O Basava,
I will hold on to the moon-bearer (Shiva). (134)

Articulating the greatness of gurus and acknowledging their contribution she writes:

I was trapped in samsara;
The guru showed me that samsara was empty.
Checking the attachment to body forms,
The guru placed the mark of the lord on my body;
He wiped away my past,
And led me onward.
My guru revealed the truth of
Channamallikarjuna, jamine -tender.(87)

Akka had a sceptical mind which became a strong factor behind her evolution. Being a Veerashaiva, Akka's perception of God eventually transformed from classical tradition to formless divine and thus, rejected orthodox Hinduism and idol worship in temples. She says:

If the breath is fragrant, who needs flowers?
If one has patience, calmness, peace, and forbearance
What need is there for the final peace of samadhi?
If one becomes the world itself
What need for solitude
Channamallikarjuna, jasmine-tender? (15) translates Vinaya Chaitanya.

Akka's life, an act of rebellion, manifested an undeniable and inexplicable connection between truth and divinity that evokes a spiritual influence in one's heart. In this context, Vijaya Ramaswamy aptly draws our attention to the fact that "Female spirituality can also be an enforced phenomenon, a diabolic outcome of patriarchal conspiracy."

Akka's vachanas are reflections of the power of assertion, courage and faith. Spending her life in a remote cave in the proximity to the Shrishaila temple where she meditated and let her soul be in communion with the Chenna Mallikarjuna firmly establishes her outright rejection and denial of the cultural codes and societal norms. Akka internalises her bonding with the transcendent and declares that "She saw the Absolute in everything. Every tree was the Kalpavriksha, every bush was the Sanjivani, every place was a tirtha, every water body contained Amritha and every pebble was the Chintamani gem. Her very breath became His fragrance. His form became hers. Having known Him, there was nothing else to know. She became the bee that drank the nectar of Chenna Mallikarjuna and dissolved into it. What remained was – "Nothing, none whatsoever", as explained by the devotees in Shaivism.

Akka's life as an ascetic wasn't easy after renouncing the worldly pleasures. Her relentless faith and intuitive love rooted in devotion to the formless god, nurtured her spiritual freedom and uninhibited expression with unsurpassed intensity. She believes that the religious texts might have enlightened the world, but the path of devotion is the only source of her enlightenment that liberates her from her past and offers her an identity. Holy ashes hold a profound significance for Akka and she feels:

If the guru smears holy ashes on his forehead,
He is anointed
Sovereign of the state of liberation.(90)

Even her own suffering vanishes if she wears ashes of her lord:

What is good
For all people of the world is there,
Religious, scriptures, epics and revealed texts.
There is the path of devotion
and the rising of the light. (107)

Akka spent her life celebrating her relationship with the god with all existence. Her charisma was redefined with her simplicity and experiences:

The four watches for the day
I am anxious for you.
The four watches of the night
I wane, missing you;
Day and night I remain in your desire,
Forgetting myself

O Channamallikarjuna, jasmine tender,
Planting your love,
I have banished hunger, thirst and sleep.(175)

Akka 's use of simile and metaphor are characterised by originality and aptness. She has brought together quite unfamiliar pictures that may not appeal to the experiences of common man but it does evoke vivid splash of emotions that expresses the intensity of her suffering in the absence of Shiva. She refers to number of births in different life forms from tiniest creature to the human in the following lines:

But eighty-four hundred thousand are the wombs
I have come through. Made to be what I couldn't be,
I ate joys and sorrows.
Let the life of the past be... (81)

Another characteristic of Akka's diction and style is the skilful use of animal imagery. A remarkable illustration of this kind of unique originality occurs in her blank verses where she selects the less known but equally true and demonstrative instances. This particular writing style in the simplest words with grandeur, effortlessly gives a kind of epigrammatic force to her perception and a personal relief to a sincere devotee.

Like a worm I writhed in pain;
Like grains of sand, I was scattered;
Sorrowful even in dreams, I trembled.
I was steamed to pulp as in a pot,
No friend to share my troubles.
Grant me your grace
So that I get a body
Better than the one I sought,
And happiness that
Cannot be added to,
O Channamallikarjuna, jamine -tender. (83)

As an elephant
Separated from its herd
And trapped remembers his Vindhyan forests,
I remember you.
As a bird in a cage
Remembers its mate,
I remember you...(85)

The diction of her lyrical stanzas was simple, and style was replete with veracious similes. She astonished her contemporaries with the aptness of her life-sized persona by defending the right to explore and recognise one's true self:

Before knowing right and wrong
I came through many births.
Coming through them, I was hurt and burnt,
Then I came to you in faith and took refuge. (169)

Akka is no less a love poet than Shakespeare, Shelley, Byron or Browning. Her treatment of love is quite distinctive and shone with other-worldly radiance. It is the tender delicacy of spiritual love that Akka extols. The implicit apathy to worldly temptation renders Akka pre-eminently the poet of mystical virtue. Marriage to her was so earthly that it was painful for her to contemplate the possibility of any relation with her husband and refused it as the ultimate fate of her life:

When emotion was intimate,
Memory got a respite.(125)
If our lord of the holy mountain,
Is pleased with me,
I won't come this way again,
O mother.(119)

The following verse describes Akka's dream of uniting with her beloved God, Shiva who came as a handsome beggar in her dream. Vinaya Chaitanya says in the lines that closed and opened my eyes refers to "opening to the inner vision and withdrawal from the outward-directed senses indicated."

I saw a mendicant, seated on the hill;
This beggar with a red matted locks and pearly teeth came and loved me.
Embracing him, I was afraid.
Seeing the jasmine-tender Channamallikarjuna,
I closed and opened my eyes, wonder-struck.(136)

Seeing the divine form
That shines in splendour
Within the eyes, I forgot myself, O mother...
So, Channamallikarjuna, jasmine-tender,
Is my bridegroom
And I his bride; listen, O mother.(138)

O lord, what shall I say of the ways
Of the wise ones, born from the linga?
Their ways are the scriptures,
Their speech is the Vedas;
Can they be said to bring to the world?(139)

The essential tenet of her eloquent poetry is sublimity and spontaneity. Akka is a painter of unearthly charm while demonstrating astonishing skill of poetic art.

As the sun is seed to
The movement of the world,
The mind is seed to
The movement of the senses...(86)

Akka derives immense knowledge from ordinary things around and views everything uniquely which in turn shapes her philosophy of life. While viewing her association with the devotees to be highly rewarding, she says:

Associating with the ignorant
Is like trying to light a fire
By rubbing stones;
Associating with the wise
Is like taking butter after churning curd.(127)

Akka knows in her heart that troubles and sorrows would wither if:

If one knows the supreme
As well as oneself
He is the yogi.
I bow to his feet.(130)

Akka's poetic vachanas written in deep love of Shiva are a testimony to her devotion and her radical insight on woman's role. It is the vachanas that gave her a new identity in the cultural context, defined her philosophy and chiselled her principles. Akka considered poetic expression as essentially an art and not a means of propagating some idea. Her poetry displays a unique craftsmanship and structure grounded in her strong inner feelings, emotional experiences and consciousness making her a poetic reformer. The effortless assertion of her identity against the hegemony and her organic detachment from the worldly desires is deftly captured in her verses. The self-consciousness that Akka possesses right from the beginning has deeply impacted both her writing and her persona. It is her writing that endowed her with a coping mechanism to deal with conformists and the societal construct. She was not just a prodigious poet but also a revolutionary preacher of empowerment and spiritualism. She left a mark by participating in the deliberations of intellectual men in a patriarchal society during the time when even woman's education was not regarded as relevant. Akka became an epitome of valiant spiritual love and one of the most ideal feminist figures in the history of Kannada literature. Akka's remarkable poetry is an amalgamation of her trance like experiences and religious ecstasies. The subjective experiences and spiritual truth are irrefutable. ■

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The Politics of Compassion: A Reading of Gandhi and Mandela

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Chittaranjan Bhoi

Compassion is a virtue, a unique trait. Cultivating such virtue needs the exercise of humanly qualities. Compassion and politics though sound blasphemous, yet the juxtaposition of these two can make a big difference. When politics is considered as the last resort of the scoundrels and compassion hypocrisy then a question emerges out is whether politics and compassion are detrimental to each other. The two main objectives of this article are to provide a thorough understanding of the cardinal principles of politics and compassion. Compassion is an inherently democratic and global emotion, according to the some current political advocates. They believe that the moral and motivational basis of compassion serves as a safeguard for the security of democratic institutions and practices. One of the advocates of this movement defines compassion as a fundamental social emotion flows in isolation. Kristen Monroe, in her outstanding psychological study of the rescue of Jews in Nazi Germany argues that “political theory has ignored the political and moral consequences of altruism and compassion as invaluable sources of a fragile sense of common humanity”. One of these saviors said that the “hand of compassion” is “quicker than the calculation of reason.” This theory states that people act more quickly and consistently out of compassion than rationality when faced with pain, even to the point of risking their own lives to protect others. According to Andrew Linklater’s Sociology of Global Morality, empathy is essential for promoting democratic citizenship and a fair Global Society. Some political critics believe that empathy, when properly applied, can help establish political harmony, international justice, and democratic order. Reparation for violence perpetrated in post-conflict and post-colonial cultures is the goal of this political attitude. It also seeks to broaden the scope of political and moral engagement. Its proponents fear that it will severely limit the ability of the citizens and the governments to resolve the said crucial and political issues.

However complex a system may have become, natural selection will have led to its development because all living beings that support and defend each other, value it highly. This is true because societies with the most caring citizens would prosper.

Darwin assumed that the successful evolution of political units required the selection of sympathetic and altruistic members and traits. Recently, there has been a resurgence of criticism of the moral and political importance of compassion, empathy, and altruism for the maintenance, support, and development of democratic norms and practices. As a result of the recent findings of the political function of passion, political theorists have revived the idea that democratic institutions can only remain stable if people's emotional narratives do not cross the bottom line. In the last ten years, there has been an explosion in the study of emotions in Humanities and Social Sciences, which has been a driving factor behind political reform and the rise of compassion in politics. In addition, contemporary political and legal philosophy, until recently paid little attention to the role that passion can and should play in politics. In contrast, early modern thinkers such as Rousseau, Smith and Hume emphasised the importance of the subject of human passion. They recognised that the study of how political actors, process and institutions are shaped and molded by the emotions was one of their main areas of interest. They argued that political practice is directly influenced by people's passion. They contend that one's passions limit one's ability to influence political opportunities and developments. The politics of emotions is emerging as a new area of research. Drawing inspiration from recent developments in Evolutionary Biology, Anthropology, Social Psychology, Social Neuroscience, and the cognitive explanation of emotion, a new school of political theorists has revived the notion that politics is an art of emotion. This new political paradigm is significant. It analyses the positive role that emotions can play in productive politics, in contrast to conventional wisdom that largely views them as distractions, risks, or obstacles in politics.

Charles Taylor is of the opinion that we can no longer "count emotions out of what constitutes democratic politics, where people can be brought together".

Western heads of state praised Mandela for his capacity for mercy, his compassion, and his desire for peace. Many felt that Mandela had the humility to understand the perspectives of others, and therefore, he was able to negotiate and reach agreement among forces that might impede or destabilize a transition to democracy. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, overcame racial discrimination over personal actions. He advocated kindness and show guts to listen to and engage with others. His biographer Richard Stengel expresses the same opinion.

In the early phase of his political career he was part of a group of young Turks who supported the African National Congress (ANC) in adopting a more radical strategy. Needless to say, Mandela was heavily criticised as a "terrorist" both in his own country and in the West for advocating military struggle in ANC. By his own admission, he was once an ardent nationalist, and research states that he was closer to the South African Communist Party (SACP) before his imprisonment. These facts contradict the notion that Mandela was always the great. Though he was maligned by the western leaders yet he was determined.

“A very clear vision before he left prison that his mission was to unite his country and not simply to dismiss apartheid. And that political skill that he had is what people don’t get about him. He was a masterful politician”.

Bill Clinton, the former President of the United States, expressed similar thoughts, rejecting the politics of anger when he had the opportunity. Similarly, he shared his grief over the loss of one of President Obama’s most incredibly kind acquaintances. His praise for Mandela’s leadership style focused on the way “Mandela taught us the power of action, but he also taught us the power of ideas, of reason or argument, and the need to study not only those with whom you agree but also those with whom you disagree” (Telegraph 2013).

Mandela proved that even in the most hopeless situations, change toward a better society is possible if one has faith, perseverance and determination. Achieving social justice is a long and difficult process. His life will continue to serve as an inspiration and example to all of us who believe in the value of every individual. In South African and world history, Mandela truly changed the game. He prioritised peace over revenge which changed the course of history. Mandela embodied the noblest ideals of kindness, humanism, perseverance and forgiveness. He handled the worst that life could do to him with grace. During the 27 years he spent in prison, he created a boundless capacity for compassion, moral clarity and love, which he then passed on to the world. His voice and wisdom will be heard for the rest of written history.

Gandhi taught us that we must embrace even seek suffering if we are to experience personal change, political upheaval and a glimpse of God. Gandhi said, “Nonviolence in its dynamic form means conscious suffering” It means resisting the will of the tyrant with one’s whole being rather than silently submitting to their terrible demands. To save one’s dignity, religion, soul and to lay the foundation for the downfall or renewal of the empire, a single person can defeat the whole power of an unjust empire, in accordance with the law of human existence. Gandhi sincerely mentioned that the ultimate core of promoting peace lies mastering the art of voluntary suffering and dying. Gandhi excitedly said, “This is very simple: renounce pleasure,” when asked to describe the meaning of life in three words or less.

This paper analyses Gandhi’s attitude toward the politics of compassion. It focuses on the core of his concept and how it can be applied in today’s world. The paramount objectives are to discuss Gandhi’s philosophy of political compassion and nonviolence as are key strategies to overcome social challenges, and his contributions to politics through compassion. The influence of Gandhian philosophy on contemporary thought has been reflected in a few other statesmen across the world.

It is the nature of the world that if we are to fight to establish peace and live peacefully, we must also speak out against conflict and do our part to prevent it. We must not only organise against common evil, but also actively work for the common good in the society.

“Non-cooperation with evil is as much a duty as cooperation with good,” Gandhi promoted peace and justice in his speech, but he also brought back the conventional religious idea that any major, non-violent social change for peace required risk and sacrifice. Gandhi emphasised the spiritual, life-or-death character of these concerns, the need for a lifetime commitment, and the necessity of being willing to suffer and die in order to bring about peace and justice. This idea is by no means novel. Take up the cross, as Jesus commanded his followers to do. Early Christians claimed that our involvement in the Paschal Mystery, the cross, and the resurrection was the key to entering God’s millennial kingdom. Gandhi saw the cross as a symbol of a conscious decision to be arrested, accused, imprisoned, and even put to death because “Freedom is to be wooed only inside prison walls and sometimes on the gallows,” he said, “but never in council chambers, courts, or the schoolroom.” Gandhi’s political revolution was based on the spiritual practises, renunciation, sacrifice, and even martyrdom.

The aforesaid ideas extend complements to the new political perspective. Since it is generally recognised that compassion and its cognates are among the most divisive and politically relevant emotions, the paper focuses primarily on them. It has been argued that compassion is the fundamental democratic virtue and that it is destructive to politics. Despite the controversy surrounding compassion in politics, a comprehensive analysis of its importance for democratic politics is yet to be made. The truth is that we know little about the ethical and unethical applications of compassion in politics. This paper is simply an attempt to examine the place of compassion in politics. ■

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Gendercide: An Internalized Phenomenon in Patriarchy and its Repercussions as Portrayed in the Novel *Resolve*

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Women are considered to be the major force of life. However, the harsh reality that we see in history specifies a different altercation. Female infanticide is a violent act performed by the patriarchal society that runs in the veins of every household story. Gendercide is ruthless slaying of a specific gender. Violence against women is internalized as a common phenomenon transpiring in a patriarchal set up. This paper contemplates on the hostility manifested against a female child, which is dehumanizing. Strong preference or inclination towards a boy child has led towards an establishment of culture called gender-selective infanticide. India being metamorphosized digitally, to give space for all kinds of gender orientation and empowerment; however the disparity and discrimination still prevail when it comes to female gender. The paper delineates the discrimination shown to the 'other' and its repercussions. How are we camouflaging our flaws? Or is there an exigency to conceal our fallacy? The milieu is life-threatening, by not bequeathing space for any gender to survive. The emphasis is laid on elimination of belligerent setting and it becomes obligatory to set up a respiring abode. Point of convergence is, to destitute the notion of gendercide and to encompass breathing space to the new born, indemnifying them their right to dwell in the unscathed environment.

Keywords: female infanticide, gendercide, discrimination, belligerent setting, repercussions.

“The poverty of being unwanted, unloved and uncared for is the greatest poverty”, this quote by Mother Teresa seems apt to the female condition in our country. In a country like India, a woman is seen or revered as goddess, attributing the highest place. However, in reality she is not allowed to be born. Female Infanticide has not only barred this gender from legal right to be born as a woman, but it has also brought in that realization of the consequence that the patriarchy has to undergo. Abiding to this toxic pattern of ruthlessly slaying of a girl child is dehumanizing one. The 2019 National Sample Survey report says

that women in our country shoulder over 82% of the domestic work and almost 28% of care giving, whereas for men its 26% and 14% respectively. With this data it is explicitly clear that women are crucial for family as an institution to function smoothly. However, the attitude towards a girl child is not welcoming one. Who needs to be blamed? Who will shoulder the responsibility to provide them the safe environment?

The present paper delineates gender inequality and discrimination meted out on the basis of sex. Despite, knowing the worth of a girl child, she is shunned to the periphery without giving her the space to breathe. A female has the power to exercise herself in any arena, whether it is public or private sphere. But still people commit heinous act of suppressing the new born. Robert Zoellick writes “Equality is not just the right thing to do. Its smart economics, how can an economy achieve full potential if it ignores sidelines or fails to invest in half of its population?” In the contemporary world women are equal participants and contributors to the Economic growth, however, they still remain oppressed by patriarchal construct.

To discern the imbrications of female infanticide, the present study contemplates the novel *Resolve* by Perumal Murugan. Murugan is a well accalimed Indian author, through his work *Resolve* the writer debunks the tragedy of the epidemic of female infanticide that has led to severe shortage of girls for marriage. Marimuthu, the central character in the novel grapples with the issue of marriage and he cares for nothing other than a wife. Murugan paints a vivid picture of women and their pathetic life they lead as commodity to maintain family lineage. However, due to female infanticide Marimuthu is unable to find a bride for himself. Female infants were slayed due to, the general mindset that they would be burdensome for the family. This repressive culture to suppress the ‘other’ gender is bound to explode eventually.

In 1989, a progressive step was adopted by the new legislation towards equalizing the oppressed gender by granting them right to property. Right over property should have enhanced the life of the girl child, but it only deteriorated further. However, around the same phase, scanning technology was made available to determine the sex of the unborn. This paved way to the notion that it would be better to kill the fetus in the womb rather killing it after the birth and also to the preference that patriarchy had for sons. This can be substantiated by the conversation from the novel *Resolve*:

‘So, you are not going to stop until you have a boy?’

‘I don’t know, da. There is no guarantee a son would take care of us in our old age. He might humiliate us for not having enough money or property to give him. Atleast with daughters, we can marry them off and be done with our duties’.

‘Oh! So it looks like you have decided to stop with five children.’

‘Yes, we went and checked last month and found out it was going to be a girl. So, she had an abortion and also the operation. That’s it. Enough.’

Varthan somehow managed to feed and clothe five girls. And he used to long for a male child.(135-136)

With the traditional ways of killing a girl child, technology came as boon to inflict atrocity on the 'other' gender, by killing them before birth. Technology did add more fuel to the issue which prevailed.

Murugan through his writing exposes us to the traditional ways of killing a new born. The below instance from the novel depicts the bleak reality of the male, female ratio issue that prevailed in the society. Instance from the novel proves this:

Kattayan only had two daughters, both of whom were married. All his money would certainly go to them in the future. Marimuthu remembered that, in fact, there had been a third child long ago. Kattayan's wife had their third child at the city hospital. They were not happy that the third child had also turned out to be a girl. They looked like they were in mourning.

But all of this lasted only three days. On the fourth day, the new baby died. More people then turned up to express their condolences. The family repeated the same story to everyone: 'She wouldn't drink any milk, and she cried continuously. Then, suddenly, she stopped crying. We thought she had fallen asleep, so we let her be. Only after an hour we realized she was not breathing.' But everyone knew that Kattayan's mother-in-law was responsible for this.(201)

Who knows? If Kattayan had not killed that baby, perhaps Marimuthu would now have a girl to marry.(203)

Daughter Deficit a book by Sharada Srinivasan employs quantitative and ethnographic material to examine daughter elimination in the form of sex selection and female infanticide. Srinivasan in unit 3 titled Daughter Elimination in Tamil Nadu provides brief analysis on daughter elimination and of Female Infanticide that existed in North and Western part of India. Government had announced several schemes to save the girl child namely; Cradle Baby Scheme, Girl Child Protection Scheme and the 15- point Action Programme for Child Welfare in 1993. However, a state wide survey in 1996 by the Directorate of Public Health reported contagious female infanticide. This kind of aversion towards the 'other' gender had to be uprooted to avoid therepercussion.

Nilanjana Bhowmick in her book *Lies Our Mothers Told Us* provides a closer insight into the gender inequality that forms the bedrock of India's middle class. Journalist Nilanjana Bhowmick provides us the data and anecdotal evidence from the real lives of Indian women and the discrimination that, women encounter in their routine. In one of the anecdotes she gives us a crux to the life of a girl child; the child is completely forgotten and ignored by her father, who fails to pick her from school. In spite of being an educated man, being a doctor by profession he fails to treat his daughter equally in par with his son. Suchi, the girl child hankered just for love and that was never showered on her. According Economic

Survey, son preference over the daughter had led to the birth of 21 million ‘unwanted’ girls in India until the year 2017. This widespread notion concerning son preference, prioritizing son over daughter was that they would stay with their parents and look after them during their old age, this cultural frame of individuals prioritizing son over daughter should undergo transformation to witness change in the society. Nilanjana Bhowmick provides us glimpse of the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao initiative, set in motion to hanker change in how a girl child should be viewed. The drive laid its hands on, to spread awareness about empowering girl child, but failed to allocate funds, which would have made betterment possible.

Amongst us are many activists who are fighting to bring in that equal footing for the subjugated gender. The fearless activists, Sanjoli and Ananya Banerjee fought against female foeticide from a young age. Sanjoli was a silent spectator to her pregnant mother’s struggle, the sex detection result indicated another baby girl for her mother and it was at the last moment that her parents decided to ignore the societal response and decided to go for the girl baby to show the world that girls were not burden and are capable individuals like any other human beings in the society. We lack in showing that love, care, feelings of wantedness to the girl child despite, the potential she owns. Even though, constitution has granted equal rights to Indian women, the cultural frame of patriarchy, unfortunately remains unaltered.

Gita Aravamudan’s book *Disappearing Daughters* presents us investigative report of girl infants who were a victim to the dehumanization act performed by their family. The writer disentangles the horrendous stories of patriarchal credence and shows disempowered women and their lack towards their own bodies. ‘They would sedate the new born with a drop of opium and bury her alive in a mud pot. Now, they scan the uterus and abort her before she is born.’ These lines from the book show the inhumane and destructive attitude of the patriarchal set up towards the ‘other’ gender. Self- questioning or introspection of the conscience about the destructive act need to be evaluated on prior basis otherwise the repercussions would be eternal. Why are women the target to such mindset? Why cannot women be let free to choose her very existence? This narrative of brutal slaying of female foetus gives us the gruesome vision of the future generations.

Cultural Construct theory is significant for the study, for it throws light on the societal practices, beliefs and attitudes that they attribute to the larger society. These constructs are laid on the marginalized section of the society. The traditional practice of killing a girl child due to preference over son can be read within the patriarchal discourse of femininity that girls are burdensome. Hence, through these construct we know the creation of such ideas are not the natural ones but accorded by each dominant culture, to hold on to the hegemony.

United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) as an agency of change makers provides humanitarian and developmental aid to children worldwide. UNICEF committed to promote gender equality in South Asia has ample development

Programmes to curb discrimination against female gender. According to UNICEF report, the sex ratio is 933 for 1000 male in 2022-23 and the report says by 2036 the ratio would be 952 for 1000 male. The South Asia Regional Headline results of 2018-2021, report 500,000 newborns are saved by UNICEF.

Another study by Pew Research Center, a US-based think tank, revealed that there were at least 9 million female foeticide in India during 2000-2019. The number of girls born fell from about 480,000 in 2010 to 410,000 in 2019. The number lessened only because of the cultural preference people had for sons over daughters. Rather than, just shouting slogan to save girl child, individual mindset and cultural construct needs to be eliminated for the betterment of all.

To conclude the reference is drawn from the novel *Resolve*:

The vision he saw in his dream, a world in ruins and bereft of women—was that going to come true soon? If he could get married, he would live the way people lived in the old days. He wanted to have at least ten children, and he wanted them all to be girls. The world should never again witness the sorrow of a man like him.(22)

The central character realizes the repercussions of female infanticide and fiercely gesticulates the need for a change. *Resolve* novel is titled *Kanganam* in the Tamil version of the book. *Kanganam* means the ritual of tying yellow thread during important events, especially for a groom. The tying of the thread is not just to denote cultural connotation but also signifies the responsibility that the individual have to take up during and after that event. In the novel, it is Marimuthu's responsibility to shower love, respect to the 'other' gender in the society. Simone De Beauvoir's quote sums the societal construct on a female gender, "One is not born rather becomes a woman". To achieve gender equality and women's empowerment, ideological domination that prevail in the society need to be shattered. It becomes obligatory to obliterate boundaries and barriers to foster a safe, healthier and prosperous world for all. Solidarity is the essential key to make the change viable. ■

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The Advent of Counter-hegemonic Narratives of Power: A Study of Select Black Science Fictions through the Discourses of African Futurism and Afro-futurism

Ananya Buragohain

Black Science Fiction came to form under the influence of several factors; however, its increased distance from the trauma of Colonization and continuous focus on self-growth of the entire community of the Blacks tend to be the significant reason behind the advent of Black Science Fictions in the contemporary era. The noteworthy figures of this section of literary works are Nnedi Okorafor¹, Octavia E. Butler, River Solomon, and so forth. It is arguably true that Black Science Fictions facilitate a thought process which attempts to create a sense of Black Solidarity amongst the people of Africa and her descendants worldwide. The oeuvre of Black Science Fictions includes aspects from history, technology, science, and myth. Such narratives attempt to explore contemporary concerns while challenging those ideologies which were promoted by the Colonizers during the Colonial period. The characters in Black Science Fictions often appears to be superhuman beings who possess the power and potential to challenge the established hegemony of a particular society. Thus, the area of Black Science fictions is undeniably an interesting one because it allows the readers to explore various dimensions associated with science, technology, African history, tradition, culture, and myth. However, this study will specifically explore two Africanfuturistic texts by Nnedi Okorafor, namely *Binti* (2015) and *Lagoon* (2014).

Keywords: Africanfuturism, Afrofuturism, Postcolonialism, Self-healing

This paper attempts to understand the schema used by the writers of Black Science Fictions to create a section of literature which will focus more on the psyche of the Black people and will enable them create a space for their self-healing and collective solidarity. The methodology involves a critical understanding of the select texts, namely *Binti* (2015) and *Lagoon* (2014) by considering Afrofuturism², Africanfuturism³, African Feminism, and Postcolonialism as the vantage ground for this analysis. This study will also engage with the ideas shared by critical thinkers such as Peter J. Maurits and Nick Wood in essays such as “On the Emergence of African Science Fiction” and “Forces Shaping the Development of South African speculative fiction down the ages” respectively. This reading will also

rely upon texts such as *Myth, Literature and the African World* (2005), *The Souls of Black Folk* (2017), *Africanfuturism: An Anthology* (2020), and *Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-fi and Fantasy Culture* (2013) to comprehend the technique used by significant Black personals to strategically compose a section of literary work which will question the hegemonic structure promoted since the era of Colonization of mother Africa. In African Science Fiction there is constant promotion of collective consciousness amongst the Black people and such an approach will enable people from Africa and her diaspora to overcome the trauma of Colonization.

This study will specifically explore the plotlines of two texts by Nnedi Okorafor, namely *Binti* and *Lagoon*. The aforementioned texts can be categorized within the genre of Black Science Fiction and can be analyzed through the discourses of Africanfuturism and Afrofuturism to explore the strategy used by the Black writers to encourage the people of Africa and her diaspora understand the necessity of climbing the ladder of social mobility. Okorafor's text *Binti* is the first narrative of her trilogy titled *Binti Trilogy*. The text *Binti* narrativizes the story of a Himba girl who decides to pursue her dreams and succeed in her life. The text beautifully narrativizes the journey of a girl from her homeland to an intergalactic university and her encounters with diverse people and strange creatures. On the other hand, *Lagoon* narrativizes a tale of sudden crisis in Lagos, Nigeria because of a sudden alien attack and how characters such as Adaora, Agu, and Anthony raced against time and tried their best to safeguard their homeland during the alien attack.

Wole Soyinka in his book *Myth, Literature and the African World* (2005) contended that for the Africans from the mother continent and its diaspora Negritude became a life-line which inspired dissociated individuals to connect to their matrilineal essence (64). This undeniably will enable them understand the significance of forming Black social entities. On the other hand, the traditional approach to African literature will force the readers to understand the absence of creative individualism amongst their people because the earlier narratives from the land of mother Africa were more focused on individualized lives of the people. Thus, the readers can trace the line of development which assisted the writers of African descent to realize the necessity of a section of literature which will create a sense to strive and climb the ladder of social mobility amongst their people rather than accepting the position sanctioned for them in the society during the colonial era.

Furthermore, W.E.B Du Bois in his acclaimed text *The Souls of Black Folk* (2017) contends about the position of the Blacks in the society who are marginalized and are often looked down upon as the relegated section of the society. It is noticeable that a few amongst them have managed to overcome the boundaries constructed for the Blacks in the society and achieve milestones in their lives, but it should be noted that a large section of them is still struggling to fit into an esteemed position in the society. Moreover, Du Bois also discusses about the psyche of the Black people who often end up believing that they should be contented with the position already defined for them by the society since the colonial era. This in a way highlights the harsh reality the people from Africa and its diaspora have

to undergo as a result of the stereotypes promoted against them since the era of colonization. Thus, it can be seen that the traumatized psyche of these people forces them to question their own potential. Du Bois also contends that a repressive environment deprived of sustainable thoughts will only breed more of contempt and abhorrence towards others. Moreover, a restraining environment will also promote more of self-questioning (6). On a similar note, this paper attempts to argue that by imbibing in the elements of science and technology in their literary platform and by overtly shifting towards Science Fiction the Black authors are attempting to challenge the pre conceived notions of the society which restrain the Blacks from focusing more on self-growth and self-healing.

Thus, the dark history of Colonization that mother Africa endured becomes a significant aspect associated with the arrival of African Science Fiction in the World Literary Platform. However, it can be seen that the entire oeuvre of works associated with African Science Fiction at times maintains a mild distance from the dark history of Colonization by focusing more on self-healing. The writers visibly invoke the instances from slave trade and the oppression of the Black people on the basis of race; however, their portrayal of colonial history is also implicit at times. On the other hand, African Science Fictions share a humble bonding with the narratives of struggles of Black people in the society by involving aspects from science and technology. Peter J. Maurits in the essay “On the Emergence of African Science Fiction” contends that African Science Fictions can be termed as a joint tradition of utopic writings and science fiction which in a way attempts to respond to both contemporary and non-contemporary narrative traditions. This is in a way moving towards maintaining a momentum because of the new media and techno-optimisms towards the African continent (4).

On the other hand, Black Science Fictions also highlight the significance of African culture, tradition, myth, and their history. This section of literature tries to glorify the beauty African soil carries and the heterogenous bonding the Black people shares all over the world. Moreover, this literary platform is quite critical even about the instabilities their community encounters internally. For instance, African Science Fiction overtly criticizes the institution of family and marriage which tend to operate in a repressive manner at times. For instance, Binti was unconsciously forced by her family values to believe that her determination to journey to Oomza University by transgressing the boundaries set in her community is no less than an abomination. She even fears that she might be deprived of the familial love and support if she happens to return to her homeland after she completes her studies in Oomza University. Furthermore, Binti was conditioned by her family to believe that by prioritizing her higher studies over her family she almost scandalized her bloodline, and hence, her family was quite indifferent towards her during her university days. It will be pertinent to quote here a few lines from the text *Binti* to understand the scenario better “My four aunties and two uncles who lived down the road would shout and gossip among themselves about how I’d scandalized our entire bloodline. I was going to be a pariah” (Okorafor 10).

In the select texts, the characters of Binti and Adaora have been constructed along the lines of empowered Black women who can possess the capacity to decide for themselves and overcome the restrictions imposed on Black women by the society. The character of Binti has been constructed by recalling every possible trait that a Himba girl from Africa might carry. Her representation stands significant throughout the *Binti Trilogy*. Binti has been portrayed as a harmonizer and as a superwoman who possesses the power to challenge the patriarchal attitudes of the society. Even Adaora undergoes similar scenarios of hatred and oppression from her husband Chris. However, it can be noticed that they have a deep sense of reverence for their own people and homeland and this inspires them to race against time and safeguard the life of the people in their homeland. They believe that there is a significance of the identity that their ancestral land allows them to acknowledge. Here, the character's esteemed land refers to Africa once exploited by the Colonizers for its natural and human resources.

Hence, it can be argued that the strategic representation of Black women in African Science Fictions is highly noteworthy because they are represented as women of power and perseverance who possess the potential to race against the odds and safeguard their prized possessions and this include their self-respect, identity, homeland, and so forth. They overtly challenge the stereotypes constructed for women in the society. In Okorafor's text *Binti*, Binti, who is the protagonist, is not just a harmonizer but also a warrior by spirit. She tried her best to establish harmony between two warring communities namely the Khoush people and the seemingly aliens Meduse while she was in Oomza University. However, while she was settling the deal between them, she was stung by the Meduse named Okwu and it eventually ended up providing her some Meduse power. Thus, it can be argued that Binti's character has been constructed by the writer as someone who has the capacity to develop fluidity in her nature and actions.

The character of Binti is all-encompassing she is adamant yet compassionate. There are several hues in her character. Briefly, it can be said that she tends to be the powerful version that every Black woman seeks to become in the near future. Okorafor encourages the women of her community to overcome the barriers set against them by the prejudiced society and envision a sustainable and powerful future for themselves and for the upcoming generations. Binti becomes the self-governing woman of her community who chooses her career over the prejudices of the society and her people. Binti even received hate messages from the Khoush people when they came to know that she is all set to pursue her studies in Oomza University by being the first Himba ever to receive the honor of attending the University. It will be pertinent to quote here a few lines from the text *Binti* to understand the aura her character carries as a Black woman of power and perseverance:

Straightening up, I paused and shut my eyes. Now the weight of my entire life was pressing on my shoulders. I was defying the most traditional part of myself for the first time in my life. I was leaving in the dead of night and they had no clue. My nine siblings, all older than me except for my younger sister and brother, would

never see this coming. My parents would never imagine I'd do such a thing in a million years. By the time they all realize what I'd done and where I was going, I'd have left the planet. (10)

Even in Okorafor's *Lagoon* the readers encounter similar instances too. Adaora, the main protagonist of this text, constantly faces subjugation from her husband Chris who quite often doubts her loyalty towards him. Once while there was a misunderstanding between them, on account of Adaora attending a concert of Anthony Dey Craze, Chris ended up hitting her. He deliberately harbors vile intention towards her and subjugates her as her husband. Chris has constructed an imaginary story in his mind that his wife performs witchcraft and deliberately humiliates her often by addressing her as a witch. For instance, while Adaora was pouring wine for Chris, he was eyeing on her actions and was pondering if accepting wine from his wife will break the purging that he is undertaking to protect himself from his wife's witchcrafts (34). It is quite heart wrenching to see such scenarios where a woman is dominated just because her husband has started constructing false narratives around her loyalty to him. Such patriarchal practices relegate the position of a woman in the society and under such circumstances it becomes far worse for a Black woman to overcome such attitudes of the society as they are already triply marginalized on the grounds of race, class, and gender.

On the other hand, the institution of family was critically highlighted in *Lagoon* and in *Binti* as well. It tends to operate in a patriarchal manner the moment Adaora and Binti tried to step out of the constructs approved by the familial norms. When Binti informed her family about her choices her sister Suum spat on her and asked her not to be selfish. Suum arrogantly asks Binti to be more rational and demands her to stop chasing achieving greater goals in her life. Binti opines that Suum is just a year older to her, but her actions express nothing less than some sort of adamant desire to exert authority on her sister's life. Such scenarios in Okorafor's text expresses the lack of solidarity amongst Black women in the society. Afrofuturistic and Africanfuturistic writers urges their people to be more compassionate and encouraging towards each other. They are of the opinion that the only weapon which can initiate a sense of Black consciousness in the society is a better solidarity amongst the people of Africa and her diaspora. Thus, the domain of Black Science Fiction tends to operate as a platform to promote a sense of Black consciousness in the society. This advent of counterhegemonic narrative of power will enable the people from Africa and her diaspora to realize their true self and overcome the dark history of their past. One can quote here a few lines from the text *Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-fi and Fantasy Culture* (2013) by Ytasha L. Womack:

It's one thing when black people aren't discussed in world history. Fortunately, teams of dedicated historians and culture advocates have chipped away at the propaganda often functioning as history for the world's students to eradicate that glaring error. But when. Even in the imaginary future- a space where the mind can stretch beyond the Milky Way to envision routine space travel, cuddly space animals,

talking apes, and time machines- people can't fathom a person of non-Euro descent a hundred years into the future, a cosmic foot has to be put down. (13)

Hence, it can be argued that the advent of Black Science Fiction paved the way for the writers to promote the ideology of Black solidarity in the world. Its attempt to challenge hegemonic narratives of the society still remains the first priority of this platform. Thus, the arrival of this newer oeuvre of works that has enabled the Black writers of the world to promote a sense of Black consciousness amongst their people. This literary platform encourages the people of Africa and her descents to become self-sufficient and self-heal from the trauma of the past. The characters are portrayed as men and women of power and potential who possess the capacity to safeguard their identity and homeland in times of need. Binti, for instance, transgressed all the boundaries constructed for women in the society and decided to prioritize her career over the stereotypes propagated for women. On the other hand, Adaora also decided to move ahead from the dreadful environment in her private life and decided to race against time to safeguard her people during the sudden alien attack in her homeland Lagos, Nigeria.

Thus, it can be concluded that Black Science Fiction is the platform that enables the people from Africa and her diaspora to speak for themselves and self-heal from the trauma of Colonization. It will be pertinent to mention here that this study doesn't attempt to make any biased analysis of the aspects associated with oppression of people belonging to Africa and its diaspora in the society by people belonging to other race; however, it definitely attempts a straightforward understanding of the indifferences preserved against the Blacks on the basis of class, race, and gender. It has enabled the Black writers to challenge the narratives promoted and popularized by the colonizers and focus more on envisioning a sustainable future for themselves across the world. Thus, the area of Black Science Fictions undoubtedly tends to be an interesting one to explore because it discovers several dimensions that delineate the necessity of popularizing Black narratives of power and persistence of the Blacks in the society.

Notes:

1. Nnedi Okorafor is a Nigerian American writer who specifically writes Africanfuturistic texts. She has immensely contributed to the field of Black Science Fiction. Her trilogies such as *Binti Trilogy* and *Nsibidi Scripts* series are quite popular and highlights the necessity of Black women empowerment in the society.
2. Afrofuturism as a cultural lens combines history, science, technology, and fantasy to explore African-American experiences and seeks to reconnect those to Black diaspora.
3. Africanfuturism is a cultural lens that connects aesthetics and philosophy through a fusion of African culture, tradition, history, myth, with science and technology. However, it should be noted that Africanfuturism is more connected to the aspects related to Africa and not limiting to diaspora only. ■

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Three Women's Death in *Six Acres and a Third*

Soumya Sangita Sahoo

Fakir Mohan Senapati is undoubtedly the champion of rural India in the colonial period. His realistic portrayals surpass the restrictions of time. His narratives are classics and have been found relevant in contemporary life. His seminal works *Rebati* (1898) and *Six Acres and a Third* exemplify modern Indian thought and consciousness amidst the British Raj. *Six Acres and a Third* (Chha Mana Aatha Guntha) has been read as a text of exploits by Zamindari system and a criticism on colonial patriarchy. This study argues that the text could be read from the perspective of the death of the central female figures who have more to contribute than their passive presence. The characters of the Saantani, the weaver woman Saria and the crafty and cunning Champa work as three focal characters around which the narrative can be re-read. The death of these three female characters lay founding stone for the plot to make its progress and without this very event, a critique of Mangaraj and colonial patriarchy is impossible. A feminist analysis of the death of these characters will explore the possibility of reading *Six Acres and a Third* as a feminist inscription of silencing the female voice every now and then and death as the final solution to the women's problem. A postcolonial feminist reading of the text reads *Six Acres and a Third* as a text that talks back to the centre.

Keywords: colonial patriarchy, feminist, zamindari, death, talking back

Fakir Mohan Senapati's *Six Acres and a Third* continues to remain a text preferred for realistic representation of rural India in colonial times. The text is a popular inscription where the narrator with his satire mocks at prevalent social hierarchy and its ethical codes. Zamindars and the fragility of shifting powers has been analysed and the role of the subaltern with its marginal presence is marked. The negligible contribution of women to social life and their invisible presence is recorded through numerous instances. A text foregrounding the inequalities evident in societies, *Six Acres and a Third*, will continue to intrigue readers for its sensitive portrayal of rural countryside and its evident dialectics.

This paper is an attempt to reflect upon the narrative presence of women in Fakir Mohan Senapati's *Chha Mana Aatha Guntha* (translated as *Six Acres and a Third*). On a careful scrutiny one uncovers the obvious dominance of the female in the events of the

novel, in opposition to this narrative being a testimony to the evil ploys of the evil landlord, Ramachandra Mangaraj. Ramachandra has been viewed as the prototype male antagonist who is no less powerful than Iago in *Othello*(1603), Rochester in *Wide Sargasso Sea*(1966) or Gabbar in the Amitabh Bachhan starrer bollywood movie *Sholay*(1975). Iago is the most powerful and most psychologically advanced villains of all time. He has an authority that none can question and his silence is beyond comprehension. He exemplifies, evil in embodiment and vicious in execution. Othello is undoubtedly the greatest of Shakespearean heroes for Iago is the vilest of human beings, if he could still be categorized with homo sapiens. Rochester, the male protagonist Victorian classic *Jane Eyre*(1847), becomes the antagonist in the its re-telling *Wide Sargasso Sea*, set in the Caribbean Islands. The re-telling deploys its evil intentions behind marrying a Caribbean white creole girl for her wealth and property. *Wide Sargasso Sea* has been read as an important text of postcolonial literature expounding its theoretical underpinnings. Gabbar is not just a villain but he is an embodiment of barbarity, ruthlessness and frenzied hatred. He was all that no one wanted encounter, Just as Voldemort in the *Harry Potter*(2001-2011) series, was never named, people would panic at the hint of his mention. They would never refer to him with his name, rather would say as “HE”, “You know who”, “He who should not be named”. It was a popular belief with the characters of *Harry Potter* that with the mention itself, the evilness of Voldemort will start diffusing in the environment, so people avoided his mention. A similar status has been accorded to Ramachandra Mangaraj whose evil ploys, his greed for land and his crookedness has been over-emphasized in literary analysis. Popular analysis of this cult narrative has focussed on the atrocities of the Zamindars, the binaries that the rich and the poor accommodate in the society. However, Ramachandra Mangaraj is very much similar to Shylock in Shakespearean *The Merchant of Venice*. All his name, fame and wealth could be easily sabotaged with the accusation one murder, the murder of Saria, the weaver woman and wife of Bhagia.

On a closer study with a feminist underpinning away from its usual Marxist or subaltern projections, the text would achieve a novel perspective. What if the text is all about the three women who evidently succumb to death- Saantani, Saria and Champa. The chronology of their death could be the three focal points of the narrative-the natural death of the Saantani, the inconspicuous circumstances around the death of Saria and the murder of Champa by her lover with whom she elopes.

The death of the Saantani disturbs the narrative and arrives as a shock in a chapter named after her and dedicated to her. The lifestyle and personality of the Saantani, the Zamindar’s wife is revealed in this chapter. Saantani is not the name, rather a title given to a landlord’s wife such as Mistress or Madam. Saantani in Odia culture reflects the role of the lady who belongs to a affluent and prosperous family. However, this term could be concern for feminists which identifies a lady with the position of being a wife-that is Saanta’s wife(Saanta is the Zamindar). She is expected to assist her husband in managing the Zamindari and take care of the needs of people working for them. However, she is deprived of the respect that she deserved. Mangaraj’s

disregard of the Saantani confers on the status of the meek and gullible. Through the narrative she hardly speaks and her silence only marks her presence. The Narrator carefully places her amongst the typical uneducated Indian housewives of rural Zamindari. She stands outside the threshold of her own bedroom, inside which the boisterous laughter of her husband and the maid Champa, marked her failure as a Saantani. The view of Mangaraj and Champa, planning the execution of their devious plots, offers the readers a glimpse into the marital discord between Mangaraj and the Saantani. Mangaraj for sure would have married her for the lucrative dowry that the Saantani's family must have promised during the wedding. Apart from contributing to his wealth and assisting him in propagating his lineage, Mangaraj had fewer transactions with the Saantani. What is remarkable in the character of the Saantani is no one tells us what her actual name was. Her identity as a woman had to be dissolved in contrast to the heavily leaded status quo of the Saantani. In other words, the Saantani ought to be remembered in all grandeur, with her identity rejecting anything that is miniscule in favour of the grand narrative of the Mangaraj family. Saantani's mention or her memory could associated with Mangaraj alone. Saantani's death becomes the only remarkable event in her life. The vile Champa is seen shedding tears in her loss, however the truthfulness of her sorrow was inconspicuous. The chapter dedicated to the Saantani has a subtitle, "all shall pass away when their time comes; but their deeds shall be remembered for ever"(142). While alive Saantani seemed invisible to people, her death had suddenly made her a star, the news of the Saantani's death spread with the speed of lightening. Women left their chores, and men abandoned their work. All began reciting the sterling qualities of the departed soul. Even women who were not related to the Saantani could not hold back their tears. Some remarked, "with her death on this auspicious day of Radhastami, Goddess Lalshmi has forsaken the village forever. Others added, "Mangaraj's days of prosperity are now over; from now on, his fortunes will decline (143).

These assumptions soon become the words of prophesy and begins the downfall of Mangaraj.

Fakir Mohan's women can be categorized as the ideal women who is the epitome of virtue and a figure of sacrifice and other being the evil minded who can be termed as the vicious often falling under the category of the villain. Saantani was all that was the embodiment of virtue and selflessness.

Whenever the subject of devotion to ones husband came up in the village, everyone would mention Saanatni's loyalty to Magaraj. Her character was noble, and she was pious by nature. Fate had denied her a husbands's affection, which is what a woman treasures most, but she suffered the neglect without complaint. She simply believed that to serve her husband was her sacred duty, and performing this duty gave her joy(144).

The ideal women in Fakir Mohan's writings endure a great many sufferings and pain in their lives and that is how they are known as great beings. Saria also undergoes enormous suffering. She is shown as a devoted wife and a kind hearted lady who is loved and respected by her husband, Bhagia, however the source of her suffering is not having a child of her own. She spends her maternal care on her childlike cow, Neta whose loss to Mangaraj eventually leads to her death by self-starvation. The ideal women in Fakir Mohan texts think beyond their own self-interests as a result they lose many things in life, including their own lives.

Death is the relevant trope used by Fakir Mohan Senapati in all his works. His classic story *Rebati* also witnesses the death of almost all the major characters in the story. The virtuous and the not-so-virtuous all are equalized in the face of death. The Saantani, Sari and Champa, *Rebati*, her mother all die or else they will be revolting and rebelling. However, Champa residing within the same household of Mangaraj fell under the second category of women. The death of Saantani evokes a range of misfortunes for Mangaraj including the death of Saria for which he will be acquitted. Champa also dies towards the end of the plot, however, her death has no such consequences as death of virtuous women like Saantani and Saria. Saantani's death was a grand episode in the plot of the text. Mangaraj for the first time is seen exploding with emotions, mostly silent since his tears did the commotion while his body stood frozen before his dead wife's body.

No one had ever seen Mangaraj shed tears: this is the first time people saw him cry. They believed he was incapable of love, affection, shame, and decency; they believed that for him money was everything, that day and night, he thought about nothing else. He was often seen sitting silently with a strange glint in his eyes. Dreams of wealth rose and disappeared before his eyes, like waves of sea rushing to the shore, crashing and dissolving. But today his mind was filled with something else. His eyes were half-closed, listless and moist with tears(144).

The stone-hearted man had suddenly realized his greatest loss, the loss of his wife. Mangaraj was unaware that Saantani's death was going to change the course of his life, not for good.

Saantani's death is followed by the death of Saria within the periphery of Mangaraj's house. Saantani's death chapter is followed by the chapter titled, *The Police Inquiry* where the news of Saria's death is broken before the readers. The crime scene with different witnesses is narrated numerous times with minutest of details by various characters, confessions often mismatching with the witnesses. Witnesses manipulate the crime scene and re-enact their versions of the night on which Saria died. While numerous witnesses confirmed having seen Ramachandra Mangaraj beating Saria to death, there were many who testified to it being a natural death. The daroga of the place incurred enmity with Mangaraj, prepared witnesses to give false testimonies against the accused, thereby leaving no chance of him escaping punishment. The Case was "the murder of Saria, the weaver woman; unlawful possession of her cow, Neta, and other valuables from her house"(156).

While people were being interrogated, Marua the faithful servant in Mangaraj's household connects the death of Saria to the death of his beloved mistress, the Saantani. He reveals the cause of Saria's death being self-starvation after her land of Six Acres and a Third and her cow, Neta were snatched away by Mangaraj in the name of recovery of the sum that Bhagia had borrowed from him towards the building of Maa Budhi Mangala temple. Marua who was emotionally paralyzed at the death of Saantani further reveals that how the starvation of Saria led to the Saantani's despise of food. For those eight days that Saria went starving, Saantani had also forsaken her food. Her compassion for the poor and the weak was not new;

If Mangaraj lost his temper with a servant or a housemaid, and raised his hand to mete out a beating, Saantani would come forward and defend them with a series of arguments proving their innocence. On occasions like these, Saantani would think nothing of the difference between truth and falsehood; she could tell a lie in order to help servants. It was she who would bear the brunt of Mangaraj's wrath(145).

Saria's suffering led the Saantani to impose self-suffering on her own self. Marua reveals that while Saria died due to her hunger, Saantani's death was caused due to shock. What killed her was the devious plan of her husband where Champa was the cause behind the burning down of Bagha Singh's family house and making them penniless.

While Saantani and Saria's death were connected to one another, Champa dies as a consequence of her own deeds. She elopes with Gobinda, the barber with whom she hatches a plan to steal the hidden wealth of Mangaraj from his bedroom. She had carefully acquired the keys from Mangaraj being his trusted subject. At the dead of the night, the barber and the maid Champa run away with a lot of money and jewellery from Mangaraj's household, a fact that neither Mangaraj nor his family members were aware of. However, Gobinda realizes that he has been used by Champa who has no plans of sharing the wealth with him. She was also adamant that it was her intelligence that had got her the wealth and not otherwise. "A man expects respect, love, devotion and loyalty from a woman; Champa's conduct made it clear that although she had taken a fancy to Gobinda, he would always remain nothing more than a barber to her"(191). This realization compels Gobinda to ruthlessly slit the throat of Champa.

Champa dies as a consequence of her own deeds and her death was not connected to that of Saantani or Saria directly, however, it had been poetically just that she dies a painful death. She had been the cause of distress to the Saantani and had occupied the place in Mangaraj's life that was rightfully belonged to the Saantani. "All that can be said That Champa wielded great deal of authority in Mangaraj's household, while his wife's presence was hardly felt there at all. Farmlands, labourers, the clerks in Mangaraj's office-everyone recognized Champa's power"(55). Champa not only exercised her power within Mangaraj's office but also intruded into his personal space, his household. She was his companion with whom he shared his heart out and bared open his evil intentions and plans for looting

innocent people of the village. The Saantani was a mere mute spectator to this, “A tender hearted women can endure sorrows which would break a tough man’s heart. A women’s capacity for tolerance is greater than that of any man, but no pure and chaste woman can bear her husband’s scorn and lack of trust. For her, to be slighted in her husband’s presence by a maidservant was worse than death. But this was not new; the Saanatni had got used to this kind of humiliation”(124). Champa was the other woman in her husband’s wife. The Saantani was the namesake mistress, while Champa got the aura of it. Marital indifference was a cause of stress to the Saantani but she was heartbroken and traumatized as she could uncover the distress that Champa and Mangaraj were causing to innocent folks. Champa destroys the peace of Bhagia and Saria’s lives when she convinces Saria to borrow money from Mangaraj for building the temple. Later Mangaraj snatches the Six Acres and their and their cow, Neta. He doesn’t stop there, he goes on to pull down their house which he had bought in auction. Champa helps him in destroying his powerful opponent the Bagha Singh family. Champa who would appear faithful to Mangaraj from the beginning of the plot, is seen deceiving him when he gets arrested for Saria’s murder. Champa’s end was destined as a consequence of her karma, just as Mangaraj in the last chapter of the text is abandoned by his sons and left to succumb to the injuries given by Bhagia, who had lost his well being after the death of his wife Saria.

Fakir Mohan Senapati had carefully crafted a plot that was set in the colonial era where Zamindars exploited people. While the grand narrative appeared to a popular story of infamous Ramachandra Mangaraj, a name very contradictory to the deeds of the God that he might have been named after, it was multilayered and addressed numerous stigmas in the society. On a closer look one finds Champa to be the mastermind behind Mangaraj’s wealth, which she seems to accumulating not out of any love for Managraj but for the sake of wealth alone. The true antagonist is Champa then for whom, Mangaraj, Saanatani, Saria, Bhagia, Gobinda are all pawns to be used and sacrificed when the time was apt. This power narrative is more of a women’s narrative with chapters named after Champa, Saanatni, Bhagia, the weaver and Saria, his wife, Maa Buddhi Mangala along with chapters such as Ramachandra Mangaraj, the Mangaraj family, the Bagha Singh family and many more. On a closer introspection Fakir Mohan seems to be inscribing the death of these women and the circumstances around it-one a noble lady, the other a working class lady and the last who came from no one knew where and was responsible for the befall of many around her including herself. ■

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Redefinition of Righteousness in Kuvempu's *The Sudra Ascetic* : A Thematic Study

P. Kannan

Kuppali Venkatappa Puttappa famously known as Kuvempu is a multifarious personality with such various and versatile images as teacher, Vice Chancellor, writer, reformer, State poet, Central Sahitya Awardee, Padma Bhushana awardee and recipient of Honorary D.Litt from several universities from India as well as abroad. Kuvempu is a household name in Karnataka. Social justice is the predominant motif in the writings of Kuvempu. An attempt is made to identify redefinition of righteousness in the light of social justice or equality as the theme in his play *The Sudra Ascetic*.

The Sudra Ascetic is translation its Kannada version called *Sudra Tapasvi*. *Sudra Tapasvi* was written in 1944 and was translated into English by Prabhu Shankara in 1982. It is a short play in three scenes based on the episodes dealing with a *sudra* ascetic Sambuka in *The Ramayana*. There are several views regarding the period of the creation of the original *The Ramayana*. While some state that it could have been created between 8th century BC and 4th century AD, some others say that it could have been created in 3rd century AD. However, *The Ramayana* is considered to be the first and oldest Indian epic. There are also arguments about the form of this work. Some scholars call it an epic or *purana* and some other scholars consider it to be a history or *itikasa*. Originally it was a recitation. It is Narada who is said to have narrated the story of Rama to Valmiki who subsequently created *The Ramayana*. The meaning of the title *The Ramayana* is regarded as the journey of Rama. This Sanskrit work has been re-written and translated into many Indian and foreign languages.

The Ramayana is hailed as the supreme guidance of political, social, religious and ethical ideology in India from the time immemorial till date. Rama represents the ideal son, husband, father, ruler, friend and all are taught to emulate Rama in their various walks of life. While *The Ramayana* is appreciated universally, it is not free from adverse criticism. The act of cutting the nose of Surpanakai, killing of Vali from hiding behind Sukriva, excommunication of Sita and beheading Sambuka are criticised as anti-heroic and biased.

Kuvempu's *The Sudra Ascetic* is recast of the Sambuka in *The Ramayana*. In *The Ramayana*, Sambuka is depicted as a *Sudra* ascetic. According to the *varanasrama* theory,

the occupation of the people is distributed according to their *varna*. Chaturvarnya is the concept which defines the four varnas on the divisions of the people of the society like Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. It is said that Manu created a myth of creation of four sections of mankind from four parts of Lord Brahma's body and their status is fixed accordingly. The following serves as an illustration of the myth from *Who were the Shudras?* in *Dr.B,R Ambedkar's Writings and Speeches* thus:

The *Brahmin* is equated to the mouth of the creator. Mouth being the noblest part of the anatomy, the Brahmin becomes the noblest of the four classes. As he is the noblest in the scale, he is given the noblest function, he is given the noblest function, that of custodian of knowledge and learning. The *Kshatriya* is equated to the arms of the Creator. Among the limbs of a person, arms are next below the mouth. Consequently, the Kshatriya is given an order of precedence next below the *Brahmin* and is given a function which is next only to knowledge, namely, fighting. The *Vaishya* is equated to the thighs of the creator. In the gradation of limbs the thighs are next below the arms. Consequently, the *Vaishya* is given an order of precedence next below the Kshatriya and is assigned a function of industry and trade which in name and in fame ranks or did rank in ancient times below the warrior. The *Shudra* is equated to the feet of the Creator. The feet form the lowest and the most ignoble part of the human frame. Accordingly, the *Shudra* is placed last in the social order and is given the filthiest function, namely, to serve as a menial[32-33]

While the function of *Shudra* is prescribed to serve the three classes of the people above the *Shudras*, the *Shudras* are prohibited to indulge in the *thapas/penance* which the *Brahmins* are alone entitled to. *Sambuka* is a *Shudra* in *The Ramayana*. He has become a ascetic and is found performing penance despite it is prohibited and treated as a taboo. A *Brahmin* comes to the gate of the palace of King *Rama* carrying the dead body of his only son. On King *Rama's* enquiry, he informs King *Rama* that his son has died as a consequence of the violation of *Dharma* in *Sambuka's* act of practicing penance. King *Rama* visits the venue of *Sambuka's* penance and beheads him as soon as he learns that *Sambuka* is *Shudra*. Thus King *Rama* has restored *Dharma*.

It is very interesting to note that *Valmik's The Ramayana* does not contain the episode of *Sambuka*. It is observed in the later addition called *Uttara Kanda*. It is in this section, *Sambuka's* penance is considered to be a violation of *dharma* which causes bad *karma* leading to the death of a *Brahmin's* son. *Rama* kills him which is praised and congratulated by the gods as it has protected the interests of the gods which has prevented a *Shudra* to reach heaven in person. *Rama's* act also resurrects the son of the *Brahmin*. *Trichy Kalayanaraman* in his discourse gives a different clarification. He states that *Rama* kills *Sambuka* only on his own consent. He informs *Rama* that he performs penance in order to attain *moktsha/* or reach heaven, *Rama* states that he could attain *moksha* or reach heaven with his body. If he is beheaded he could not only attain *moksha* but give life to the

dead child of a brahmin. Rama kills him only after Sambuka accepts for such a death. In both cases, the received notion of dharma is upheld in the episodes of Sambuka.

Kuvempu has corrected the vedic or chaturvarana notion of dharma in his *The Sudra Ascetic* by rewriting the episodes of Sambuka in *The Ramayana*. The author has created an astonishing background in the very first scene. The first scene provides an agry argument between two characters of Kuvempu's own creation.

The god of death and justice in the mythology is Yama who dispenses the law and punishment of sinners in his abode. Kuvempu has introduced a character called Death which is a personification of death. The other character is Bhairava which is also a new inclusion. In the Hindu mythology, Bhairava is said to be the creation of Lord Shiva from his hair to teach a lesson to Lord Brahma who argues arrogantly that he is the supreme god and calls himself Shiva by stating that he has also got five heads like Shiva. Bhairava beheads Bhrama and holds the head in his hands. The form of Bhairava is terrible and fearsome but regarded as fearless. There is another interpretation according to which he is a protector of his devotees from dreadful enemies, greed, lust and anger, Kuvempu has created the character of Bhairava as a protector of Sambuka who is not only a sage but also Gurudeva of Bhairava.

Death enters the vicinity of Sambuka whne Bhairava is guarding it. The encounter reveals that the region of Sambuka is deathless and immortalised and thus there is no need for Death to enter there. After a heated and angry argument between them, Death says that it has visited Shambuka's area not take away the life of Shambuka and his associates. He has visited there to kill a Brahmin boy who fails to pay obeiance to Ascetic Sambuka. The following serves as an illustration:

Bhairava – A certain Brahmana,

Acompanied by his son,
Entered thede woods,
To collect flowers for his daily worship.

Death — It is just on that account
That I had to undertake this journey!

Bhairava – The reason?

Death – He did un unholy act!

Bhairava – How?

Death – By showing disrespect.

Bhairava – To whome?

Death – To whomelse? To the Sage!

To Sage Sambuka, your own Gurudeva![116-17]

Another important revelation from the diaoogue between Bhairava and death is as why the Brahmin has failed to respect Ascetic Sambuka. The reason for the Brahmin not

to respect Sambuka is that Sambuka is Sudra. An illustration to this effect is given as shown under:

Bhairava – (enraged)

What an insolence on the Brahmana's part!

Death – Just because Sage Sambuka

Is by birth a Sudra!

Bhairava – (removing at once the column of tridents that had formed a fence)

God, O God! What a terrible sin has occurred

In this land of righteousness

Ruled over by Sri Rama himself! [117]

The content of the conversation between Bhairava and Death needs to be interpreted in the past and the present contexts. Firstly, there is no sanction for the shudra to become an ascetic, It is only the Brahmins who are entitled and authorised to become the ascetics. A shudra is meant to perform only the menial functions without causing pollution to the system. A shudra becoming ascetic is adharmic or unrighteous in the Hindu system. Secondly, the behaviour of the Brahmana towards Sambuka is an attribution of Chaturvarna principles according to which the practice of ascetic penance is an exclusive right of the Brahmins by birth. Brahmin is the highest and the shudra is the lowest in the caste structure which is founded in an ascending scale of reverence and a descending scale of contempt. Thirdly, there is no dispute regarding the value of asceticism. It is universally agreed that the ascetics must be revered and respected by all irrespective of variations in the caste systems. It is adharmic/unrighteous for anybody including a Brahmin to fail to respect the ascetic. Thus the act of Brahmana in not respecting Sambuka just because he is a sudra ascetic is regarded as adharmic/unrighteous in the modern context. This is Kuvempu's principle of social equality.

The second scene shows the encounter between Rama and the Brahmana. It opens with a Brahmana lamenting the untimely death of his son of five years of age. From his elegiac expression, it is stated that the boy is the only son of the Brahmana. His mother is blind and it is the boy who has been helping her in her movements. He grieves as how he would make his blind wife not detect the absence of their son. After lamentations he holds the ruler responsible for this sort of unrighteous death which is evident in the following thus:

Pray tell me!

Never was such a horror seen here before,

Should Sri Rama's subject suffer under Sri Rama's reign?

The misfortune of the subjects must be due

To the sin of the ruler himself;

It can be nothing else, nothing else!

Rama himself must have committed some sin or the other! [119]

Then he suddenly remembers the cause for the death of son. He considers the penance of Shudra to be responsible for his son's death as Shudra's penance amounts to violating the

prescribed and received principles of Dharma. The Brahmana demands justice from Rama thus:

(Reflects for a few moments, and then, feeling that he has discovered it)

Is it not enough that Dharma,
Incensed by the penance of that Sudra
Has sent a curse!
(n a firm voice)
O Ramachandra, if you do not restore my dead son,
I will die here in front of your palace door.
Bearing on your head the sin of murdering a Brahmana.[Scene 2, 120]

He attaches the heavens, , moon, Ayodhya, Kings of the Solar line as the witness to his vow. At this juncture, he notices the arrival of Rama there and exclaims at the vision of Rama. He praises him that his blessed sight exciting all the three worlds, his movement is like the orderly design of the seven sea, the lustre of his figure is like that of the blue heavens and he has acquired the sublimity through his kinship with the woods and mountains. He narrates further that he is an embodiment of mercy, self-restraint and is a breaker of Hara's bow and beautiful like a rainbow.

He adds that he is delicate like blossom, dark blue in the complexion, lover of mountains and woods, enemy of Ravana, terrible, stern of will and fierce in resolve, bosom friend of Anjaneya, pure souled. He is the one bathed in the sacred Godavari and destroyed the Daitya hordes. He is the one who ate the fruits offered by the humble Sabari out of her own hand and sublime like Mount meru. He glorifies Rama by hailing him as an embodiment of love, righteousness and forgiveness, the protector of the good and the punisher of the evil. He feels that Rama being a godman must be a supreme being and embodiment of hope. He considers Rama's arrival there is like a blessing and expresses his hope that both he and his son would be saved.

Rama's reaction on his arrival to the spot is marked by the sense of irritation and annoyance. He states that the unhappy man has disturbed the full moon night of the spring season, peace of Ayodhya and revived the agony of of his separation from Sita. Rama states that he has been subjected to hearing weeping and wailing and experiencing only grief since long.

The Brahmana appears before Rama and prostrates to his feet. In the following conversation between Rama and Brahmana, on Rama's demand, the latter narrates how his son was killed. The Brahmana alleges that Rama is himself responsible for the untimely death of his son. Then explains the incident of Shudra's penance as being the cause of his son's death which is illusrtd as follows:

Brahmana-
Thia morning in order to collect flowers for worship,

I went to the forest,
Accompanied by my little boy.
Sri Rama – What is the forest?
Brahmana- I did not utter its name
For fear of committing a sin.
It is situated in the direction of Death.
Sri Rama – Where is any sin in uttering a name? Tell me.
Brahmana- They call that forest Smbuka’s hermitage.
Sri Rama – *(plunged in thought for a while, and then to himself)*
Oh, the truth is now dawning upon me! *(aloud)* Then?
Brahmana – Then, my Lord, we both saw him
Who was performing penance,
A Sudra bearing the name of Sambuka,
An infidel in the guise of an ascetic.

(Sri Rama knits his brows in a frown. He stands pondering, The Brahmana mutters to himself)

Now that Sudra will get his desserts.
At the mere mention of unrighteousness,
How terrible, in his indignation,
Became the face of Ravana’s foe!
Sri Rama – *(assuming a milder aspect, and turning to the Brahmana)*
Did you do obeisance?
Brahmana – *(closing his ears)*
O Shiva, Shiva, Shiva!
We did not commit such a horrible sin.
But that innocent son of mine was about to fold his hands,
I, however, corrected him and checked him commanding:
‘Forebear, we must not pay obeisance to a Sudra!’[Scene 2, 125-26]

In the subsequent conversation between Sri Rama and the Brahmana, the Brahmana alleges that it is unrighteous for a Shudra to practice penance which should be prevented in order to protect the people from going to hell. When Sri Rama cross-questions the Brahmana whether his act of preventing his son from paying obeisance to Sambuka, his son has gone to heaven, the latter reiterates that it is the unrighteousness committed by the a Shudra by performing penance, his son who is also Sri Rama’s subject has died. He adds that if he had not died prematurely, he would have done great deeds, preached the the scriptures, composed poems, performed penance, and gained fulfilment. He upholds his allegation that it is because of the sin of a Shudra, his son has become a victim.

Unlike Sri Rama in in the Uttara Kanda, Sri Rama in Kuvempu’s *Sudra Tapasvi* finds fault not with Sambuka but with the Brahmana only. In aside, Sri Rama contemplates

how to punish the Brahmana who has misunderstood the scriptures due to the arrogance of his caste. Sri Rama understands that unfairness in the incident. He is able to consider Sambuka to be the ascetic and the act of the Brahmana to be a dishonour to the ascetic. *Dharma* has rightly acted in bringing about the untimely death to the son of Brahmana. He realises that the Brahmana has failed to understand his wrong doing and is blaming Sambuka and Sri Rama unnecessarily. Bearing this in mind, he instructs the Brahmana to take him to the forest of Sambuka. The Brahmana thinks that his praising Sri Rama will bring him greater gain than blaming him and takes him to the forest of Sambuka.

There are three factors arrived at in the interpretation of the encounter between Rama and Brahmana. Firstly, the woe of Brahmana has affected the mind of Rama which was already filled with the melancholy of being separated from beloved wife. Secondly, he realizes that the allegations of the Brahmana against him and Sambuka as being responsible for the death of his son are expression of his caste arrogance. Thirdly, Sri Rama has decided to teach the Brahman the true meaning of righteousness. Besides, the attitude of the Brahmana endorses the conservative belief that the Brahmana should not pay obeisance to the Shudra and the Shudra should not perform penance both of which are regarded as unrighteousness. It also explains that the Brahmins are exempted from corporal or death punishment as the murder or killing of the Brahmin is regarded to be the greatest sin and the highest of the *mahapatakas*.

In the third scene, Sri Rama and Brahmana are found in the region of Sambuka's hermitage. It is filled with beauty and peace. On observing the sadness of Brahmana over the loss of his son, Sri Rama is reminded of his own father's suffering at the time of his departure to the forest. He consoles Brahmana who is in the pain of having lost his son. The Brahmana expresses his hope of getting his son resurrected as Sri Rama knows the value of a son and appeals to Sri Rama to kill Sambuka who has perpetrated unrighteousness. At this juncture, Sri Rama notices the goddess of Death and learns from her that she is there to perform penance. When Death states that she is performing penance to accomplish the fulfilment of the foe of the *Daityas*. The *Daityas* are those who belong to the *asuras* originated from Kashyapa and his wife, Diti. Here the reference may be to Sambuka. When Sri Rama asks Brahmana to show the spot where the sudra is performing the penance, Brahmana indicates the place where there is an anthill. On hearing it he is reminded of Valmik who is also a sudra. It would be to provide the illustration which brings home the fact that Sambuka is entitled to perform penance thus:

Sri Rama - ...
Hearing the word ant-hill,
I am reminded of the master-poet
Who is now protecting Sita,
And a blessed grief is welling up in my mind!
The seer poet, too, even like this Sambuka,
Is a Sudra, is he not? –

One who had been a hunter,
But, performing austere penance,
Rose to the status of a *Maharshi*?
Is there anything that can match
The power of penance?[Scene 3, 130]

At this juncture, Sri Rama happens to see Sambuka whom he considers to be *Maharshi* (supreme sage) which causes a confused shock to the Brahmana not being able to understand the gesture of Sri Rama towards Sambuka who is an infidel performing penance according to the Brahmana. The Brahmana wonders whether Sri Rama pays obeisance to Sambuka or prepares his arrow to kill him. Then Sri Rama seeks some clarifications about the status and respect for the ascetics. The Brahmana admits that there is nothing which can match the virtue of penance but refuses to apply this logic in the case of Sambuka. The Brahmana argues that the commandments of the Vedas are superior to logic. He adds that it is well-known in the sastras or the sacred scriptures that the *sudra* has no right to become a ascetic and to perform penance. He explains in this regard as follows:

In the *Kruta* age, only Brahmanas are qualified
To perform penance.
In the *Treta*, *Kshatriyas* too are qualified for it.
In the *Dwapara*, *Vaisyas* also may perform penance.
And when *Kali* sets in, even the *Sudra* becomes an ascetic.
For this reason, *Dharma* which stands
On four feet in the *Kruta* age,
Becomes three-footed in *Treta*,
Two-footed in *Dwapara*,
And in *Kali*, limping on one foot,
It staggers, dies, and tumbles into oblivion.
Protector of *Varanasrama*, listen :
Milk is sacred,
It is life-giving;
Yet the milk of a bitch is forbidden:
A *Sudra*'s penance is no better than bitch's milk![Scene, 3, 132]

On hearing the explanation of the Brahmana about the norms of the division of labour and the structural hierarchy, Sri Rama becomes angry indeed. Yet he controls and seeks his permission and approval for releasing an arrow at Sambuka who is an infidel according to the Brahmana. When Sri Rama states that an ordinary arrow would not be powerful and effective to kill Sambuka who has been bestowed with great power owing to his penance despite being a *Sudra*. The Brahmana suggests that he can use the divine Astra called the *Brahmastra* which was used for destroying Ravana. When Sri Rama is reluctant to use such a terrible weapon as it would not stop until it kills the culprit, the Brahmana insists on using the *Brahmastra* as the infidel deserves such a punishment.

Sri Rama sends the *Brahmastra* which goes to the extent of frightening Death which rushes to Sri Rama to guide it as which path Death should follow. When Sri Rama informs Death to follow the path of the arrow to which he has ordered to find and kill the wrong doer, both Death and the *Brahmastra* become powerless on reaching the spot of Sambuka. On witnessing it, the Brahmana states that even the *Brahmastra* has come to nothing before the power of the penance of Sambuka. While Sri Rama assures that his weapon will destroy the unrighteous person and states that the weapon will destroy the Brahmana as it is he who has dishonoured the ascetic and misconstrued the scriptures along with arrogance.

The Brahmana appeals to Sri Rama to save and show the path of safety him by attempting to hold the feet of Sri.Rama, the latter instructs him to follow the path of the arrow. He also reminds him that in addition to obeying his command, he must realise the truth so that his son and he will be safe. But the Brahmana refuses to adhere to what is not sanctioned in the Sastras. Sri. Rama reminds him that the sanction of the Sastras is not required to do the right thing dictated by the right mind and mentions the authority of a *sloka* which is redefined as follows:

The Invisible Voice – Relaying solely on the *Sastras*,
No decision should be reached;
Any decision bereft of reason
Will be undoing of *Dharma*[Scene 3, 135]

The Brahmana feels that he is enlightened after hearing the invisible voice. He admits that he was bound by the old custom, had misread the *Sastras* and was blinded by the arrogance of caste. Like the fire which does not discriminate between the trees, the ascetics should not be discriminated on the basis of the caste. He accepts that all ascetics are one and the same and must be respected. It is a blessing to prostrate to the ascetics while it is a sin to scorn them as foul. On hearing this, Sri. Rama suggests him that he should honour the ascetics which will bring a good reward. Subsequently, the Brahmana falls at the feet of Sambuka. It brings his son back to life. Sri Rama instructs the boy to bow down to Sambuka whose grace has made the boy a twice-born in the true sense.

The story of Sambuka is added to the later version in *Uttar kanda*. The original Raaamayana and the later versions or adoptions or adaptations are a series of episodes dealing with the conflict or war between Dharma/righteousness and adharma/unrighteousness in which the righteousness defeats or destroys the unrighteousness. Sri Rama and Ravana represent the so called righreousness and unrighteousness respectively. Whether somebody is righteousness or unrighteousness is not only based on the deeds but also on the caste of the person. The actions and reactions of the people are conditioned according to the caste system. One of the stories of this kind in the Uttarkanda Ramayana is that of Sambuka. Sambuka is a sudra and thus is not eligible or allowed to the perform penance and become an ascetic as he is meant to serve the people of three varnas above his

varana according to the doctrines of *Vedya Dharama*. Thus Sri Rama is said to have killed Sambuka for his act of adharm/unrighteousness. This episode endorses not only the vedic dharma but also the caste hierarchy of Chaturvarana system. The Uttar Kanda establishes the vedic righteousness through the story of Sambuka.

Kuvempu does not accept the Dharma/ righteousness based on the caste system. He also defies the division of labour based on the caste system as he notices that it is not only division of labour but also of the labourers. The interchange of the labour or occupation among the four varnas is not admissible lest the hierarchy of the caste system based on birth shall be destabilised and broken. The dignity of ascending order and contempt or indignity of descending order shall be abolished. The pride of upper caste and slavery of lower caste shall be removed. The dignity of the person is determined not by the caste in which he or she is born but by the ability to perform.

Sambuka proves that he is able to perform penance and thus is rightfully entitled to be called an ascetic. If ascetics are considered to be of high order, the sudra ascetic should be also considered to be of high order as much as the Brahmana ascetics. It is the act of penance which should be taken into account instead of the caste of the person who performs. In addition, there should be freedom for all to choose the occupation according to his or her interest and ability instead of his or her caste. Kuvempu redefines by prescribing reason as the basis of dharama rather than the received belief. The Dharma embodied by reason shall be non-discriminatory and allow universal brotherhood. ■

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Poverty, Violence and Caste Discrimination in Baby Kamble's *The Prisons We Broke*

Prashant Mandre

Caste is descent based and inherited in nature. Caste is a feature determined by one's birth into a particular caste irrespective of the belief practiced by the human beings. Caste indicates a system of inflexible social stratification into ranked groups defined by descent and occupation. Under a variety of caste systems throughout the world, caste divisions also control marriage, housing, and general social interface divisions that are unbreakable through the practice and threat of social leaving out, economic boycotts, and even physical violence.

As the lowest in the caste pecking order, Dalits in Hindu society have previously suffered caste-based social prohibiting from civil, cultural, economic and political rights. Women from this society suffer from not only prejudice based on their gender but also caste identity and resultant economic scarcity. Dalit women's troubles include not only gender and economic deprivation but also discrimination associated with caste, religion and untouchability which in turn results in the rejection of their cultural, social, economic, and political rights. They become powerless to sexual violence and utilization due to their gender and caste. Dalit women also become victims of objectionable social and spiritual practices such as devadasi/jogini (temple prostitution), resulting in sexual exploitation in the name of religion. For more information inequity faced by Dalit women on description of their gender and caste is obviously reflected in the discrepancy achievements in person development indicators for this group. The indicators of human growth, for example, literacy and durability, Dalit women achieve worse than Dalit men and non-Dalit women. The troubles of Dalit women are diverse and outstanding in many ways and they suffer from the 'triple burden' of caste discrimination, gender prejudice, and economic scarcity.

Keywords: Dalit women, Poverty, Violence, discrimination, consciousness, Society.

Baby Kamble is born on 1929 usually known as Baby Tai Kamble was an Indian activist and writer. She was born into an untouchable caste Mahar the main untouchable group of people in Maharashtra. She was a prominent Dalit activist and writer. Baby Kamble was inspired by B. R. Ambedkar important Dalit leader. Kamble and her family rehabilitated

to Buddhism and remained lifelong practicing Buddhists. In her community she came to be accepted as a writer and was tenderly called as Tai (meaning sister). She is widely remembered and respected by the Dalit people for her contributions of influential literary and activist works. She is one of the earliest women writers from the untouchable communities whose idiosyncratic reflexive style of feminist writing setting her apart from other Dalit writers and higher caste women writers who gaze was limited and reflexivity enslaved in caste and masculinity.

Baby Kamble is importantly acclaimed and known for her autobiographical work *Jina Amucha* written in Marathi. Social Activist Maxine Bernstein was significant in encouraging Baby Tai Kamble to publish her writings which Kamble had kept as a secret from her family. Bernstein exposed Kamble concern and her writings in Phaltan where Bernstein was conducting her research. She convinced and persuaded Baby Tai to print her writings which soon became one of the best autobiographical books on caste, poverty, violence, and triple discrimination faced by Dalit women. This is auto narrative history Baby Kamble's life story in pre-colonial to postcolonial India. It is intensely embedded with two significant serious moments in the Indian history independence from the British rule and anti-caste movement led by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. Thus Baby Tai's memoirs are just not individual account of a woman's life history but it is a deeply political and a critical record of the making of the country from the vantage point of a very insecure social location. *Jina Amucha* public input is it is a nation's life history record from the impervious woman's point of view. It is also therefore a critical account the nation and its margins lives of untouchables in a caste Hindu society.

Important major portions of the book expressive caste and gender discrimination and multilayered aggression suffered by Dalit women at the hands of the savarna (upper caste Hindus) and Dalit men. This honesty and reflexivity has been mainly missing in upper caste women's writings. Baby Kamble also highlights how the caste Hindu women and men treated untouchables with contempt, disgust, and hate. This work became one of the most powerful and emotional auto-biographical writing in Marathi. This book was translated by Maya Pandit into English titled *The Prisons We Broke* and published by Orient Blackswan.

Babytai Kamble's *The Prisons We Broke* was originally written in Marathi as *Jina Amucha* and later translated into English by Maya Pandit. It can be distant into two sections on the basis of the arguments she presents in the work. Importantly she follows a broad thematic demonstration of the weirdness of Dalit women inside their own community. Secondly Babytai Kamble praises the role played by fellow women in following in the footpath of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar to dream of impartiality with upper-caste Hindus in the social order.

In *The Prisons We Broke*, Kamble uses her life as a basis to identify Dalit oppression painting raw images of the crude realities of their world. rising up in a Maharwada in

Maharashtra puts her in major position to witness Dalit oppression at one of its worst, because Maharwadas are the spirit of the prejudices of the Hindu caste system which are most widespread in and around Maharashtra. Maharwadas usually consist of secure to 15 families belonging to the Mahar caste located in the outer edge of villages of Maharashtra, which sarcastically owes its etymological origins to the Mahars who are the original people of these regions. Maharashtra is one of the states where the caste organization is most prevalent, *The Prisons We Broke* is justified in being a statement upon Dalit oppression. Maharashtra has witnessed Dalit revolt in literature, religious practices inter alia over centuries. *The Prisons We Broke* is one such effort although one of the firsts by a Dalit woman explanatory its description on women's issues.

That is not to say that this superiority has not been met with consequence. *The Prisons We Broke* is one such effort though one of the firsts by a Dalit woman descriptive its narrative on women's issues. Scholars have classify feminism in three broad waves in India where the first two waves (consist of characterization of feminism solely by elite upper-class men with a redeemer compound since political awareness ran low in Hindu women then as they were kept on a leash using ancestral and religious institutions. Still within the third wave feminism, there are three documented sub-categories, namely

- (1) The Period of Accommodation,
- (2) The Period of Crisis
- (3) The Period of Empowerment.

In this period 'Period of Accommodation' which can be said to have gave way to the 'Period of Crisis' where around the 1960s socio-economic matters were the major concern of the feminist movement in India. Babytai Kamble, born 1929 wrote *The Prisons We Broke* in 2009 and a greater part of the book represents of her lived experiences that can be traced back to the that years representing the Period of Accommodation and onwards. Pinning *The Prisons We Broke* as writing from that period means the work should have focused on issues of gender equality and women empowerment. However the theory of intersectional feminism clarifies how Dalit feminism cannot be said to be at par in its growth and demands with the rest of the feminist movement in India and justify Babytai's dependence on socio-economic inequality as the source of her writing in *The Prisons We Broke*.

The central theme noticeable in *The Prisons We Broke* is the inter sectionalist of the troubles of Dalit women. Babytai highlights in subtle ways all the way through the book that if Dalits were seen as an others group of people by upper caste Hindus, Dalit women were subject to the same manners by men within their own community. She qualifies to the established patriarchal social follows within the organization of family which make themselves most apparent only in the lowest social strata.

In fact she goes on to point that power dynamics growing on account of familial and sociological relations mean women are pitted against each other as well leading to

worsening conditions for women in general. She quotes exact examples of the relations between a woman with her mother-in-law and those between a Dalit woman and an upper-caste Brahmin woman to support her quarrel in *The Prisons We Broke*. Babytai Kamble states it was usually observed in Maharwadadas that a woman would mistakenly guilt her daughter-in-law of doing deeds she would not even understand, driving the young girl to death and persuades her son into re-marrying a widow. She provides emotional reasons for this behavior being one where the woman being incompetent of projecting her pent-up emotions towards the society finds solace in her victory over a minor being even if it is at the cost of her life. It is this strangeness of women which presents itself in intersectional forms that Kamble chooses as the subject matter of *The Prisons We Broke*.

In *The Prisons We Broke* Babytai query the illogical practices of Hinduism followed and supported by Mahars despite being outcasts to the Hindu community confirmations by the fact that Mahars were compulsory to live outside villages to not fraudulent areas inhabited by caste Hindus. Women had to face the force of irrational Hindu rituals more than most on account of their lowly position in the Hindu society.

She supports this claim by examples firstly, of her own mother being reduced to such inability due to years of oppression that she could not maintain amiable relations with any of her relatives and secondly, of women wed in the Maharwada who were necessary to keep a passive outlook donning their pallava and applying kumkum in the presence of men of their community. In a specific example, she provides context to this preserve writing that for the wrongs of the women before Brahmins it was the Mahars in common who had to face the Brahmin's dishonors straight away but it was the woman who would be reprovved and flogged later by the male of her family. She even suggests how mythological goddesses were considered lesser to the male gods of an irrational Hindu religion.

In addition to the usual practices upheld in upper caste privileged households such as women eating only after the men of the household have finished their meals, the Mahar women were subjected to biased practices followed in the lower caste communities. For example, Dalit women have to bend over down and step out of a road in the village when an upper caste man would move toward. Later in *The Prisons We Broke*, she makes states of how Brahmin women would not touch them while accepting money, Dalit girls in schools were made to sit on the ground so as not to contaminate the classroom for caste Hindus.

Baby Kamble depicts the nail on its head in retelling a story of an odd customs where Mahar women had to carry the feces of newly-wed Brahmin women on their heads Hindu custom obligatory the Brahmin women not to leave the house even for the reasons of defecation during this period to ward off evils and because of the Hindu tradition being reluctant to the idea of construction of toilets inside homes for the purposes of sanctity and purity of the household.

Baby Tai given the evidence directly at the start of *The Prisons We Broke* when she says she is addressing the millennial of her own group of people completely. In the second

part of the book Kamble distinguishes that the living situation of Dalits have taken a turn for the better and that Dalits all over the place owe their betterment to Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar. However Kamble believes that the vastness of his involvement to the Dalit cause is not understood in its whole by younger generations because of their spanking socio-economic rise. She also believes that the role of Dalit women in the strengthen of Dalits should not be ignored as well because they form as essential a part as any in spreading the gospel of Dr B. R. Ambedkar and paving the way towards a better opportunity than lifelong shit-shoveling for their children.

In *The Prisons We Broke* Babytai affirm that the Mahars were a absurd people. Diseases of the body were typified as being possessions of the soul by gods and goddess's further illustrative a person's passing away due to such sickness as their doorway into the metaphysical monarchy. This was because Mahars had neither money nor access to medicines but mostly for the reason that of a culture against education commit by the upper castes to keep the Mahars from bearing the fruits of civilization. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar changed such primary thinking of Mahars when he arrived in villages attired in a three-piece suit exhorting them to aim better material well-being and give up on the existence intended for them by the Hindu caste system. Kamble remembers that Mahar women who were anything but rebellious up until that point in time would now go in opposition to the head male patriarch of the Maharwada in cultivating their children adopting the practice of not eating dead animals and giving up irrational customs after the instruction of Dr B. R. Ambedkar.

The irrational practices forced by the Hindu religious order upon the Mahars for eons have been referred to as prisons in the title of the book metaphorically, and Babytai maintains that Mahar women were involved in rising up against these social problems designed to keep the Mahars in professions such as manual hunted skinning of dead animals and boot polishing amid other practices which communicated to lowly payment to ensure their animal-like survival for generations.

These details authenticate her original argument of the cruciality of women in defying age-old customs and ultimately leading their people to prosperity, which was kept from them by the higher ups in the varna system. Also mainly this part of the book makes the title *The Prisons We Broke* clear in its whole. The superstitious practices forced by the Hindu religious order upon the Mahars for eon have been referred to as prisons in the title of the book symbolically Babytai claims that Mahar women were instrumental in rising up against these social problems designed to keep the Mahars in professions such as manual scavenging, skinning of dead animals and boot polishing amid other practices which corresponded to lowly payment to ensure their animal-like existence for generations.

Baby Tai praises Ambedkar for initiating an intellectual discourse in which the Mahar women participated vocally. The reason of making these claims is to call upon the younger people to be grateful for their roots and to propagate the idea of Ambedkar. Nevertheless as true and personal the accounts are the writing lacks the inspiration and

material to arouse any serious rational conversation as would have befit a work of this nature. To demonstrate there is no mention of critical writings of Ambedkar such as ‘The Annihilation of Caste’ to direct the young readers to appreciate the vision of Ambedkar. Babytai calls upon younger members of the Dalit community to identify and appreciate Ambedkar’s role in their rise in the ranks through this novel it would have been more apt to pursue this purpose in depth where the book only brushes upon it cursorily. ■

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Vimala's Pleas to uproot the Tradition to establish Woman's Creativity in the Poem 'Kitchen'

J. Mercy Vijetha

Kitchen is a feministic poem by Vimala. The poem is originally written in Telugu as *Vantillu*, and it is translated into English by B.V.L. Narayana Rao. The poem typically depicts the sufferings of women in general and Indian women in particular. In almost all the cultures women holds the responsibility of household work especially in kitchens. The *Kitchen* is a poem of resistance because 'shaping of womanhood' begins here at this place. Vimala beautifully describes ambience of the kitchen and the woman who works in it in different roles like mother, wife and daughter. As the description of the kitchen progresses, we observe the speaker's resentment towards kitchen. Generation after generation woman's freedom and herself is lost at this place.

Vimala Morthala is an extraordinary poet in Telugu literary world. In her poems she expresses her own intense experiences. The commonly found elements in her poetry are loneliness, forsakenness. The Poetry is Feministic and revolutionary in characteristic. She has published a collection of poems titled *AdaviUppponginaRathriin* 1986. Many of her literary works are translated and published into English. Few of her works are included in *The Anthology of Women's Poetry* edited by Susie Tharu and K. Lalitha, Published by Penguin Books and *Sweeping the Front Yard- Poems and Short Stories* edited by Sampurna Chatterjee. Her writings are included in graduate and post graduate curriculum in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Vimala's poetry is lucid, honest, accurate, sincere and rebellious in tone. The poetry is conversational, bold in attitude and defiance, voice is crystal clear and direct courage. Conviction and truthfulness are the attributes of her poetry. She experiments with a feminine sensibility that demands woman's equality with man and examine life from woman's point of view. She writes as an Indian, speaks and understands in a subjective, individualistic and recollective mode.

The Poem 'Kitchen' as directly written by Taufiq Rafat makes a comparison. In every household, the kitchen is an integral part that we need to meet our culinary needs. However, with the passage of time and changes in lifestyle, kitchens, and activities in kitchens have

changed. Rafat, in this poem, highlights the difference. He draws a comparison between a rural kitchen and an urban one.

But a thought-provoking poem by Vijila Chirappad's Malayalam poem "Kaikkalathunikal". The Poem is translated into English titled *Kitchen Rags* by Rakhi Raghavan. The effective poem, "*Kitchen Rags*" symbolise the women sufferings who are caged within the kitchen. The poem brings out the culture of slavery that married women are bound to. She talks about the transformation of a soft textured dress material of a baby girl into a rough textured linen used in the kitchen. The transformation of female body/life is compared to the piece of cloth which becomes rugged with use. The lines show how Woman's feelings and dreams are shattered who is born free but forced to be in the chains in the Patriarchal societies.

Vimala's ideas about Kitchen coincides with Vijila, for her kitchen is a wonderful place with wafting smells like an open sweet stall. The whole kitchen is a playhouse. Soon after the break, the day activities of the women in kitchen begins. The kitchen works are like churning for butter, scrubbing of vessels, cooking food, seasoning etc. The place is like a grocery stall with all sorts of provisions and vegetables. In order to provide snacks and food items to all who are on their works, the wife/mother/daughter hides them from others notice. The poet describes how she manages the distribution of food items to all. She says,

*Each morning the kitchen awoke
To the swish of churning butter
The scraping of scoured pots...
Seasoning box, hid sweets too,
And played at cooking with lentils... (Kitchen P1)*

Vimala complains that kitchen is no longer a playground because it traps the girl-child's childhood. 'Kitchenness' is taught in kitchens. Actually, women who are at present mother or grandmother or wife or daughter learnt kitchenness and they continue to teach the same to their girl children. The place becomes a training centre where all the kitchen works are taught to generations one after the other.

In magic world kitchen

*That wrapped childhood in spell.
No longer playground for the grownup girl
Now trained into kitchenhood.
Like all the mothers and mother's mothers
Before her, in the kitchen
She becomes woman right here (P2)*

Vimala compares kitchen to a graveyard with corpses of all kinds in the containers like tins, bottles, sacks etc. They hang amid the smoke and damp fire. All the pleasure denying feelings like fear, despair and silence are present in the women in kitchens. The women

move around like lifeless beings having no sensations. They have turned into stone angels without any emotions.

*Our kitchen is a mortuary
Pans, tins, gunny bags
Crowd it like cadavers
That hang amid clouds damp smoke.
Mother floats, a ghost here,
A floating kitchen herself, her eyes melted in tears. (P3)*

In the kitchen mother floats like a ghost because she has to manage the cooking at different intervals and looking after the household works. She is a busy bee working tirelessly and restlessly. The monotonous routine kitchen work made her a mechanical robot. Her emotion disappeared long back. Being involved in the kitchen work, her body has lost its beauty and vigour.

*Mother floats like a spirit
She herself looks like a morning kitchen
Her eyes ran out of tears long ago
Her hands are worn out with endless scrubbing
Look, she doesn't have hands anymore
She looks like a ladle, a pan, a bowl
A piece of kitchen bric-a-brac.*

Sometimes the woman feels disgusting due to work, in kitchen. She becomes outrageous like a flame over or a tigress-trapped. She ventilates her disgust using the utensils hastily creating noise. Hence the family members get alerted and understand her disgust.

*Mother glows
Like a blazing furnace
And burns through the kitchen,
Pacing, restless, a caged tiger,
Banging pots and pans. (P.4)*

Though woman is does all the works in the kitchen, the authority is men. Even in the case of next generation with sophisticated and modernized accessories in kitchen did not change the women's position. Names on the accessories are husbands. The form of the kitchen may change, the food may change but it is the woman's position which remains the same.

*Damn all kitchens. May they burn to cinders...
Let us destroy those kitchens
That turned us into serving spoons.
Let us remove the names engraved on the pots and pans. (P.5)*

Thus, the poet compares the kitchen to a workshop and a butcher's shop where there is a babble. Routine senseless jobs are done in kitchen. Even though millions of years are passing,

there is no change in woman's position. As a result, the poet requests the system or the patriarchal forces to demolish the kitchenness or victimization. So that at least the women in future finds a place to prove her creativity. Hence the earth becomes harmonious place of peace for women and solidarity between men and women. At the end of the poem, she makes a plea to demolish the kitchen in order to protect the 'creativity' of the future generations.

*Come let us tear out these private stoves,
Before our daughters must step
Solitary into these kitchens.
For our children's sakes
Let us destroy these lonely kitchens. (P.5) ■*

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Literature : A Tool for Improving Language Learning Skills

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The proponents of language studies observe that there lies an inseparable link between language and literature. Virtually, language has left an indelible mark on literature. Language is, by far, a divine gift; an effective resource and a powerful asset of humans in forging a tie to develop societal relationship, boosting communicative skills, promoting honorable position, grooming occupational competency and charioting cultural values abroad. In our pedagogy, language learning skills has been a prime objective to inculcate academic prospect, improving learners' comprehension skills as well as growing leadership quality among trainees. The strength of our communiqués and deals depends on language ability of persons to the extent one is well-expressive and evocative. In the context, literature adopted as common course in academic planning, needs to be gauged how far it works and what way it inspires learning language skills. Barring promotion of aesthetic values, infusing philosophical outlook, nobility of life or belletristic sensibilities, literature on the contrary, is an effective tool that operates in the area of learning language and improving readers' narrative techniques. Inadvertently; the experts can only be reliable to take responsibility of handling the resource of teaching language skills in proper way by converting literary pieces to the diction of language analysis. In fact, so far as learners of second language are concerned, despite our sincere effort over the years we are still searching for an effective model of Language Learning Methodology. The purport of the paper is to focus on scanning language through literature in teaching curriculum with a view to improve language skills and probe into the subtlety and nuances of language in learners' life.

Keywords : *language, literature, teaching, technique, method, learning.*

Literature is a creative output of language exquisitely embedded with thought, emotion, feelings and impulse. It is an artistic ejaculation and also the record of individual talent and technique tinged with imagination and uniqueness in form, expression and ideas to retain permanent or universal interest of humans in words and symbols. In antiquity, literature flourished as an oral tradition in form of legends, folk tales, folklore, folk song and sermons those were taken as basic language art. Rightly saying, literature is an

informative, expressive, persuasive and impulsive verbal coding that forges stories from social set up, inculcates moral values and hails ideas from religion, ethos, culture, myth, epic, history, memoirs, classics and science. The literary pieces such as prose, poetry, drama, story, novel, biography, travels or fiction are wisely set up in particular situations, environment or locale that the language is specifically chosen to depict the scenes, correlation, dreams, plans and talk as well.

Language is a perfect set of sounds and symbols arranged in meaningful symmetry or structure. It transmits communicator's emotion, thought, feelings, needs, reaction and intension. Truly speaking, language and literature are complementary and interdependent that literature is portrayed in language and language can best be read through literature. However, tricks for searching skills, usages and rules of language in literature demand empirical and critical analysis. We can move from phoneme to morpheme, construction to structure, sentence to unit while we take up a piece of literary work to interpret and analyse.

Both language and literature are contextual in nature. No discourse can mean anything in isolation. Any writing or speech carries meaning in specific context or situation. Keeping the fact in mind, W.G. Widdowson aptly remarks;

The learning of a language, then, involves acquiring the ability to compose correct sentences. This is one aspect of the matter. But, it also involves acquiring understanding of which sentences or part of sentences appropriate in a particular context. (p-3)

As forms of language writing or speech relates communicator's moods such as assertion or denial, interrogation or exclamation, promise or desire, plan or procrastination, protesting or proclaiming, applause or obstruction, appreciation or disapproval, remarks or comment. Moreover, it denotes our mental states like happiness or sorrow, love or hate, revelation or concealment, pleasure or pain, parental love or patriotism, friendship or enmity, support or contest, repentance or realization, open-mindedness or contempt. Hence, literature covering a wide span of speech provides the most appropriate base or ground to grasp the rules and use of language on varied situations which can help protect contextual analysis and scanning language learning skills.

Rigid rules of grammar are not always effective for language flow. Sometimes, single word, structure and construction expressing cheer, comment and surprise are too meaningful that those are treated as most useful units of language. Poetry, a study of syntactic deviation stands quite unique. Sometimes, novels and plays look hackneyed. The intellectual analysis can be visible in short speech. The narrative technique or throwing speech differs in context and individual writings. Language variety can be best picked up from different sets of literature. Language choice is another basic need of language use. Using relevant vocabulary and correct language structure are urgent need pertaining to a particular situation or specific context. So, Widdoson rightly opines;

One argument against linking language learning with other subjects is that a foreign language should be used to transport the learner out of the classroom into the more real and exciting world of wider experience. (p-27)

For the reason, the pieces of literature can be sampled for matching speech variety. The types of versions in different situations are to be picked up as real contexts of language learning.

Literature is an art and the art of expression sustains our language proficiency. We can study the style of composition from literature. The texts and meaning are infused with contextual relevance of talks, thought, narration or remark justly fitting into communicator's serious, hilarious, analytical and remorseful states. A step further, the aphoristic and ornamental features such as prosody and jargons, metaphor and simile, antecedent and anecdotes, puns and myths, symbols and idioms, personification and eulogy etc. are to be located and closely marked in the lines of literary works for language learning purposes.

Literature, as an offspring of language, has much intellectual values. The lines can be taken for discourse analysis concerning to form, content and meaning. Literature is genre-specific, and a medium of communication related to sound, lexicon and grammar. On the contrary, language is a set of discourse relating to expression of ideas, opinions, emotion and intellect. While literature concerns life experiences as well as emotional outburst; language carries sense, notions and concepts. Truly, literature is a plethora of lingual expression but language is need-based expression for proper communication. The studies of language relates to phoneme or sound, morpheme or word formation, syntax or sentence structure, semantics or meaning. The language types are called dialects that differ to persons, places and regions. Literature reflects wider span of language, provides better scope of language analysis and acquiring presentation skills, thus, it works as keys for language learning.

Language of literature differs with the passage of time. The old forms of language are replaced with the new coinage and sophisticated wording. We can cast a glance on the growth of language in literature over the ages. The close observation of language use in genres of literature provides enough opportunities to learn skills and technique of using language in right perspectives, context and proper sets of life situations. Both language and literature are highly reciprocal and mutually contributing to one another's development.

Rejecting open-ended sentences in learning devices, literature can teach about human nature, and cross curricular and cross cultural relation. on that aspect, Dr. A Chandra and Pradeep S. Raj keenly notice;

By reading literature the reader can develop Language skills unconsciously without much effort. It helps the learners to get familiar with the socio-political

background of target language society and also makes them understand how communication takes place in a particular community (p-17)

Language is a chain of process relating to mental faculty and covers a wide range of vocabulary, cute expression, practical sound system, lively dialogue and correct version. Literature helps for developing interpretation abilities, improves subtle vocabulary usage, complex syntax and language access to readers. By reading literature, readers can be more conscious, reflective, creative and thereby, speed up their language learning process. It also provides models for good writing, practice reading skills and strategies by reading the literary texts. Further, literature stimulates students' creativeness, imagination, critical thinking, power of Judgment, appreciation, analysing power and language solving problems.

Linguists and Philologists' find literature suitable for learning target languages. Jennifer B. in her article "How Literature Can Enrich Language Skills" finds literature improving interest in reading and comprehension, providing an opportunity to expand and enrich language skills, grammar and speech exercise. Shauna Aziz (2021) locates utilitarian approach in learning English for job-related purposes and finds study of language in isolation is placing something in vacuum. Prof. DemolaJolayemi appraises due to advanced knowledge in the last century with language, literature and communication, politicosocioeconomic and medicotechnoscience development occurred in Nigeria. It is pertinent to assert that EFL teachers mainly focus on the development of the students' language skills according to what society demands, consequently, they forget about literature which stands for improving higher values like thinking and imagination. Thus, literature rationalises the readers with overwhelming experiences. Emphasis must be laid on the texts of shorter length, but of higher values for language learning drills. Then, literature can make the teaching of a language to students more interesting but not disgusting by focusing on grammar and syntax in an interactive way. A step ahead, the study of literature can infuse brighter insight for mapping road to translation.

In socio cultural context, legends, myths and parallels carry some unfamiliar objects and abstract senses popularly with fairies, kings, wizards, genies and denizens that promotes personal interest of understanding. We come across some unknown terminology and complex sentence structures which need proper analysis to improve our new perception. Learning idiomatic expression, jargons, proverbs etc. further improves popular wisdom. Aly Anwar Amer in his research paper, *Using Literature in Reading English as Second / Foreign Language* finds growing interest in utilising literature in Second Language (L2) classroom. He prefers literary texts to be used extensively and intensively for conceptual clarity to adopt literary texts as a source of learning languages. He quotes Langer (1995-15) literature plays a critical role in our life often without our notice helping us to explore ourselves and others. Recalling role of literature in improving language skills, Weixiong Liu and Pang Yang write,

when reading a literary work the learner seems to enter the world which is created by author based on real life and to feel the use of different languages in different situations. Learning is not only the words and grammar. Immersing in the target language, learners can better learn and master English. (p-1208)

In fact, literature is a rich resource of recorded language and a powerful tool in teaching relatively cultural values and the inherent problems in cross-cultural communication. The children's literature promotes motivational spirit among children to explore their world, themselves and their surroundings. Aly Anwar concludes that the exposure to literature stimulates learners' reflection on different concepts, comparing values and life style with other cultures. Hence, it may encourage learners to avoid ethnocentrism and develop intercultural competence.

It is noteworthy that the world possesses a canvas of more than 7100 languages, and languages are in a state of flux and in the process of constant change. Language is technical in nature studies structure and rules while literature grows up more artistic and stylistic putting long lasting impact and impression on readers. Language existed before origin of literature. But, literature cannot exist without language. According to A.Arifah technology has crept into the scheme of language acquisition and classroom is not now dull and drab but Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) system uses technology to assist in language learning classes to change learners' attitude and enhance their self-confidence. Whenever literature is converted into a language matrix; language learning becomes more effective by providing more technology integrated teaching materials.

The integration of literature in the system of language learning is a complex and complicated process. The language teachers are to focus on language techniques used in literary works while dealing with teaching literature where learning languages is meant for second language and special purposes. R.S.A. Susikaran (2013) rightly remarks;

In order to prevent the students taste, tiredness, teachers have made great effort to design flowery and fancy courseware, but they have neglected the cognitive laws. They did not consider these factors very well such as teaching aim, teaching objects, teaching content and teaching measure. (p-7)

For better results it is urgent for language teachers to focus on specific classroom techniques such as standard grouping of students, language practice, interaction, course planning, testing course objectives, students' aptitude, periodical assessment, monitoring, error analysis, experiential learning opportunities, mock drills, and assignment of home task. Further, the teachers have to plan individual student intensive analysis, base level promotion of language skills, problem solving classes, Psycho-educational tricks, remedial programmes and

stimulus improvement process. At later stage students' engagement in projects and exercises can be more effective. In pre-school system, Reggio Emilia approach that the teacher has to play the role of co-learners can become more motivational and inspirational to early learners. The Scaffolding Teaching Method is also in some cases useful for language learning in which the teacher has to divide the lesson into certain chunks such as vocabulary, sound system, structure and similar approach etc. in a steady process so that the students can pick up the same without any burden or constraint. Erica M. McAndrew feels the children's literature improves students' ability to understand geometric concepts.

Literature indubitably provides a vast scope for language drill and analysis. Having close notice of literature boosting language skills Truong Thi My Van in his research article deftly remarks;

EFL, the study of literature is indispensable because it exposes students to meaningful contexts that are replete with descriptive language and interesting character ... In addition to developing students English language skills, teaching literature also appeals to their imagination, develops cultural awareness and encourages critical thinking about plots, theme and character (p-1)

It is evident that language teachers face a lot of crucial problems, confusion and doubts especially while dealing with their second language learners when they speak or write in English. It is the best way to detect mistakes comparing it with the texts in their courses that they can realise the anomalies they commit in their own language in natural manner. It would provide a scope of practical experience in their language learning. However, the language teachers have to take strain in locating the common problems that the students grapple with their writing and speech. In this context, the appropriate portion of literary texts can be cited as example to remedy their linguistic hazards. These innovative techniques can be meticulously used to effectively solve the difficulties of students in language learning process.

It is frequently found that the students have doubts in specifying nominal units or generalisers. Moreover, their doubts occur in using grammatical items such as preposition, passive mood, tenses of verbs in specific contexts and narrative complexity. Apparently, they fail to choose correct vocabulary and appropriate words with proper connotation to express their inner thought. In certain cases, the structural approach to sentences and the concord seem trifling that students have their deficiency in putting the right words in proper context. Consequently, misplacement of words conveys wrong meaning or produces nonsense units. Choosing substitute of lesser connotative words or the units inappropriate to the context distorts meaning, which continues as a fault with the learners. So, the teaching of grammatical units in infusing literary texts in classes can solve language learners' problems more effectively.

One of the useful applications of language learning system is that students are not only kept engaged to acquire aesthetic values, sensibility and philosophical idea focusing on forms of literature, but similarly they are to put into drill of language analysis. Further, in similar contexts and situations, grammatical items are to be practised in language classes including reading aloud, taking detection, filling missing parts, being engaged in word games, narrating situations, formation of antonyms and synonymies, conversion of sentences into the simple forms. The technique of citing lines from literature is most probably the easiest method for enhancing language learning ability at all levels.

Expressing idea in simplest manner is suitable for language learning. The language of story, novel and travelogue become helpful in the context. The dialogues and assertions in plays can be cited for speech practice. The prose pieces can be taken into account for parsing, sentence construction and sequence of composition.

To conclude it may be inferred that the paper is an attempt for planning and scheming lesson work. The real application depends on language teachers. So far as syllabi of literature are concerned, a good and effective technique for interpretation of literature, language drills and practices from literary texts can extensively meet the rate of acquiring language skills, and intensively, actual usages of a language as well. The students must have enough patience and tenacity to perceive rules from context of literary texts and make consistent practice in the domain of social background, personal feelings, past knowledge and general concepts. Moreover, the exercise of lesson works needs to be framed by the language experts. Though some texts have already been published with an aim to cater language learning process yet these are quite inadequate to meet the target. So, the language experts should try to adopt an approach to literature as a model in language learning methodology. ■

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Buddha, Basava and Ambedkar : A Brief Study

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India has been a leader in the field of culture, if not civilization. Culture is but a way of life. English Critic Matthew Arnold defined culture as ‘sweetness and light’. The Hebrews revered the value of Truth, while the Greeks that of Beauty. Aristotle spoke of virtues and excellence. This research article speaks of world vision upheld by three great Indian thinkers, namely Buddha, Basava and Ambedkar and they speak of the middle path for fulfillment.

Keywords: culture, vachana, welfare society, fulfillment

India is known for its diverse religions – Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Lingayatism and Sikhism. Parseeism, Islam and Christianity entered the country later. India upholds the value of love, truth, compassion, tolerance, humanism and- interfaith community. The people of most religions like Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Lingayatism, and Sikhism live harmoniously in this country. Hinduism and its religious structure are not clear. Jainism is clear but it is too orthodox. Buddhism is all right but it does not concentrate on work ethics. Lingayatism is clear, no doubt. Sikhism is clear. The last two are modern religions. They all speak of ways of life. That’s nothing but culture. Mathew Arnold spoke of culture as ‘sweetness and light’. It is said, “The book *Culture and Anarchy* establishes the nature of a broad and all-embracing notion of culture.” (Sanders 452). Arnold thought of high culture and low culture, dividing English people into three classes, a Barbarian aristocracy, a Philistine bourgeoisie and an unlettered Populace. On the other hand, leftist cultural critic Raymond Williams spoke of all cultures as relatively good. Once Sri Ramakrishna said all religions lead to Providence.

Now the point is that ‘good’ is a relative term. Raymond Williams and Sri Ramakrishna are to be taken as ideal definers of cultures. Accordingly, Hinduism, Buddhism, Lingayatism and Sikhism provide examples of great men who lead mankind by their kind hands. This research paper analyses Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, Basava, the founder of Lingayatism and Ambedkar, a modern socio-political theorist, and he was born a Hindu but embraced Buddhism finally.

Buddha (563 BC – 483 BC): The Buddha stands for ‘awakening’. He founded a faith after his name. As Donald Lape thinks the followers were called ‘sakyabhiksus’ (Lope, Donald, Buddha, Wikipedia 2).

Buddha was born in Lumbini, now in Nepal in 563 BC. He grew up in Kapilavastu in UP today. He spent much of his life in today’s Bihar and UP. His father was king Suddhodhana, and mother Queen Maya. His community was called Sakyas.

Siddhartha marries and leads a royal life. He has a child. He faces life’s ordeals. He meets an old man, a sick man, a dead one and a religionist. These encounters are known as Four Meetings. Siddhartha realizes such four truths old age is inescapable, sickness and death, and the ultimate solution to suffering is an honest living. so Siddhartha deserts his family and does penance, soul-searching, and holds discussion with the great monks of his time. One day he gets awakening, and Buddha means ‘the awakened one’. So we call him the Buddha, or just Buddha as is the practice. E. Date Sanders observes,

1. All existence is suffering
2. The desire is a cause for this suffering
3. The cause may be brought to an end
4. The middle path as discipline necessary to bring it to an end.

These truths form the gist of Buddhism, altogether.” (Sanders, 696)

Buddha speaks of causation, impermanence, no-self, nirvana, etc. Now Buddhism has spread to the west, and there are many branches in it. Buddhism provides peace if not prosperity as Mahatma Gandhi himself felt.

Basava (1105 – 1165): Basava was a religion founder, social reformer, and philosopher-poet. His ideas on political science, economy, and mysticism are worth- studying and following.

Basava was born in Bagewadi in 1105 to its Agrahar head Madarasa and Madalambike. He had an elder brother Devaraj and sister Akkanamma. The family was of Shaiva brahmins and well-connected politically, with Baladevarasa, minister at Kalachuri king Bijjala at Mangalavedi (now in MS). Basava with his rudimentary gurukul education of the day, realized that his people baptized only male children, then practicing gender-inequality. He did not take much time to understand the existing social evils like untouchability, casteism, and violent ritualism. Basava found that religious constructs like karma operated.

Basava expressed his socialist-democratic views in young age, and brahmins excommunicated him at his age 16. So he left his town, and parents, and studied at a Vidyapith at Kudalasangam nearby where his Sister Akkanamma was married unto. He studied for 12 years and joined Bijjala’s service as treasurer at Mangalavade. Bijjala usurped Chalukya emperor Tailapa-III’s throne at Kalyan in 1155. So Basava, already married to Baladevarasa’s daughter Gangambike, shifted to Kalyan, the great capital in

South India. Soon he discovers the royal treasure for Lord Bijjala. So Bijjala makes him prime minister and marries his adopted sister Neelambike to Basava. In addition to this, Bijjala, as Allama tells, allows Basava to found his Lingayat religion, the first-ever South Indian religion.

Basava's Lingayat religion has this characteristic. He rejects karma theory, varna system and ritualism in its all forms. He thinks all people are equal, and woman is as good as man. There is no heaven and hell, no sacred and profane, no mere temple worship and donation culture. Basava created a symbolic ishtalinga, which he advocated people must worship for reaching manhood/ maturity. Then they can leave it. He thinks 'Know thyself'. It is self-study principle called 'arive guru'. He advocates kayaka and dasoha theory. Kayaka is but honest-work and living. Man can help the poor with his surplus wealth, and that is dasoha (without expectation). See the following of Basava's vachanas:

1. Do not steal, do not kill,
do not lie, do not rage,
do not loathe the other,
do not brag of yourself,
do not revile the opponent. (Vachana 150)

2. The haves make temples for Shiva.
Ayya, what can I do?

I am poor.
my legs are pillars, my body the temple,
and my head the golden pinnacle.

Koodalasangamadeva,
listen,
the sthavara comes to an end
but the jangama does not. (Vachana 75)

Basava's gospel of faith created a revolution, attracting such great pioneers of his faith, such as Allama, Akkamahadevi, Siddharama. His own nephew Chennabasava. Chennabasava codified the faith. Jessica Frazier thinks, "Basava's movement united advaitic monism with effusive Bhakti devotionism." (Jessica 281) Basava's religion blends socialism and democracy.

Ambedkar (1891-1956):

Dr B.R. Ambedkar was an Indian jurist, economist, social reformer and political leader. He headed the committee drafting Indian Constitution, and he served as Law and Justice Minister in Pt Nehru's Cabinet. Finally, he embraced Buddhism and inspired Dalit Buddhist Movement.

After graduating from Elphinstone College, University of Bombay, Ambedkar studied economics at Columbia University and the London School of Economics, receiving doctorates in 1927 and 1923, respectively, and was among a handful of Indian students to have done so at either institution in the 1920s. He also trained in the law at Gray's Inn, London. In his early career, he was an economist, professor, and lawyer. His later life was marked by his political activities; he became involved in campaigning and negotiations for Partition, publishing journals, advocating political rights and social freedom for Dalits, and contributing to the establishment of the state of India. In 1956, he converted to Buddhism, initiating mass conversions of Dalits.

In 1990, the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian award, was posthumously conferred on Ambedkar. The salutation Jai Bhim (lit. "Hail Bhim") used by followers honours him. He is also referred to by the nickname Babasaheb meaning 'Respected Father.'

Comparative Analysis:

Buddha rejected Hinduism and founded a new faith. Basava rejected Hinduism and founded Lingayatism. Ambedkar rejected Hinduism and embraced Buddhism (thanks to him, Buddhism is reviewed in India). As American transcendentalists Emerson and Thoreau think the modern world is veering towards democracy, and as George Orwell thinks this is socialist democracy. Emerson talks of individuality (meaning life based on liberty, equality and fraternity and self-reliance (honest-living). Thoreau spoke of hard work and just life, which blends as *kayaka* and *dasoha*. Ambedkar strove for pure democracy. The point is that Basava's Lingayatism is, partly based on Buddhism. Then Ambedkar embraced Buddhism. This speaks of Buddha's concept of social life. It is because, "Buddha achieved the essence of nirvana (fulfilment)." (Greene, 44) ■

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Gender, Race, and Social Class Intersect in the *Purple Hibiscus*: Kambili's Experience as a Young Black Woman in Nigeria

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Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie uses a bildungsroman to examine Kambili's identity development in her novel. The problem of discrimination and brutality done to women is highlighted in *Purple Hibiscus*. The novel demonstrates how male characters' depictions of violence cause the suffering of female characters. It indicates how religion and patriarchy are portrayed in the book as two philosophies that males use to oppress and violently punish women. The image portrays the family as the primary setting where violence develops before substantially spreading to a larger society. The novel by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*, is a classic example of an African feminist work that rejects the aesthetics of female suffering and supports the beauty of female emancipation.

Kambili Achike is the protagonist and narrator of the book *Purple Hibiscus*. She is a quite shy girl who is under her Catholic father's rigorous rule at the beginning of the book. She had spent the majority of her life in a violent home under her father, Papa Eugene, who also exercised a kind of dictatorial control. Conscient of the deleterious effects of their father's recurring violent outbursts, both Kambili and her elder sibling Jaja have been afflicted with stress. In exploring the different forms of oppression experienced by women in postwar Nigeria, the novel emphasizes the significance of the young protagonist as a powerful response to the obstacles faced in a postcolonial African country. By emphasizing education and female solidarity, Adichie's portrayal underscores the possibility for women to assert themselves and have their voices acknowledged, even in a male-dominated society. The book advocates for women's empowerment through social change, in which women combat various types of oppression, exploitation, exclusion, and silence in order to advance gender equality.

Keywords: *Women's Independence, Black Feminism, Domestic violence, Patriarchal Dominance, Gender Struggle, Silence*

Introduction

Kambili Achike, the protagonist of the book *Purple Hibiscus*, tells the narrative of Enugu, a city in post-colonial Nigeria. It revolves around an Igbo family who lived in the late

20th century in the southeast of Nigeria. The novel is a coming-of-age story centered around Kambili's journey from a timid child to a self-assured adult capable of navigating social, economic, and political systems for personal gain. Kambili also manages to evade the domestic violence inflicted upon her by her father Eugene, who is a devout Catholic and physically abuses his wife Beatrice as well as their children Jaja and Kambili. This abuse is carried out while he upholds his rigid religious convictions. Kambili's older brother Jaja, who shares her intelligence at school but remains silent and moody at home, resides with her. African women typically experience discrimination owing to their skin tone and their inferior sex. Women are given inferior treatment throughout Africa. They have experienced verbal, sexual, mental, and physical abuse. Numerous cultural traditions in Africa discriminate against women. A girl child in a family is informed from birth that she is nothing more than a tool for males. Later on, when she is an adult, she marries a man. Husbands frequently beat their wives and place the responsibility for their inability to have children on them.

The advancement of Black Feminism, a powerful and influential movement advocating for the rights of black women, faced obstacles due to the dominance of black males within the broader race movement. When discussing the disparity in power between black men and black women, Sojourner Truth wrote:

There is a great stir about colored men getting their rights, but not a word about the colored woman; and if colored men get their rights, and not colored women theirs, you see the colored men will be masters over the women, and it will be just as bad as it was before (Truth 1).

Women Suffer Domestic Violence

Kambili, a teenage girl who tells tales, first appeared to have accepted the pattern of circumlocutory abuse in her home. The storyline centers on her journey to regain her own voice by challenging the dominance of patriarchal authority, deeply impacted by her father's relentless acts of cruelty that have left her speechless.

Eugene (Papa) is a representation of patriarchy; his very existence ignites a flame of threat, which fuels females' anxiety and fear in order to silence them. In truth, Kambili's voice resonates with melancholy at first: "I feel suffocated" (*Purple Hibiscus* 7), and then, bewildered, she explodes at another point. "Fear, I was familiar with fear, yet each time I felt it, it was never the same as the other times, as though it came in different flavors and colors" (196). Devout Christian Papa Eugene exercises authority over the family.

"Papa always sat in the front pew for mass, at the end beside the middle aisle, with Mama, Jaja and me sitting next to him. He was first to receive communion. [...] but Papa did"(4). Additionally, Ose adds that "domestic violence therefore functions as a means of enforcing conformity with the role of women within the customary society" (Aihie 2). The authority to use violence against women is clearly given to men by society and its institutions. According to Ose, women in traditional African civilizations are expected to assist men and

the community, even if that means using force. As a result, women are obligated to do so. The problem of violence against women becomes common as a result of society's customs that support corporal punishment of women.

Ose Aihie writes, "violence on women is shockingly high with two thirds of women's population subjected to physical, sexual, and psychological violence by husbands, partners and fathers" (2). The examples showcase magnitude of violence inflicted by men on women. Violence has portrayed women on several occasions to draw attention to and question the unfortunate predicament that women confront in society.

The initial sentence of Kambili's personal account moves as such: "Things started to fall apart at home," (*Purple Hibiscus* 3). Indicating that anything that was previously intact is going to come apart, the statement prompts the reader to inquire as to why "things started to fall apart at home" (3). Through flashbacks, the past is informed, and how it relates to the present is revealed. Eugene's family is on the verge of disintegrating due to Eugene's repeated acts of aggression. Due to references in *Purple Hibiscus* to the book *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, intertextuality is clearly present. The phrase "Things fall apart" is used in *Purple Hibiscus* to analyze how violence affects the breakdown of Eugene's family and the societies of Enugu and Nsukka.

After school, she is not permitted to hang out with her buddies. She is beaten up if she is late. She is referred to as a "backyard snob" since she can't get her tongue to work in class. In addition, she rushes to her father's car as soon as the school bell rings. Before being taken home, she doesn't say goodbye to her classmates. This is perceived as aristocratic haughtiness by her peers. They are ignorant that her father rules and manages her family.

When Kambili accepts the flaming tea, she trains herself to accept her father's acts of violence because she takes them to be signs of his affection. Eugene is imitating the penalty the colonizer got when he sinned against his own body by burning his daughter's feet. Eugene therefore believes that by immersing Kambili in hot water, he is atoning for his daughter's transgressions:

"Kambili, you are precious. His voice quavered now, like someone speaking at a funeral, choked with emotion. You should strive for perfection. You should not see sin and walk right into it. [...] The pain of contact was so pure, so scalding, I felt nothing for a second. And then I screamed" (*Purple Hibiscus* 194).

In a different incident, Kambili and her mother are once again subjected to Papa's violence for violating the rules of the Catholic Church. Kambili experiences menstrual pains an hour before going to church. For her cramps, her mother gives her a pill. Papa Eugene catches them and promptly tears them apart with his leather belt. Eugene, a man, will never be able to comprehend a woman going through menstrual problems. He will never be able to understand how a woman's body experiences hormonal changes. Kambili suffers psychological torture in addition to verbal and physical violence. Any child who is

psychologically harmed will become self-conscious. Papa Eugene reduced Kambili to a naive child and destroyed her self-confidence.

Silence

When it comes to the conversation about violence against women, the word “silence” has many different connotations. In postcolonial nations, silence is associated with repressive problems like tyranny, particularly concerning the cries of women. Observation in *Purple Hibiscus*, though, does not imply stillness because the narrator is also meant to be silently witnessing events. Silence can be abusive, both physically and verbally, as it can silence one’s voice or actions. In addition to remaining silent, silence can also indicate choosing to ignore what is going on or behaving foolishly. Pauline suggests that “silencing comprises all imposed restrictions on women’s social being, thinking and expressions that are religiously or culturally sanctioned. As a patriarchal weapon of control, it is used by the dominant male structure on the subordinate or “muted” female structure”. (75) Atina Grossmann asserts that anti-Nazi soldiers who resisted Nazi Germany mistreated German women. According to Grossmann, in order to disprove the tradition that views sexual violence as normal, victims of such abuse should stop keeping silence. “the voices of women who speak of sexual violation, and tries to integrate rape into its analysis of normal heterosexual relationships” (45).

The silence that envelops Kambili and Jaja is a result of the violence their father used. As he sees silence as submission to and exaltation of God, Eugene thinks that silence cultivates godliness in his kids. In fact, Eugene replies in response to Ade Coker’s inquiry on Kambili and Jaja’s silent actions: “They are not like those loud children people are raising these days, with no home training and no fear of God” (58). Eugene believes that silence in Kambili and Jaja’s lives is suitable. Their apathy is interpreted as submission to God. This silence, however, is deceiving since it hides the truth. To hide his cruelty, Eugene keeps his kids silent. The people of Abba are unaware of Eugene’s cruelty against his family. As a result, Eugene gains the title of Omelora and is therefore protected by silence.

Ifeoma’s home in Nsukka is democratic, in contrast to Eugene’s silent family in Enugu. The transition of Kambili and Jaja from Enugu to Nsukka began to break their silence. They notice Ifeoma’s fearlessness, assertiveness, democracy, and laughter in her company, where silence has no place. Kambili observes that “Aunty Ifeoma was whispering, too, but I heard her well. Her whisper was like her-tall, exuberant, fearless, loud, larger than life” (95). Ifeoma’s voice, in contrast to Kambili’s mother’s, whose voice is hardly audible, inspires newfound optimism. As a result, Kambili understands how crucial it is to be heard. Kambili picks up what Father Amadi, a priest at St. Peter’s Church in Nsukka, refers to as questioning talents from her aunt. She notices the distinctions between Ifeoma’s family and her own.

The realization that her home is silent makes Kambili want a noisy setting where she can express her suppressed dreams. In “*Trying to Survive*,” Ogaga Okuyade describes

Kambili's development in terms of "there is the awakening, when the character becomes aware that her condition of life limits her aspirations for the future. She begins to display tendencies of her resentment and discontent for her geography, which she hopes to transcend" (10). The expansion of Kambili necessitates travel and a change of residency from one location to another. Nsukka is more than just a geographical location for Kambili. It stands for a moral and spiritual realm that aids in breaking Jaja and Kambili's silence.

As a result, Kambili is able to discern between the two families, one of which is small yet has plenty of air while the other does not. Kambili, like the first atmosphere, is a peaceful home: "Laughter always rang out in Auntie Ifeoma's house, and no matter where the laughter came from, it bounced around all the walls, all the rooms" (140). In the latter house, silence is the norm: "the compound walls, topped by coiled electric wires, were so high I could not see the cars driving by on our street" (9). Her home is completely enclosed by high, impassable walls and gates, isolating people inside and causing absolute silence. Overall, Eugene's family isn't being safeguarded by Kambili's house because of its restrictions on freedom and contact, and the electrified wall barrier simply serves to keep them quiet while Eugene uses violence. A family is a metaphor for a nation. Eugene's family is a representation of Nigeria, a nation where people are silenced. In Nsukka, Kambili and Jaja grow up in Ifeoma's house and feel a lift from the silence. Her sibling goes through a change in a single week. When she develops affection for Father Amadi, who is the one who can recreate her secret grin, Kambili begins to experience what it is like to be a woman. "Then I felt the smile start to creep over my face, stretching my lips and cheeks, an embarrassed and amused smile. He knew I had tried to wear lipstick for the first time today. I smiled. I smiled again" (177). As a consequence, aggression inhibits development. Kambili finds happiness in Ifeoma's home, where she also learns to express her feelings for her first love.

Kambili faces the difficult task of ending the torturous silence in her life when she arrives in Nsukka. As related by Kambili:

I could hear the ticking of the clock on the wall, the one with the picture of the Pope leaning on his staff. The silence was delicate. Auntie Ifeoma was scraping a burnt pot in the kitchen, and the kroo-kroo-kroo of the metal spoon on the pot seemed intrusive. [...] Watching them, I felt a longing for something I knew I would never have (165).

Christopher Werimo Ouma describes how Kambili emerges from the silence in Ifeoma's home:

"The presence of music keeps them in touch with the outside world but also because the kind of music that Kambili is exposed to is culturally conscious and the most importantly politically conscious music that informs her of the political happenings in Nigeria" (57). Alongside Amaka, Kambili gains her voice and freedom. Amaka informs Kambili, "You were just singing along with Fela" (*Purple Hibiscus* 277). As a result of his new, open

relationship with Amaka, Kambili is beginning to comprehend democracy. Additionally, Fela's music serves as the umbilical cord connecting Kambili and Amaka. Even though Amaka leaves for America at the conclusion of the story, Kambili still has memories of the connection and keeps playing the music to serve as a reminder of democracy and the value of speaking out.

Independence

Beatrice fights on the margins and rises to the center, where she is free to make independent choices as the moral protagonist who destroys patriarchy (by the husband's poisoning). Eugene must be physically removed from Beatrice's vicinity if patriarchy and its violence are to be eradicated and if Beatrice is to be spared the suffering she is currently experiencing. No, getting rid of males is not the ideal solution for women's issues, yet every married woman wants her husband to adore her. However, if Kambili's parents disagree, she becomes agitated, and Eugene frequently strikes his wife. As the narrator notes:

I WAS IN MY ROOM after lunch, reading James chapter five because I would talk about the biblical roots of the massaging of the sick during family time, when I heard the sounds. Swift, heavy thuds on my parents' hand-carved bedroom door [...] I sat down, closed my eyes and started to count. Counting made it seem not that long, made it seem not that bad. Sometimes it was over before I even got to twenty [...] There's blood on the floor (32).

The adventure of Papa's kids at Ifeoma's residence sparks a great transformation. Upon their return, Jaja and Kambili carry with them a newfound sense of awareness and a longing for freedom within their own household. The visit to Nsukka significantly alters their perspectives and ways of thinking. Kambili comes to comprehend her father's high expectations for her cousins during their time in Nsukka, as Auntie allows them to live in freedom and realize the full potential they have. Using the recurring theme of the journey, Kambili not only discovers her true self but also develops a deeper yearning for independence.

Mama and Kambili take over the family's financial management after Papa passes away and Jaja is imprisoned. Even better, they learn who to hire, promote, or bribe. They remain silent, but it is a liberating silence. In spite of its problems and ghosts, this is a sign of an entirely fresh family with independence and a small amount of happiness. Jaja is prepared to suffer on behalf of Mama and Sister even though Papa is no longer here because he is a brother and a son. Adichie hints at respect for women and selfless masculinity through Jaja.

In Adichie's literature, numerous instances showcase the collective efforts of women in combating the consequences of patriarchal dominance or supporting each other in overcoming challenges instigated by men. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Ifeoma makes friends with

Beatrice's spouse's sister and tries to persuade her to abandon an abusive marriage. Beatrice is able to prevent domestic abuse and develop independent thought processes. Sisi is Beatrice's maidservant, and she gives Mama the poison that kills Eugene since Beatrice is close to Sisi.

Conclusion

Adichie emphasizes domestic abuse, tradition, religion, and family life as the reasons for women's oppression; she also pushes women to speak out in order to combat their oppressors. *Purple Hibiscus* showcases the empowering journeys of both Beatrice and Ifeoma, as they courageously challenge and defy the oppressive grips of patriarchy. Initially, Beatrice embodies the stereotypical image of the silenced and victimized African woman. However, as she forms a deep bond with Ifeoma and gains her trust, Beatrice undergoes a gradual transformation. Her struggles with Eugene's cruelty serve as catalysts for her development, ultimately leading her to become a proactive force who takes matters into her own hands. Through a bold act of poisoning her husband, Beatrice becomes the agent of change, effectively dismantling patriarchy and asserting her agency.

When Kambili and Jaja pay a visit to Ifeoma's House, it ignites within them a transformative desire for self-discovery and a yearning for freedom, which ultimately sparks a revolution. The family business is taken up by Beatrice and Kambili after Eugene dies and Jaja is imprisoned. Even who to hire, promote, or fire is known to them. They are silent, yet their silence is one of joy, freedom, and tranquility. Additionally, Adichie does an excellent job of illustrating how women band together and support one another in order to pursue a shared goal since success often comes in groups and because there is power in numbers. Because the female characters in the book were successful in breaking away from patriarchal oppression, they stand as a powerful challenge to living in a patriarchal society.

In Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, the female characters Kambili, Beatrice, and Ifeoma explore violence against women. Violence against these female characters wrecked their lives by silencing their voices, hurting them, and inspiring ideas of retribution toward the victims. Male characters suffer as a result of their aggressive behavior, which ultimately leads to the destruction of the entire civilization as a form of vengeance against violent offenders. Both as a tool of aggression and a defense against violence and silence. The idea of silence was perceived as a two-edged sword that might sever both relationships. ■

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Transition of Culture and Identity Crisis through different Dimensional Elements in K.S. Maniam's Novel *In a Far Country*: A Study

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Evolution of Multiculturalism can be understood as a colonial legacy, left by the incursion of the Britishers (Western) power in Malaysian peninsula. Contributing to the cultural diversity of Malaya, colonisation led to Malaya into a Multicultural state. This article traverses across a novel of K.S. Maniam, entitled as *In A Far Country* to see how the writer depicts transition of multi-culture in the pre-colonial Malaya through the Protagonist, Rajan and other characters. This article is a travelogue. It reveals how the multiethnic groups adapt to the host country and assimilate according to it. Many elements come across and testify each and every character of this novel about their self-existence and leading to develop the strong sense of self belonging to host state, never making to think about the homeland from where they migrated.

Keywords: - Transition, Multiculturalism, Incursion, Assimilate and Travelogue.

Introduction

Subramaniam Krishnan widely known as KS Maniam was born in 1942 in a working class Tamilian family in Bedong, a small countryside town in Kedah, located in rural areas of northern Malaysia. Like many immigrants, his family had migrated from India to Malaya peninsula around 1916. Being a prolific writer, Maniam wrote three novels, plays and short stories. His first novel was *The Return*, published in 1981, second novel was *In a far Country*, published in 1993 and the third one was *Between Lives*, published in the year 2003. Along with novels he also wrote his two famous play *The Cord* (1983) and *The Sand pit: Womensis* (1990). He also authored numerous short stories and some famous ones are "The Eagles" (1976), *Plot* (1989), "Haunting Tiger" (1990) and "A Stranger to Love" (2018). He is the 1st recipient of Raja Rao Award for literature and is bestowed for "Outstanding Contribution to South Asian Diaspora" and was awarded in the year 2000. He was Associate Professor in English at the University of Malaya, Kuala- Lumpur. He died on February 19th 2020, after brief battle from bile duct Cancer in Kuala-Lumpur.

Multiculturalism can be understood as a post colonial legacy, left by the incursion of the British power in Malaysians. Contributing to the cultural diversity of Malaya, colonization changed Malaya into a multicultural country. This Article focuses on K.S. Maniam's *In a Far Country* to see how the author depicted multiculturalism in the post-colonial Malaya through the protagonist Rajan. To live in a multicultural society, one requires to accept the diversity and inculcate the acceptance and respectfulness to those from other cultures. Maniam's characters face challenges in their process of absorption.

This discussion aims to identify the challenges came over by the characters in the process of absorption into a multicultural society. It also signifies to examine how the characters subsist with the challenges in the process of assimilation into a multicultural society and finally to reveal that acceptance and respect are the key factors to achieve multiculturalism. The rationale is that by understanding the challenges faced by the characters in their endeavors, the process of assimilation into a multicultural society that occurred along the way can be understood. Hence, Maniam's work can show the process of assimilation in shaping Malaya into a multicultural country.

Analysis

A desirous work in thematic terms, Maniam's second novel takes place on the broad canvas of the multiple communities of independent Malaysia. Because of his cosmopolitan experience, he is aware of the danger regarding culture as no more than a "defensive little patch" or "protective enclosure", instead, says Maniam, *In A Far Country* commits itself to bringing cultures and societies into collision with one another and learning from that situation. Not only does the protagonist have to learn about other societies and personalities, but the writer also has to steep himself in the involved cultures so as to make his work convincing."It is also technically a paradoxical and difficult work, light and dark, present and Flashback, Private and public, Past and Present, Dream and consciousness variously succeed each other in a twirl of contrast with its collection of meditations, memories, notes, and letters. *In A Far Country* tries to depart from the set of social realism, although it is still the case that some of its best chapter contain dense description. Like R K Narayan and his Malgudi, William Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, Thomas Hardy and Wessex, even V S Naipaul and Trinidad, Maniam writes most convincingly about the Kedah he knows so well as complete insider.

The main protagonist and the narrator, Rajan, is a Malaysian Indian who has come out of a remote estate realm and achieved success in business. Rajan is defined as a "house and property owner, with a solid bank account", but he also has a clearly reflective bent. At the outset of the novel, he is undergoing a kind of mid-life, mid-career crisis, shut up in a favourite room in his house, obsessed with his inner self, shunning both food and the company of his family, yearning for some transcendental light above and beyond orthodox communal and material preoccupations, but most convincing when he remembers over the plantation estate of his childhood. His memories are overwhelmingly negative.

One of eight children, Rajan recalls a permanently anguished mother and a father sodden with toddy for most of the days and nights, a grim picture of “limp helplessness.”Rajan believes that the only significant event in his father’s entire life was his initial “escape from India to Malaysia”, but even then, there had been little heroism in that immigrant experience. As the father related:

“The ship we came in was crowded and foul. The hulls were rusted. When I drank water from the taps there was only the taste of rust. And the human dung - all over the place. The men not even closing the door. The door too rusted to be closed. The women with just the saris over their thighs try to hide their shame. Sometimes there was no water even to wash, to flush away the human filth.”

Once in Kedah, the father feels trapped, helpless, impotent and condemned. Like other familiar Maniam characters, he cannot find a home in this new land.

“...I thought I would find heaven. But people can be wrong. A man can be wrong. The price must be paid. I am paying it with blood. With all this suffering...Why must there be suffering? We suffered there in India. Now there is only suffering. No escape like the last time.”

The rubber estates themselves were manifestly nothing like the fabulous mythological kingdoms uncovered by earlier Indian explorers in prehistoric times across the Bay of Bengal. Even by the age of thirteen, Rajan desire to escape the “the bareness and harshness of my surroundings”.Not even wonderfully mysterious tradition like Deepavali, or stubborn, captivating characters like Mani the goat and Muniandy the smoke-house attendant, can dampen Rajan’s resolve to leave, firstly by voracious reading, and then through formal schooling.

In his adult years, Rajan meets up with Lee Shin, a Chinese business colleague, and decides to make a detailed, sociological type “study” of him. Lee Shin turns out to be a private, cultivated person of calligraphy, banners, flute, and decorated dragons, who also is doomed to die after a failed quest to transplant his Chinese culture into Malaysian soil. “He just wanted to be left alone”, Rajan reflects wistfully on the inefficacy of Lee Shin’s main goal. Still trying to comprehend the meaning of Malaysia, Rajan turns to the rural Malay, Zulkifli, who uses the image of the tiger to convince him of the Malay community’s traditional, mystical attitude to the landscape. However, despite several forays into the deepest Zulu, Rajan doesn’t come face-to-face with this tiger, and in fact runs away from the prospect. Zulkifli gently reminds him, “You don’t have ancestors here”.Significantly, Maniam employs the natural symbolism of the tiger to signify the essence of the Malay community, rather than the apparently more obvious symbolism of Islam, which is not mentioned in the text at all. Yet Islam is a fundamental point of entry into contemporary Malay culture in Malaysia.

Malaysian identity, then, remains elusive in any concrete, programmatic, even human terms. Communal habits, reflects Rajan, “build up walls...(and) prevent us from knowing

each other, knowing ourselves”. If, as Maniam himself affirms, “the problem for the Malaysian writer is in making the crossover to the other cultures, to get to know better the people of other races to be able to write about them”, then that problem remains, after all the effort of *In A Far Country*. Instead, the novel offers another return to Hindu verities in the quest for a mystical light that is beyond and above all earthly existence and travail. Again, Rajan asserts:

“I see the light. It is the light of pure living. It is there shining all around and into me. There is no ego, no self-interest, no loyalty to all the people I’ve known; only the desire to contain that light within me and to take it out into the world. For it is the light of intelligence, not the darkness of the limited mind”.

Rajan has begun to turn from worldly success to spiritual enlightenment, though not, he hopes, as a reclusive form of escapism. Within this context, concepts such as national identity seem unnecessary, even irrelevant. In fact, the transcendental theme of darkness into light is there from the very first chapter of *In A Far Country*, when the middle-aged Rajan goes into a bright room to begin his self-analysis. It is likewise significant that, at the end of the novel, Rajan has managed to achieve a reconciliation with his spouse, indicative of the efficacy of human action on an individual, microcosmic level as contrasted with a broader social or national realm.

Stylistically, there are some awkward moments in this text. In direct speech, for instance, it is difficult to accept that Rajan’s barely literate, estate-bound father would employ complex adjectives such as “honey-dripping”, “gossip diseased”, “hope-giving”, or “insect-gnawing”, especially when in an inebriated rage. A firmer editorial pen was needed on this kind of unnecessarily intricate passage. The plot of the novel, too, verges on diffusion, with significant repetition and divergence, even into barely disguised political commentary. The latter affords a rare instance of bawdy humour as political satire in the text, when the stubborn goat, Mani, reappears behind the podium on which visiting government ministers sit and speak, and irreverently neighs and passes wind with hilarious results.

Maniam himself believes that *In A Far Country* raises more questions than provides answers.

Conclusion

This article brings to light the degree of importance placed on ethno-cultural recognition and an individual’s sense of self vis-à-vis a plural society, as seen in the first novel, and the multi-ethnic and multicultural society, as seen in varying degrees in the later novels. There is evidence of the promotion of cultural pluralism, where the ethno-cultural identities of individuals and communities are given their due and public acknowledgement by members of the family, the ethnic community and society. However, there is also confirmation of the need to move on from a pure, culturally based identity to embrace a

more cosmopolitan, individually based identity. It is in the balance between the two, ethno-culture and self, that the protagonists seek their true selves in the multi-ethnic landscape of the country. ■

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The Perception and Production of English Vowels by Speakers of Eastern Region of India

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English teachers need to pay considerable attention to pronunciation, especially those that take a conversational approach. The speaker's mother language has a big influence on a lot of the issues. When speaking English, Odia pupils use Odia speech patterns or accents. As a result, English teachers must assist students in becoming aware of this in order to speak English intelligibly and clearly. This article examines the challenges Odia pupils have when pronouncing specific terms in the English language. When some words are delivered in the same manner as native speakers, this is quite clear.

Students were given an entry-level test and an exit-level test design to gauge how the training affected them. Both the control and experimental groups received printed materials for the entry-level test, which they were then instructed to speak/utter and record.

The experimental group participated in 50-minute pronunciation sessions, four times per week for 12 weeks before to the exit-level test and students from both groups were then assessed once more using the same methodology as the pre-test. The individual vowel pair analyses produced the following conclusions.

The experimental group significantly outperformed the control group, with post-test scores that were 30% higher than baseline values. The group achieved a pre-training score of 55.5%. Their test scores increased to 88% after 8 weeks of training, demonstrating the significant benefit of the guidance and practice they received in telling apart between /Y/ and /e/, /e/ and /æ/.

The experimental group examined the second opposing vowel pair, /R/ and /ʌ/, for analysis. The experimental group demonstrated that they had benefited from the instruction and explanation provided in class to distinguish between /R/ and /ʌ/. Their post-test scores increased from 44.4% to 66.6% from their entry-level test results.

Keywords: Experimental group, contrasting vowels, speech pattern, and pronunciation.

Introduction

The development of language skills is crucial for shaping citizens' perspectives on the world. The ability to speak English is very important in the modern world. Internationally,

the English language is regarded as having a high status. The global language of choice is English. It is popular over the world and is probably spoken in most nations. On all continents, it has been recognised as an official language.

English became the official language in India during the British era. After India gained freedom, English quickly gained popularity and influence; it is now taught all over the world. The English language continues to be a potent tool for social change and has had a significant impact on moulding India's political, social, economic, intellectual, and cultural life. More than 350 languages and dialects are spoken in India, making it a multilingual nation. English is well-liked in India not just because it is a widely used language abroad, but also because Indians need English to connect with one another. In this day of globalisation, the spoken form of English is receiving the respect it deserves. The learners' goal should be to improve their understanding of spoken English on a global scale in order to facilitate international travel, trade, and the exchange of knowledge sources.

In India, speaking English has always received less attention than reading, writing, and studying its structure. The foundation of reading and writing skills is speech ability. The day when students just acquired reading and writing skills proficiency in English the task is supposed to be over. But in order to communicate with people who speak both English and other languages, many of the pupils will need to speak and understand the language. The ever-changing global scene caused a paradigm shift in how English language learners approached the subject, moving away from written language and toward spoken language. In today's globalised world, spoken skills have implications for economic job opportunities. As a result, a study like this would be very helpful for ESL teachers, students, and institutions alike.

Description of the issue

Technology is assisting young and recent engineering graduates in finding jobs globally in the twenty-first century. Although there are many opportunities, there are also too many requirements. The capacity to speak in English is one of these requirements. English has become a prerequisite for employment in any reputable organisation, along with technical proficiency, due to its widespread popularity worldwide.

The study is descriptive qualitative in nature. The emphasis is on the linguistic issues that arise when learning pronunciation, issues brought on by the interference Odia language in pronunciation classes at a private engineering college in Odisha. Students often have trouble pronouncing and transcribing words, especially those with vowel sounds. In these conditions, learners from vernacular backgrounds find it challenging to communicate in English when they are needed to. Among the significant and typical issues they run with are:

1. To comprehend the foreign accent
2. To speak with a neutral accent that foreigners can understand.

3. Maintaining normal fluency, pace, and rhythm in communication with others.

Study objectives include:

To improve students' understanding of native accent.

To negate MTI of vernacular background pupils.

To lead the learners from listening to speaking.

To assist them in getting over their fear of speaking English.

Methodology

To help pupils who had trouble pronouncing vowel sounds, pronunciation tests were conducted to collect the pertinent data (spoken and written) of the research. Additionally, particularly on the front and back, the test included both short and long sounds.

Methods of data collection

The study made use of tests for the purpose of collecting data.

Entry level test

Exit level test

The 20 single vowels on the entry level test were intended to assess the respondents' ability to pronounce the words accurately to correspond to the vowel sounds they contained.

Some of the Vowel Sounds:

/R/	wash	Cost	Hot	Got
/E/	trust	Mud	Love	Blood
/D/	nurse	Girl	Hurt	Serve
/T/	thought	Cough	Cord	Want
/Y/	about	Ahead	Aloud	Afraid

Sampling

The researcher has attended four classes per week for a total of 50 minutes each for practice. The data were acquired through observations, recordings and through interviewing approach. List of words taken from the material that is prepared by the faculty were given to the students to be read and later recorded. The transcription and annotation of the recorded data allowed for data classification, which allowed for the identification of the aspects of English pronunciation that the Odia language interfered with. The assignments were completed as part of class activities with the teacher present.

The speaking evaluations took place at a private engineering school. Out of 60 students who are from Mechanical and CSE stream, 30 individuals were picked up as samples. Two experiments were carried out.

Test for entry level

Test of exit level

Sample test subjects

Undergraduate students studying computer science and engineering or mechanical engineering at a private engineering college in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, are the test subjects for the little research project. Students in this diverse group have varying socioeconomic, cultural, and racial backgrounds.

Tools for Research:

-----Observation of their reading, listening speaking activities.

Informal student interviews that are videotaped or taped.

Reading Aloud Exercises

Reading aloud exercises were used to determine which students had MTI as well as to gauge their exposure to the English language and their ability to read aloud while retaining the right rhythm, intonation, and pauses. The purpose of the listening exercises was to help students learn how to pronounce words correctly and to understand how the accents of native speakers differ from their own. It was also hoped that repeated repetition would help them overcome their accent.

The researcher used certain PPTs created by the English department at CVRCE while keeping in mind the issues that students confront. The testing subjects are enrolled in their engineering graduation courses at CVRCE, the engineering institute where the researcher is employed.

Presentation of Data

It is crucial to teach pronunciation in EFL/ESL courses, as Morley (1991) correctly stated. Despite being crucial, pronunciation instruction is overlooked.

Fan Lin asserts “Some teachers claim that pronunciation is not at all significant because students would rarely be asked to demonstrate pronunciation skills in assessments.” But because pronunciation is a crucial component of language learning, the facilitator must pay special attention to it as a language instructor. The facilitator is typically the one who encourages good pronunciation among the students. They could experience a range of pronunciation issues. Among the problems could be interfering mother tongue and unqualified educators.

MTI-Odia vowel sounds do not frequently contain the vowel sound /æ/. Students pronounce the term like fan as /fjan/ rather than /fæn/. In English, they don’t have an extended /e:/ sound. If the word “table,” which should be pronounced as “teible,” is given an extended /e:/ sound by the students.

The consonants of their target language are typically spoken incorrectly by language learners. They are primarily submerged in the mother tongue's flood of influence. The pupils frequently have trouble pronouncing certain words or sounds they employ in their spoken activities. For instance, certain English consonant sounds are unknown to the Odia students learning English. They therefore speak these native language sounds.

Teachers who are not properly trained can help students develop their careers in a measured manner. Some educators are unable to instruct students on proper pronunciation because they lack familiarity with foreign sounds. The manner they pronounce implies that the teachers have not acquired the correct linguistic equipment, pronunciation in particular. Thus, the pronunciation used by the students is similarly erroneous and improper.

Debut- /debut/ /deibju:/

Wednesday- /wednesde/ /wenzdei/

Both the pupil and the teacher must possess the necessary pre-requisite knowledge of proper pronunciation. A pupil can get over pronunciation obstacles in this method.

The pupils may be taught using the following approaches or techniques to effectively learn L1 pronunciation. They could be: separate sounds, gathering thoughts, separating word endings, chain stories, dialogues, minimal pairs, and rhymes.

The students are instructed to repeat the last word of a set of words, such as a phrase or sentence, and then add another word with each repetition until the entire phrase or sentence has been uttered.

Ex- I want.

I want to see.

I want to see the mud house.

I want to see the mud house of our grand-parents.

English classes need to pay considerable attention to pronunciation, especially those that take a conversational approach. Oral communication will suffer from poor pronunciation.

Ex: I stopped my car when I spotted a bear on the road to Delhi. The speaker's mother language has a big influence on a lot of the issues. When speaking English, Odia pupils use Odia speech patterns or accents. As a result, English teachers must assist students in becoming aware of this in order for them to speak English intelligibly and clearly.

Discussion of the result

When teaching pronunciation and getting the students to say words correctly, a teacher faces varied. When students and teachers repeatedly practise sounds using simple pairs like chip and cheap, ran and rain, neck and knock, etc., the results are typically less than encouraging, and the disinterested students and teachers end up desiring to avoid pronunciation altogether.

Our native tongue's (L1) speech patterns are unique. These patterns are ingrained firmly in students' minds during the first year of life. Students frequently experience discomfort when they hear or employ the second language's (L2) rhythm in this discourse, for this reason. They are concerned about this.

The researcher used certain PPTs created by the English department at CVRCE while keeping in mind the issues the students were facing. The testing subjects are enrolled in their engineering graduating courses at CVRCE, the engineering institute where the researcher is employed.

The children were able to develop their ability to recognise vowel sounds after the introduction of these sounds over the course of 12 weeks. The researcher forced students to practise responding individually, in pairs, and in groups utilising PPT material.

Students from Mechanical and ECE are in the class. 30 participants, aged between 17 and 20, first-year B. Tech. students at C V Raman College of Engineering, participated in the study to test the native speakers of Odia. The pupils were divided into an experimental group and a control group at random. Each group had thirty students. The experimental group received 50 minutes of pronunciation classes, four times per week for 12 weeks, while the control group received no training at all. The students in both groups took 36 hours of language instruction per semester, four times a day for 12 weeks with an emphasis on pronunciation. Students in the experimental group were introduced to the vowel systems of English and Odia, and at the conclusion of the instructional phase, and their improvement was gauge by organizing a quiz. The training made use of Power Point presentations, audio, and video recordings.

Because they are trained in their native vowel system, it has been noted that pupils in both groups had little difficulty pronouncing the sounds /u/ and /u:/, /i/, and /i:/. The subjects received 30 unique words. Following the vowel contrast, these words were noted and divided into 6 categories.

Book	foot	people	was	cough
Mad	mud	Mad	nut	not
Sleep	slip	bat	marvel	travel
Bottle	bought	Bet	flat	human
Work	walk	Shot	shut	ball
Word	ward	Laugh	farm	firm

Since Odia has no counterpart for the phoneme /æ/, students typically substitute /a:/ instead. For instance, the terms “apple” and “cat” are spoken as “aple” and “kyat” respectively.

The /a:/ was overgeneralized by the participants. Additionally, the English vowels /e/ and /a:/ are not present in the word “accident.” As a result, there was a propensity among

the pupils to substitute these sounds with a /a:/, which technically isn't present in English but exists in the front of position in Odia.

Analyzing data

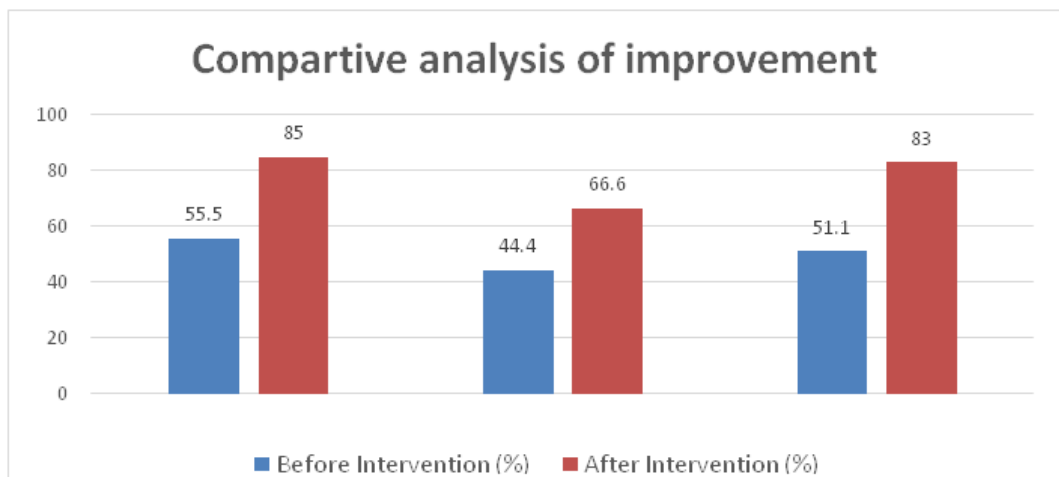
In order to evaluate how well the pupils responded to the training, both an entry-level test and an exit-level test design were offered to them. Both the control and experimental groups received printed materials for the entry-level test, which they were then instructed to speak/utter and record. The experimental group participated in 50-minute pronunciation sessions four times per week for 12 weeks before to the exit-level test and students from both groups were then assessed once more using the same methodology as the pre-test.

Following the study of the individual vowel pair analyses, the following conclusions were reached.

The experimental group significantly outperformed the control group, with post-test scores which were 30% higher than baseline values. The group achieved a pre-training score of 55.5%. Their test scores increased to 88% after 8 weeks of training, demonstrating the significant benefit of the guidance and practice they received in telling apart between /Y/ and /e/, /e/ and /æ/.

The experimental group examined the second opposing vowel pair, /R/ and /ʌ/, for analysis. The experimental group demonstrated that, they had benefited from the instruction and explanation provided in class to distinguish between /R/ and /ʌ/. Their post-test scores increased from 44.4% to 66.6% from their entry-level test results.

The third vowel pair in the English language is /E/ and /R/. The experimental group has demonstrated much higher results after the training. Their ability to recognise the two vowels that contrasted was improved, going from 51.1% on the entry-level test to 83% on the follow-up test. The fact that the phoneme /R/ was highlighted throughout training may imply that comparable approaches would be beneficial.



Conclusion

By focusing on the fundamentals of spoken English of the students, so that they can understand them rather than helping them sound like native speakers, a teacher can assist students to overcome this psychological barrier and other difficulties. It is a well-known truth that pronunciation of a language gives it life. Several major categories may encompass the research objectives:

- To get new knowledge and connect with a novel phenomenon.
- To effectively depict the uniqueness of a specific person, circumstance, or group.
- To discover the different methods in which education of pronunciation might be made engaging and successful.
- To emphasise the significance of employing techniques when instructing pronunciation in the classroom.
- To provide beneficial advice to the facilitators to employ the current ways without making it complicated for the learners in EFL/ESL sessions.

Recommendation

The cultural distinctions between mother tongue and English language present challenges for how to teach the language. Because the vocal system has been conditioned to this specific behavioural pattern as a result of the surroundings, this issue of the influence of the mother tongue on any language spoken has been a challenge for learners since the dawn of time.

The proper pronunciation of the many English sound systems, particularly vowel sounds, should be taught to the students. The substantial similarities between the sounds of English and some Indian languages must be made more widely known. Students should be able to acquire a neutral English accent with this awareness. However, there is a significant likelihood that the objective of accent neutralisation can be accomplished over time provided if a consciousness of the issues is formed.

The fundamental building blocks are an understanding of letter-sound correspondences and phonological awareness abilities. Even if students' grammar and vocabulary are great, if their pronunciation isn't easy to understand, their communication will fail. If pupils wish to speak English clearly, pronunciation is the key. ■

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The Lotha Naga Traditional Marriage System

Libemo Kithan

The traditional Lotha community values each individual's life in the society. The Lotha family cares for both male and female children equally, and as they reach adolescence, they are assigned various tasks and become a major contributor to the village's socio-economic development as well as the promotion of cultural and religious life. The community was racked by combative and bellicose battles, including frequent headhunting. As a result, even when working in the field or walking to and fro in the field, women are always placed in the middle, protected by the men folk. Because wooded areas are enemy hideouts, they were not permitted to clear the field's edge. This is supported by the Lotha proverb, "*Eloe jo litssa-lino nlhuptok*": which states that women are not permitted to chop or clean the weeds at the paddy field's border or edge. Her parents' and community's respect for her when she reached marriageable age, as well as his parents' respect for her during marriage, attest to her respectability. Similarly, the boys are thoroughly trained to be brave and self-reliant. We have seen how the lads were trained to be great warriors to protect the community throughout their time in *Morung (Chumpho)*. "*Eboe na jo hochi tia ntsokhok nning*", says the Lotha adage, aren't you do after being a man?

Exogamous marriage is practised by the Lotha Naga tribe. People from the same clan do not marry, and any sexual relations between them are strictly forbidden. The same principle applies to marriage even in modern Lotha society. Men are always expected to be active, brave, and strong in society, and only such men could marry a girl because marriage was expensive and involved a lot of rituals and elaborate festivity that poor men could not afford. Polygamy was common among the Lothas in the past. However, only a wealthy man married again, had multiple wives, and lived together. A poor man, on the other hand, cannot even attempt to marry once because he cannot afford the marriage expenses. The bride's values (erstwhile bride's prices) of different kinds are high where the groom has to bear from engagement till his death. This bride values may be in the form of paddy, livestock, fuel, ornaments and/or labours.

Keywords: Matrimony, Exogamy, Polygamy Proposal, Engagement, Relationship, Bride value.

Introduction

Marriage is a universally recognised special institution that has existed in both traditional and modern societies. After marriage, any legal family formation can be established. Marriage refers to a socially sanctioned relationship between a man and a woman that is assumed to be more or less permanent by both the couples and others; it includes the reciprocal rights and obligations of two spouses and their children. Mibang (2007) wrote, Marriage is viewed in most culture as an agreement, in fact it is a legal contract between different kin groups, and this agreement or contract may go on even if one of the spouses or both the spouses dies (Mibang, 2007:69). Rao (2019) stated that marriage is an institution of society which can have different implications in different cultures. Its purposes, functions and forms may differ from society to society, but it is present everywhere as an institution (Rao, 2019:327).

Marriage can be conceptualized in three ways: as an institution, as a rite/ritual and a process. As an institution, marriage consists of a set of patterned behaviours, expectations and relationships that are endured over time. As a rite/ritual, it includes the ceremonies through which married status is achieved and as a process, it is phenomenon which is marked by gradual changes that lead to ultimate dissolution through separation, divorce or death¹.

The Naga culture means the way of life of the Nagas, the inherited behaviour and thought of their fore-parents, passed on the new generation, through oral tradition, and day to day practices and conservative lifestyles in the form of customs, traditions, norms, values, beliefs and conversations; acquired through the process of time, change, innovation, evolution and growth; contact, diffusions, integration, imitation acculturation (Thong and Kath, 2011:57).

The Lotha traditional marriage

The traditional Lotha Naga marriage is one of the most important family festivals and celebrations because it is not only a custom but also a covenant of love between a man and a woman, as well as a means of expanding the family circle. Matrimony is not only an agreement between husband and wife to start a family, but it also fosters camaraderie among the village clans. The Lothas use the exogamy marriage system, which is based on inter-clan ties that promote mutual understanding and kinship relations. Polygamy was once common among the Lothas. There was no fixed age for a boy and girl to get married among the Lotha society. In the past, a girl's marriageable age was 14 to 16 years, and some women did not marry until they were 20 years old. Similarly, a boy can marry between the ages of 20 and 25. A parent observes for physical and mental readiness in their sons and daughters. Even if a man's family approaches for marrying a daughter, a girl parents' may refuse on the grounds that she is too young to be responsible for a family or that she has yet to learn particular skills, such as weaving clothes for herself and her spouse. Similarly, a man must be physically strong enough to sustain a family and achieve a specific social rank. Both must be able to make their own bamboo baskets (*phari*), wooden plates (*okong-*

phi), bamboo cups (*oyoo-obvü*), *lejup* (machete holder), and weaved clothing (*mpen-surüm*). Ezung (2009) articulates, “If both the family agrees to let their son and daughter gets marry, a bride and groom exchange a gift. The groom used to give handicrafts such as *okhyak/ phari* (a basket like carrier) and *onhyan* (basket rope). The bride in return gave to the groom *lejupzhü* (dao holder rope) and *rüve* (apron)... “These gifts were exchanged out of love” (Ezung, 2009: 4).

Ceremonies occur at various stages of a man’s life prior to marriage.

a) The first notable event for a male child was the naming ceremony or christening day in contemporary times, known as *omying tsayi* or *omying etssa*, which takes place on the sixth day of his birth. In honour of the new born child, the parents will plan a feast and invite their close relatives. The clan’s younger female member (child’s aunt) will receive a share of 6 (six) pieces of cooked meat (5 pieces in case of female child) and will be responsible for carrying the child on her back. A child’s aunt who got the meat share becomes a baby sitter (*ngaropvüi*)².

b) The second stage was his first meal ritual, known as ‘*ngaro-eshan*,’ which occurred around the age of 4-5 months. The kid’s father will go hunting for a bird, ideally a *liosangsi* (a song bird of the thrush family), and place it in the baby’s hand, symbolising that the child will grow up to be talented like the bird that sings various tunes. This first meal ritual was observed for both male and female child. In the modern days the father go for hunting bulbul (*vetyuru/oyeni*) and let the child taste the meat as the first food³.

c) The third stage was to participate in the ‘*raho-ramvü*’ (warrior’s ritual), in which the boys jabs the hunted enemy head brought by the warriors in village *Morung (Chumpho)*. Depending on his age, the boy jabs a number of times with a stick or a spear (in case of grown up boys). There is no age restriction for performing this ceremony and the father may carry the newly born baby boy on his back and allow him to jab the enemy’s head with a stick. The boys who perform *ramvü* ritual, are accompanied by their parents, who will go to *Ronsyu Tsalanphen* (a location to summon the Lord of the harvest) on the outskirts of the village with a good food with pork meat for a feast. The boys would return to their village after eating the meal, which is similar to a modern love feast, by inviting the Lord of Harvest to accompany them. *Arishürüi* (poor and ordinary boy) was the name given to a youngster whose parents were unable to kill pork and prepare the feast’s food with fine brew. Therefore, those boys cannot perform *ramvü* ceremony⁴. Parents will weave *rüve* (apron) and *sütum or shipang* (a white cotton shawl with a black horizontal stripe) for him as he grows up. *Ramvü* ritual was also observed at the time of inaugurating the reconstructed *Chumpho* where the warriors brought hunted enemy heads and let the boys jabbed the skull with the butt of their spears. For the Lotha Warriors, this ceremony was an act of adding hornbill feather in the warrior’s headgear (*tongkho*) and then participating in the warrior dance⁵.

d) The fourth stage was to enlist as a member of a *Chumpho* institution to protect the village from wildlife and enemy attack when he was about 10-12 years old. During this

time, he will go through several rounds of training before marrying and serving the village.

e). The fifth stage involves organising a feast known as '*shishang-nrü*' (achievement of adulthood), which was a man's first social ceremony. He will slaughter one pig and three cocks in this ritual to invite elders from his clan to a feast. A special pork curry will be prepared for the eldest clan's member to dine on a single plate (*tsorhyuta*). That elder man will accompany him to the village pond with one small *lifü-ro* (small bottle gourd used as a cup) and *shika-phük* (*Shika* means recognition, and *ophük* is a bamboo mate used for drying grains; it is called *shika-phük* for this ritual).

They will lay the bamboo mat around the edge of the pond and break the *lifü*. They will then clean the bamboo mat before returning home to eat the prepared supper they prepared. If he speaks up while eating, the clan members will take his plate and deny him further food. This act put patience and tolerance to the test. After completing this ceremony, he will be eligible to wear the '*phangrhup*', or bachelor's shawl.

f). The next stage was to engage in '*ralovo*' (warfare) to hunt down the opponent (enemy) and bring the head back to the village.

As he prepares to marry, a man's life progresses through the stages listed above. He plans to build a house for himself and his wife after the engagement ceremony (*loji-longa*).

Life of a woman before marriage

A woman's life is classified into several stages before she marries. Before marrying, women go through various stages of life, but there are no significant rites or ceremonies in their lives as there are in men's. The traditional Lotha family and community treat women with great respect. '*Tsokying-tsolo penria nini mhayi tokvüka,*' which roughly translates as 'may you be blessed with sons and daughters,' is the couple's ancestral blessing. This proverb expresses how the traditional Lotha society values the lives of both male and female children. Devi (2011) while summarizing the hard work of a Tangkhul woman notes, "In Naga society, the role of a women in running a family is no less important than that of a man" (Devi, 2011: 34). The cotton woven girdle worn by the Lotha women marks the stages of their lives.

The following are the significant stages that a woman goes through prior to marriage:

a). The female child's naming ceremony is the same as for a male child like in the modern days of Lotha culture; however, it will be held on the fifth day after her birth, opposed to sixth day for a male child. The parents will prepare a meal and invite all of their immediate family members to the feast. A younger female member of the clan will be invited, and she will be given 5 (five) pieces of cooked beef, and assigned the responsibility of *ngaro-pvüi* (babysit).

b). When a female child was between the ages of 5 and 6, she must wear a *konrosü*, a short cotton woven girdle that covers the waist and hips. The girl learned how to do

housework during this time. Mills (1922) stated, “When about five to six years old a little girl puts on her first skirt (*khondrosü*). This is about a little red embroidery in the middle” (Mills, 1922: 9).

c). She enters the teenage or adolescent stage when she is about 12-13 years old. She will be able to socialise by joining a peer group for labour exchange, similar to how boys enter *Morung's* (*Chumpho's*) life. This is the most important stage for girls to learn practical skills like pottery making, spinning, and weaving. She plans to make her own clothes, particularly a *sürhum* (girdle). A woman's age can be determined by the clothing she wears. Despite the fact that women are not permitted to participate in the same ceremonies and rituals as men, she develops into a capable and responsible individual capable of entering married life.

Engagement

Exogamous marriage is the foundation of the Lotha marriage system, in which a man marries outside his clan. A man was ready to marry the female of his choice or the female of his parents' choice after completing the pre-marital rituals and ceremonies. Shitiri (2019) noted that, “We discovered that a male or his parents would choose a girl to marry on her naming day (the 5th day of her birth) and subsequently, when she was about 10 years old, married to a boy” (Shitiri, 2019: 74). Her husband will treat her as a child; kept lunch for her when he goes to the field and the girl will call her daddy for several years. They will start intimacy after staying for 5 to 6 years. Gradually, the marriageable age was raised, and a girl might marry at the age of 14 (fourteen) and a male at the age of 20 (twenty)⁶. According to Murry (1985), “A boy get married between the age 17 to 20, and a girl at the age between 14 to 16” (Murry, 1985: 48). There were few cases of arranged marriage, but it was also common practise for a man to announce his desire to marry a female of his parents choice. Male parents would approach the girl parents with a proposal for the girl to get married with their son (*logi-longa*). In some circumstances, a *longa-pvüi* (proposer), an elderly woman relative, visits the girl's parents. In some cases the family of the boy may decide to let him marry a girl of their choice and with his consent approach the girl's family (Art and Culture, 2016: 34). In most cases if a boy likes a girl and wants to marry her, he seeks the help of a female relatives or an aunt to put forth his marriage proposal to the girl's parents. If a girl's parents accept the proposal, the boy's parents will make '*longa-suko*', a rice beer. Only a few close relatives from both the families will be invited to the proposal feast. After this proposal feast between the two families, an engagement feast called '*lantso-tsoyuta*' will be fixed at the girl parent's house. For the engagement feast, rice beer will be prepared by the girl's parents⁷.

After planning an engagement party, the bride and groom goes to the jungle to collect a leaves called *yotsoro* (*phrynium placentarium*) to wrap a meat. On the same day, a man cut firewood, specifically chooses *khovoro-tssüing* (*macaranga peltata*), called *Lomyak-tssüing*⁸ and kept outside the girl's parent house as a sign of being engaged. On the next day, a pig is killed and a number of invitees will be ascertained and accordingly a pork curry will be wrapped.

After cooking was done, the message will be sent to the bride's family, and accordingly the groom's family went to the bride's parents' home with a cooked and raw meat for the feast called '*lantso-tsoyuta*'. A piece of meat measuring four and half *efü* (one *efü* is equal to 4 kg, so 18 kg) will be given to girl's family. A pork meat of 3 pieces each will be wrapped in *yotsoro* to be given to all the invitees. Then a girl will go behind her fiancé carrying cooked pork called *sophi-maphi*, a special curry for the feast. *Sophi-maphi* curry will be served with a fine rice beer prepared by the girl's family. The wrapped cooked pork curry will be distributed according to the members in each household in the groom's family house.

After the engagement ceremony is done, a groom turns obliged to serve his in-laws for a year until wedding called '*lomyak*' (serving for the girl's sake). Marriage ceremony takes place only after *Rithak Tokhü/vami-tokhü/Loroe Tokhü* (a social festival after harvest). During this time, the groom prepares construction materials to build a house to stay after marriage. According to Lotha tradition, when the village Chief (*Pvüti*) dies, no social or religious ceremony or festivals are held until a new *Pvüti* is chosen. It can take up to two or three years to find a suitable and efficient *Pvüti*. Marriage cannot take place during this time, and the groom and the bride being in association for a long time, can have sex and have offsprings before the wedding ceremony. Such an incident is accepted in society, and they could still wait for *Pvüti*'s announcement for the festival. When the chief announces the date for the festival by performing a ritual of killing a pig at the place called '*Kijanphen*', the groom will construct a new house to be opened only on the wedding night⁹.

Marriage ceremony

Following the *RithakTokhü* festival¹⁰, a 3 (three) day wedding ceremony will be scheduled. The initial bride's value given to the bride's family is a paddy of 16 (sixteen) baskets (*etük*); the affluent bride's family will only accept 8 baskets. This paddy payment is used to make rice beer and a dinner for the bridal feast. *Hanlamvü* (taken back) will be given to the bride's family in the form of a large pig. In return, the bride's family who receive the meat portion will be given cash and kind to the bride, hence the name 'taken back'. The pig will be sent to the bride's house alive. The pig will burn and cut from the bride's place and give *efü* 7_!2 (30 kg) along with the head to the bride's family for distribution to their kindred and close relatives and in-laws (*tsoyutalo-ethe*). Normally it is only *efü* 6_!2 of meat but another 1(one) *efü*a (4 kg) is being added called *tssüingvoman* (value of the firewood cutting). Then the remaining meat will be cut into 2 (two) equal parts. The first half is given to the bride's clan for the feast on the next day and the other half is reserved for the wedding day, to be taken to the groom's place. This half portion of the pork is called '*sorhon woncho*'. On the second day, the elders from every clan, relatives of the bride and groom (*kishum*) are invited along with the *tsoyutalo-ethe* (close relatives from both sides) at the bride's parents place for a feast. The relatives come with gifts called '*khelum*' in the form of food grain, vegetables, taro, ginger, salt, handicraft items, cotton yarns, weaving implements etc. A share of meat is given to all the relatives who came for the feast. Guests coming with valuable items get the bigger share of meat.

The third day of the wedding ceremony is extremely essential and gorgeous, not because a man and a woman are tied in knot to live together, but because of the high social recognition of living as a family. In the past, finding a soul mate was valuable and difficult for the Lotha lads and only the brave, wealthy and hardworking could succeed. A man and a woman can have a child, but unless they go through various rites to obtain marital status, the couple/parent and their siblings will be shunned and ridiculed in the village from generation to generation. Those children and their families will never be included in the village's socio-political and religious realms.

On the wedding day, the bride's female relative (aunts, sisters and immediate cousins), known as '*pvüshi-yeni*' would assess how much gift items has received through *hanlamvü* feast. They packed all the gifted items and her belongings in bamboo paddy carrier (*okhyak*) and cane yarn basket (*yingkhi/chapa*). Her parents will offer her *tivü-rumbum*, *yikphyan*, *lakup etc.*, (ornaments) exclusively prepared as gifts. In the evening at sun set time, wedding procession will take place comprises of newlyweds couple, '*pvüshi-yeni*' and the close relatives to the *Yanpi-kithan* (newly constructed house by the groom to receive the bride). The eldest member from the groom's clan will open the new house and lighted fire in the hearth before the arrival of the newlywed couple. During the ceremonial wedding procession, *pvüshi-yeni* will carry the entire bride's belongings; the eldest aunt will carry the *yingkhi*; groom will carry 6 piece of cooked pork (*sophi-maphi*); two males (*sorhon-ejum*) will carry the reserved half portion of *hanlamvü* meat (*sorhon woncho*) from right hand and bamboo torch holding from left hand and follow the group¹¹. Kithan (2022) reported that, the male members with good voice (one pilot and one escort) with bamboo torch would shout – *Loroe soaka oro zetavalo* (come and see the beautiful bride) where the villagers will enjoy watching the wedding procession. On reaching the *Yanpi-kithan*, one of the elders will say, '*A motsü-rüi ki jo kvüla?*' (where is my phratry's house?), and the elder who was warming the house will respond, '*A motsü-rüi ki jo hepika*' (my phratry's house is here). Then, the group will enter inside the *Yanpi-kithan*. The groom will hand over the *sophi-maphi* to the elder who received them. The two persons who carried the meat (*sorhon ejum*) will get 1 kg of meat each and the remaining meat will hang near the hearth. The elder clan member will warn the couple- '*ojo tipyanta khena*', which means to remain chaste for the night (Kithan, 2022:170).

The next day is the day of ritual for the couple which was known *Poni Ratsen* (blessing upon the newlywed couple). The *hanlamvü* meat which has been reserved will cook on this day. Feast will be organised by inviting the *ekhyo-ekhüing* (victorious man who has done the feast of merit and completed all the rituals). Amongst them, the couple will get 6 (six) pieces of meat and the widower will get only 3(three) pieces of meat. The remaining meat will be distributed by the wives of *ekhyo-ekhüing* who will perform the rituals. They will place their armllets in a bamboo tray (*loksa*) and shake them to create music as they sing for the couple. The lyric of the song goes: "*Potsüvo chumina, ojourüm-rüm esongta tsavla; Ni kvütokroji khokata*" (Sons and daughters arriving from the sky above; open up your genital). Then, they

will prepare *ratsen-ha* (waste meat/ carcasses) and placed underneath a big tree (*ratsen-tongpvü*) outskirts the village. The eldest among the *Ekhyo-ekhyung* wives will carry the load. They will disperse to their respective homes without going back to the newlywed house. The marriage ceremony ends here and the married couple will observe 5 days aloof from the society (*sari*) to avoid the visit of widow and widower. Within this period, i.e., on the third day, the couple will go to the wife's parent house to dine with them. This occasion is called '*pikilano*', meaning to check if any of the bride's articles remain uncollected. The wife parents will give chicken or any others accessories needed by the couple. Early morning on the 6 day, they will visit the house (*oki-eyu*) whose wife and husband lives in marital stability with strong bond of love (*poni-shumjum*) separately with a hope of blessings that they may also live like those couple. The entire process of wedding concludes here and the couple will live happily ever after legally and the married man is nearing to enter the stage of *ekhyo-ekhyung*¹²¹² Interview with Bichamo Erui, 83 Years, Wokha Village, 04/10/2020.

Bride's value

The Lotha culture for paying the bride's value was a continuous process in which the groom (husband) paid to his wife's parents until death. Traditionally, it was not monetary but in the form of paddy, pork, firewood, land for temporary cultivation, and so on. Marriages in Lotha society were sealed by the payment of the bride's value to the bride's family after the bride's service was completed. Kikon (2016) has reported that, "The payment of payment of bride's value points out the economic value of the girl through which the parties benefitted at her expense: the parents for losing her labour and the groom for gaining one. The bride, having been secured through a laborious process, the husband expected her to be under his authority and the husband claimed the right to enforce the obedience of his wife" (Kikon, 2016:86).

The bride's value was paid differently in each village, but the following are the most common: *Tssüingvoman* (value given during the process of marriage), *Tsoroman* (value of pre-wedding), *Hanlamvü* (taken back), *Chüka* (paid to maternal uncle), *Nvaman* (price for not working in his father-in-law's house), *Kitsoman* (value for not constructing his father-in-law's house), *Sontsoman* (value for the construction of granary), *Opyae etssoman* (value for bride's brothers) and *Myingshiman* (value of naming).

Conclusion

The traditional Lotha marriage was a three-day ceremony that was extremely lavish. The first day was marked by giving the 'bride's value' to the bride's family in the form of paddy and a share of pig, known as *Hanlamvü*, which literally translates as "taken back" in the context of gifts from the bride's relatives. On the second day, the bride's parents will host a feast for the elders of each clan, the *tsoyutalo-ethe* (close relatives from both sides), and the bride and groom's relations (*kishum*). The relatives will bring a '*khelum*' -gift of food items such as grains, vegetables, taro, ginger, and salt, as well as handicrafts such as cotton yarns and weaving tools. Everyone who attended the wedding reception will get a

piece of the meat. Those who brought valuable gifts will be given a larger share of meat.

The third-day wedding ceremony is extremely important and beautiful, not because a man and a woman tied the knot to live together, but because of the high social recognition of living as a family. The bride's female relatives, or '*Pvüshi-yeni*', who included aunts, sisters, and close cousins, would assess the amount of gifts given during the *Hanlamvü* feast. All of her gifts and belongings were placed in cane yarn baskets (*yingkhi/chapa*) and bamboo paddy carriers (*okhyak*). Her parents will present her with handcrafted ornaments such as *tivü-rumbum*, *yikphyan*, *lakup*, and so on. The wedding procession of welcoming the bride to her new home (*yanpi-kithan*) will take place at sundown in the evening. The eldest member of the groom's family will open the new home and light the hearth fire before the married couple arrives. On reaching the new home, an elder member of the clan welcomes the newlywed couple ceremoniously and that testified how the bride is being warmly welcome to the family of the groom and to the fold of *jipo* (clan) and *motsü-rüi* (phratry) alike.

Marriages gained social status, and the couple lived a happy and contented life after completing all of the customs and ceremonies associated with it. However, certain loopholes exist when a couple have a problem bearing a child. If it was the fault of the wife, the husband may marry another woman in order to have a child. If it was the husband's fault, he would allow his wife to sleep with his younger brother. Both situations are acceptable to the family, clan and society. Even if a man marries his second and third wives, he must perform rituals to pay the bride's values to each wife. During the reconstruction and inauguration of the village *Chumpho*, childless women were permitted to mingle with the *Chumpho* boys. The mock fight or charade (*Nongpvü-rotä*) between the *Chumpho* boys and Childless mothers (*Humjipvüi/Humjupvüi*) was literally for the sake of having a child. A childless wife was permitted by her husband to dance (*Ekyä-esi*) with the warriors, and the child born in such cases was known as '*eyantso*' or '*ekyatso*', which literally means "searched baby." All ancestral practises concerning elaborate matrimony system and polygamy were rejected as Christianity influenced Lotha Naga society. ■

Endnotes:

¹ <https://www.Thoughtco.commarriage>. Accessed on 13/06/2023.

² Interview with Yitsomo Murry, 78 years, Wokha Village, 12/08/2021.

³ Interview with Tsensao Erui, 79 Years, Wokha Village, 14/06/2021.

⁴ Interview with Yankhomo Erui, 72 years, Wokha Village, 16/03/2022.

⁵ Interview with Zumomo Tsanglao, 67 years, Elumyo Village, 24/03/2019 & Yitsomo Murry, 78 years, Wokha Village, 12/08/2021.

⁶ Interview with Riphamo Kithan, 70 Years, Wokha Village, 20/09/2020.

⁷ Interview with Bichamo Erui, 85 years, Wokha village, 04/10/2020.

⁸*Lomyak-tssüing* is a bunch of firewood(fuel) specifically prepared by the groom parents to keep in bride's family residences as a sign of girl's being engaged.

⁹Interview with Yitsomo Murry, 78 Years, Wokha Village, 12/08/2021.

¹⁰A post harvest festival calls differently, such as *Vami Tokhü, PvüthehantheTokhü* or *Loroe Tokhü*.

¹¹ Interview with Yitsomo Murry, 78 Years, Wokha Village, 12/08/2021.

¹² Interview with Bichamo Erui, 83 Years, Wokha Village, 04/10/2020.

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The Lady in White

Snehaprava Das

Sudha opened the front door and came out. She yawned lazily, inhaling deeply the fragrant air of early Autumn, letting the soft breeze that was an enchanting blend of warmth and cool caress her face. The early morning was apparently noiseless. The house too was quiet since Ashok her husband, was out of the town on an official tour, and Padma the cook who lived with them was still asleep.

She stood in the porch for a while watching the sun coming out in a crimson halo.

She came inside, opened the door of a small room adjacent to the spacious hall, and looked under the wooden cot. The sitar lay quiet, covered in a glossy wrap, waiting for the familiar touch, to come back to life. But Sudha rarely brought it out when Ashok was home.

‘What is the need for you to play sitar?’ he would remark if he noticed her bringing it out. ‘There are enough entertainments besides playing that. The sound irritates me.’

There were occasions when he returned from office beforetime and would find her strumming the instrument, practicing.

‘Stop that noise,’ he would snap at her. ‘This is a house, not a music parlour. What I need is some peace and calm after long hours of work. Padma, get me a cup of coffee quick and fast.’ He would yell and cross the hall in long strides.

Sudha found no reason to explain to such a man who considered the music of sitar a noise the peace she derived from it. There was absolutely no need.

She pulled it out from under the cot with delicate hands and carefully took the cover off. She lifted it up to her lap and ran her fingers on the strings, slowly at first and then strumming it passionately, her eyes closed, overwhelmed by the magic of the music, oblivious to the world around her, transferring her claustrophobic despair into her fingers.

Her phone rang, breaking the spell, jolting her back to reality. It was Ashok, calling from Hyderabad.

‘Is everything okay there? Any problem?’

‘No problem absolutely,’ Sudha spoke into the screen, ‘You take care of yourself.’

‘Do not go out of the house unless there is an urgent need. Ask the driver to get the ration and vegetables. Padma can bring the milk.’

‘Sure.’ Sudha clicked off the connection.

Ashok would not want her to go out alone anywhere even though a car and a driver was at her disposal all twenty-four hours a day. He remained out of home during most part of a month visiting branches of his office. Strangely though, Sudha admitted to herself a bit reluctantly, she did not miss him much. Ashok advocated strongly enough in favour of the traditional virtues of an Indian wife and derided the women who fought against patriarchy and claimed equal privileges for women. A husband must, Ashok believed, be loyal in love to his wife, take care of her mundane needs like food, clothing, jewelries and things of that sort and in return the wife should ungrudgingly cater to all his needs, and wholeheartedly commit herself to the duty of keeping him happy. And that involved, though he was not too ostentatious about it, the woman’s sacrifice of her little private wishes, and relegating her passions to an oblivion of anonymity. Seen on the surface Sudha was a happily married woman. Ashok earned enough to give her quite a comfortable, if not lavish, living. Most women in place of Sudha would have no regrets.

Sudha was not like most women. She had a longing trapped inside her to move beyond the limiting experiences which defined her existence, that constantly strove to find a way of escape. She was like a caged bird that craved the infinity of the sky, prodded on by a passion to fling open the cage and soar up.

She was a trained sitar player. While a student she partook in the competitions held in colleges and local bodies and was admired by the audience. Her parents never fell short in providing her opportunities and encouragements to display her talent in appropriate platforms. She had nurtured a dream to be a recognized sitarist in the state and pursued it assiduously.

But her marriage to Ashok changed everything.

He had frowned at the sitar that accompanied the bridal gifts from her parents.

‘Why have they sent it here?’ The note of obvious disapproval in his voice hurt her like a needle-prick, sharp and burning.

‘It is mine. You know I play sitar,’ that’s why.’ She answered.

He gave her a thoughtful look. Perhaps he had sensed her resentment. He did not stretch the topic further.

A few days after, in the romantic seclusion of their bedroom Ashok mentioned the sitar. His voice, unlike the other day was mildly persuasive.

‘It was alright to play sitar or sing songs when you were not married. Most girls have one or other such hobbies. But marriage brings in other responsibilities, it demands certain amount of décor in behaviour and deportment. You might play a bit in the house now and then when you are alone. I will not object to that, but giving a public performance is entirely ruled out. You know my parents will never agree to it. You must not misunderstand me but that’s the way it is. We both should make certain compromises here and there, with our tastes and hobbies. Shouldn’t we?’ He looked at her closely, as if expecting an answer of his own choice from her. Sudha lowered her face to avert the question in his eyes. She did not answer. Nor did Ashok press her to.

The sitar was consigned to an exile, away and invisible, under the bed.

Sudha was an exile, in her own home, estranged from her dream and passion.

Rarely did she take it out from its hiding place when her husband was home. It was only when her husband was on official tours, she brought it out, stroked it, tightened the nuts, and ran her fingers lovingly on the strings. Soon she got lost in the music and would not come out of the euphoria until the phone rang or Padma called her to have her food, or the housemaid pressed the doorbell.

She had seen the advertisement in the newspaper a few days ago. Later she saw it on the television too. A contest in playing musical instruments was to be held in the Swans’ Club next month. Swans’ Club was one of those places where the elite and aristocratic section of the city gathered from time to time on different occasions. It organized art exhibitions, cultural shows, literary meets, dance performances and play staging from time to time. Just taking part in one such event will make her talent visible to the outer world.

The urge to participate in the contest was irresistible. She had made an online registration and received a confirmation letter about the enlistment of her name for the competition. One major impediment she had to circumvent now was to convince Ashok to let her participate in the contest which she knew would need a lot of persuasion. And the next was to get a proper coach to train her professionally. She was confident that with serious and regular practice she could leave most of the contestants behind. In fact, winning or losing the competition did not matter to her more than performing before the people of top echelon and gaining herself an identity of a skilled sitarist. There was a private music institute not far from her house that was not very rigid about admitting novice singers and instrument-players any time of the year for a temporary period on monthly payment basis. She could join there as a trainee, say for a month, and get her music finetuned. Practicing under the supervision and guidance of a master would bring polish to her music. She was excited at the thought of stepping on to the stage and perform before the elite segment of the society.

But, would Ashok let her? That was the million-dollar question and she shrank away from it. Yet she was determined to convince Ashok whatever it took her.

Ashok might compel her to withdraw her name from the list, she doubted, but she had decided to give it a try, hoping desperately that he would let her have her chance at least for this one time.

‘Would you give me something I ask?’ she asked him guardedly in an intimate moment of their togetherness.

‘Why such a silly question? Just name it.’ Ashok said touching her lips tenderly with his index finger.

Sudha hedged.

‘Tell me. You know everything mine is yours too.’

‘It is not about a ‘thing’

Ashok propped himself up on a pillow. ‘What is it? Why so much suspense?’ he smiled. Emboldened by his reassuring smile Sudha revealed her secret to him. She told him about her getting registered for the contest and her need to practice in a professional way.

Ashok looked thoughtfully at her for a minute or so, letting the matter sink in. ‘Why did not you ask me before registering yourself? He sounded more hurt than annoyed.

‘You were away at Hyderabad,’ Sudha lied. ‘I did not want to disturb you. They closed it before you returned.’

‘Will you not participate if I say no?’ he asked, scanning the reaction on her face. Sudha’s face fell. ‘How foolish I had been to think that he would permit me to partake in the contest.’ She cursed herself.

‘Do not look so crestfallen. Join the contest if you are so very interested.’ He said resignedly. Sudha’s heart was beating fast. She wanted to get her other wish granted before Ashok changed his mind. but before she spelt it out Ashok broke in. ‘But no training at the music institute. That institute does not have a good repute. Practice at home as much as you want.’

Sudha knew how rigid he could be in such matters and did not pursue it further.

‘Do not look the gift horse in the mouth’ she consoled herself. ‘It was enough that Ashok did give her the permission.

It needed a miracle to compete with veterans without practicing under a professional, Sudha thought in dismay. Ashok had agreed to let her partake in the contest, but that would not help her much unless he allowed her to join the music school, at least for a few days. Ashok had conveniently evaded the accusation of not fulfilling a long-nourished wish of his wife, and at the same time had put her in a tricky spot where she would be compelled to withdraw herself from the scene of the contest. Wasn’t this a form of a concealed denial? Sudha felt miserable.

The early autumn air was cool. Sudha stood in the porch watching absently the leaves dropping at intervals from the tall deodars by the compound walls. The leaves were like flakes off her dented dreams, she thought gloomily, falling helplessly from their ebullient heights to rot in the ground!

Sudha sighed deeply.

Then she saw her.

She was standing in front of the main gate, looking about herself uncertainly. Sudha wondered who the woman could be. She wandered towards the gate and opened it.

‘Oh, I am so sorry!’ the woman muttered apologetically, ‘but you have nice flowers here.’ She flashed an appreciative smile at Sudha. Sudha smiled back and gave the lady a quick up and down. The lady had the aura of an aristocratic birth about her. She was fair and had a glowing face with attractive, chiseled features. She was clad in a spotless white sari of silk and had a string of pearl around her delicate throat. A pair of pearl ear-drops hung from her ears that enhanced the loveliness of her face. Sudha was visibly impressed. She gave the lady a welcoming smile. ‘No need to be sorry madam, do come in please,’ she said and held the gate open to let the lady in.

‘Please have a seat,’ Sudha pointed to a basket chair in the porch. ‘Thank you’ the lady in white said as she lowered herself into the chair.

‘I have never seen you before’, Sudha said. ‘Are you a new arrival in this area?’

‘Yes. We have shifted here just recently. We live in the next block. I have joined as a music teacher in the Symphony musical institute.’

Sudha was instantly interested. ‘A music teacher! Was it a coincidence?’ A feeble streak of hope illumined the darkness that was threatening to envelope her thoughts.

‘Do you teach your pupils singing?’

‘I happen to teach them playing stringed instruments like sitar, violin sarod and the sort, that seems to be my forte,’ her lips curled in an amusing smile.

Should she tell her about the music contest? Will it be nice to seek help from someone who is a total stranger?

‘Do you sing?’

‘No. But I can play sitar.’

‘Really!! How nice! I will love to listen to you playing someday.’

That decided Sudha. ‘What was the harm in confiding in her, after all she too loved to play sitar.’ Sudha argued with herself.

‘What is the matter?’ The lady in white looked at Sudha curiously. ‘Why do you look so worked up? Are you in some kind of problem?’

Sudha was in no need of further persuasion. She opened her heart to the lady, her desire to partake in the competition, her desperate need for an expert who could train her in the short span of about a fortnight and her husband's reluctance to let her attend classes in the institute.

'Is that all?' The lady in white smiled. 'That is not such a big issue. If you say so I can give you a lesson at your home for fifteen days.'

Sudha's eyes opened wide in surprise. It was indeed a miracle. Someone dropping in from the blue to fulfil her wish!!

'If that is not a trouble to you!!' she responded excitedly. 'I will be indebted to you.'

'You must not think like that,' the lady said. 'I can gladly spare an hour or two for you, and that too when you are in such a dire need of a professional coaching.'

Sudha was overwhelmed in gratitude. The lady in white was a godsend.

'I will get some coffee for you,' she said getting up. The lady in white stood up too. 'Some other time,' she said. 'I will be coming here regularly for a fortnight. Won't I?' she said. 'I can come before my classes at the institute begin. Will from five to six in the morning be a convenient time for you?' she asked, moving towards the front gate.

'It is your convenience that is primary, madam,' Sudha returned feeling thankful. 'You can come at any time of your choice.' She had begun to address the lady as madam. After all she will be her music teacher from tomorrow onwards.

'Madam please do not mind. May I know your name?'

'I have a long name,' the lady gave a short laugh. Her laughter rang in the calm autumn air like a peal of silver bells. 'Sharada Soumya Subhadarshini', but you can shorten it to Soumya. My friends call me by that name.'

She took leave off Sudha and walked away. Sudha kept standing by the gate watching her disappear into a side lane. The lady who said her name was Soumya did not turn to look back.

'She must be in need of some extra money.' Ashok remarked when Sudha told him about Soumya. 'Why else would she want to give someone a private coaching?'

'But you are lucky enough to find someone like her,' he added sardonically.

'I did not find her.' Sudha objected. 'She found me. She is a godsend.'

'Ok, ok .. practice your lessons with your godsend. Ashok returned impatiently. 'But be careful not to disturb the peace of the neighbourhood with the trin... trin... trin of that instrument.'

Sudha ignored the sarcasm in his voice. She was elated. At least destiny has given her a chance to prove her worth to the world outside.

She lay awake in bed till late into night visualising herself performing in the club, strumming the sitar with deft fingers, the sound growing louder and louder, filling every nook and corner of the hall.

She felt a bit dizzy getting up at 4 in the morning. But after a cold bath and her routine ritual of worship followed by sipping a cup of hot tea, she felt energized to start her new journey.

She made a small garland of white Tacoma flowers and put it on the idol of goddess Saraswati that stood on a corner table in the living room, and lighted a brass lamp and burnt a few incense sticks. The room was filled with an enchanting fragrance.

True to her words Soumya arrived exactly at five. She took the sitar into her lap and touched it fondly. 'It is an expensive one,' very sophisticated.' She said her eyes gleaming in admiration.

She ran her fingers on the string with the expertise of a professional and the soft music of the sitar resonated through the house. Not stopping at that it floated out of the door and filled the garden, stroking the leaves of the deodars and whispering charms into the buds to open up. It streamed about in a mellifluous helix, and then spiralled up and up into the serene infinity of the autumn sky.

Sudha had heard a number of expert sitarist but they did not have this rapture in their music. It was pure magic. Sudha sat hypnotized, sucking in the nectar of the music, transported to a wonderland beyond the bounds of her mortal existence..

Soumya stopped playing. Sudha was flung down from the height of exultation to the drab environs of her living room.

'Now it is your turn, Soumya said handing her back the sitar. She pointed out the mistakes Sudha made, patiently manoeuvring her fingers on the strings with an expertise that was more than professional. Sudha wondered what such a genius was doing in the music school here. She was a gifted artiste made for greater achievements. But she did not say that to her.

Soumya was a punctual coach. She would arrive exactly at five every morning without fail. Within a span of a week Sudha was able to bring the professional polish to her art.

'Soumya is not only an expert but also an indulgent teacher. She has induced confidence in me,' Sudha told Ashok at the dinner table. 'What is the big deal?' He returned 'Won't you be paying her a handsome fee?

'Why does Ashok have to weigh everything against money? And he did not ask me even once how I was progressing.'

She sighed deeply. Ashok's apathy had slashed a sizable portion off her excitement. But she would not let her confidence yield to such minor cutbacks.

The next week passed. Sudha had never missed a lesson and practiced them religiously.

It was Saturday. The last day of her training. The contest was scheduled for Sunday. Sudha was torn with a mixed feeling of expectation and misgivings, hope and fear. She and Soumya sat in the porch discussing the meticulous details of tomorrow's performance. She listened with rapt attention, serious and undeviating, trying to keep in mind the last minute advises and tips of Soumya.

'I will take your leave now, dear,' Soumya said rising to her feet. 'All my good wishes are with you. Perform confidently, forget where you are and who are your listeners. Just play on, heart within and God overhead.' She pressed Sudha's arm lightly. Sudha fidgeted with the envelope she was holding. It felt so embarrassing to offer money to Soumya. In the past half-month Soumya had become more than a closed and trusted friend. But she had taught her and it is imperative on the part of Sudha to pay her back though she knew that no amount of money can recompense the help Soumya had rendered. She had pulled Sudha out of the dark vortex of despair to a luminous land of hope.

'I may win, I may lose; that is my destiny but I will forever be indebted to you. You will be forever there in my memory as my adorable Samaritan.' Sudha's voice was wet with emotion.

'A small return gift for all your help.' She said at last, summoning up courage and held out the envelope to Soumya.

'What is this, Sudha? You know I cannot accept money from you. How could you...?'

'It is not money,' Sudha broke in. 'Please do not see it that way. It is my *guru-dakshina*. Do not you know that a pupil cannot make the best use of the teachings of the guru without paying the *guru-dakshina*?'

'You have an unbeatable point there,' Soumya smiled her enchanting smile. 'Ok. I will accept it as my *guru-dakshina*. The teacher's fee.' She took the envelope and moved out of the gate. Sudha stood watching her back till she disappeared into the side-lane, and walked back to the living room. The brass-lamp at the feet of goddess Saraswati burnt clear and bright and the room was still fragrant from the scent of the flowers and the incense sticks.

'Sudha Prasad!' The announcement of her name came over the speaker.

Loud whispers resonated across the auditorium. Sudha was a fresh candidate. Most of the others were regular participants in such contests organized by the Swans' Club. The audience was interested to listen this new and apparently novice participant playing. Six contestants had given their performance before her and each of them had gathered their share of applaud and commendation. She sat in the small chamber adjoining the auditorium along with other contestants, waiting for her name to be called.

She stepped on to the stage, her heart throbbing. She was not exactly nervous but a bit ill at ease and her palms felt clammy. To her annoyance she realized that sweat beads had formed on her forehead and behind her ears. She walked over cautiously to the centre stage.

Her sitar was placed on an ornate and longwooden board. She bowed down respectfully to the judges and the audience and sat down by the instrument. She said a silent prayer and lifted the sitar to her lap. Suddenly, like a flash of light, the beautiful face of Soumya floated past her eyes. She squinted in to the audience-space hidden partially in a flimsy darkness. Soumya was not there among the audience.

Sudha remembered what Soumya had said about ‘forgetting where you are’ and took a deep breath. She tightened the nuts and ran her fingers gently on the strings. And she began to play, her eyes closed, lost in the music, forgetting the world around her. The music reverberated in the large auditorium taking the judges by surprise who now put the headphones on and edged forward in their chairs. The audience clapped at intervals as the music, like petals dropping from the throbbing strings drifted delicately across the auditorium. She played on... and gently, tenderly brought the music to its close.

The large auditorium echoed with the loud clapping that refused to stop for a long moment. She sat on the stage, the sitar on her lap, feeling spent but elated, waiting for the clapping to stop. She rose to her feet, bowed again and stepped down.

As she stood up feeling a bit shaky in the legs, and light headed she saw Soumya again among the audience. It was just a flash. And then she disappeared. ‘She must have let me know of it if she was coming to watch the event. I might be mistaking someone else for her, or may be, it is an optical illusion,’ Sudha thought and entering the waiting chamber she took her seat back on the bench.

All the contestants were there, waiting, the nervous expectancy writ large on their faces. Half an hour passed. Sudha was feeling edgy, though she kept on consoling herself that the judges as well as the audience were pleased with her performance and she was now regarded as a good sitarist though not an expert like her contenders.

The anchor’s voice resonated in the small chamber.

‘Our esteemed judges are now done with the evaluation of the performances. I have the final result with me. I request all the contestants to kindly come upon the stage.’

Sudha followed the other contestants on to the stage. There was a loud clapping from the audience. Sudha felt all her senses going numb. The voice of the anchor was a blurred, indistinct sound. Her palms were sweating badly and she felt cold.

‘Mrs. Rita Mehta, is declared here as the winner of the third prize. I would like respected Mr. Subhas Burman, the Director of the club to felicitate Mrs. Mehta and gift her the trophy. The hall was loud with clapping and cheers as Rita Mehta received the trophy.

The performance was repeated with the winner of the second place, Sudhanshu Ray. He received his trophy from the President of the club. The cameras kept clicking nonstop.

There was an electrifying pause.

Every one waited in bated breath for the name of the winner of the first position to be announced. Sudha had lost whatever little hope she had pinned to her luck. She would have been more than happy if at least she was selected for the third position or even a co-winner. She was sure that she had performed better than Rita Mehta. Perhaps, she thought resignedly, her perseverance and diligence were not enough. She knew that there would not be a next time. Ashok would never allow her to partake in such a contest again. Tears welled up in her eyes. Her legs felt unusually heavy and she wished the charade of felicitation to get over soon so that she could get back home, to the solitude of her bedroom and weep her heart out into the pillow.

‘Sudha Prasad!!’

The voice of the anchor rang across the auditorium, loud and clear.

There was a moment of stupefied silence, then the auditorium reverberated with a crescendo of applause and cheers. ‘I now request honourable Arun Kumar, Additional Secretary, Department of Art and Culture to present the trophy to madam Sudha Prasad.

Sudha felt faint. She stood rooted to the stage-floor, staring at the anchor in utter disbelief.

‘Congratulations madam, the anchor said, smiling at her. Please come over to the centre.’

Everything seemed to be happening in a dream, the Additional Secretary of Art and Culture Department holding out the large shinning trophy to her, she receiving the trophy from him, numerous cameras flashing blindingly and the audience cheering her up...

She had a blurred memory of what followed. She was requested to speak a few sentences on her musical journey, and she standing there with the trophy speaking about her struggle and the timely help from a professional who was a godsend and without whose help her success would have remained a distant dream.

As she stepped down the stage, dazed and euphoric she saw Somya standing by one of the exit doors and waving at her, her soft, beatific smile glued to her face. Sudha blinked and looked again. Soumya was gone!!

‘She has possessed my mind. I am yet to come out of the hypnosis her music had cast over my soul. That is why I keep seeing her time and again. I must meet her tomorrow and express my gratitude,’ she decided as she walked towards the exit. And, there was Ashok standing outside, his face beaming. It was a shocking surprise but pleasant. She had never expected to see Ashok, of all people, here. ‘Congratulations, ‘ Ashok greeted her

happily, putting his arm around her. I did not know you are such a brilliant artiste,' he exclaimed, genuine pride dripping from his voice. Tears streamed down Sudha's eyes.

They returned home after a lavish dinner at a restaurant of Ashok's choice.

'It all happened because of Soumya. I wouldn't have ventured to enter the contest otherwise, despite my experience and confidence.' Ashok looked at his wife thoughtfully. Sudha felt ill at ease for mentioning Soumya and her expertise again. Ashok happened to accept Soumya's talent slightly grudgingly. 'You are right,' Ashok replied agreeably, to Sudha's surprise. 'You must meet her personally at her home and thank her.' It was indeed a marvellous night. Everything was happening as she had wished them to happen. 'Are you cross with me,' she asked guardedly, for joining the contest without asking for your permission?'

'Why do you ask that now? Do you doubt the genuineness of my happiness? Do you think I am pretending?' Ashok sounded hurt.

'No, no.. It is not like that. Please forgive me. I asked that because I am still feeling a bit guilty inwardly.'

'You should not be, my dear. It is I who should feel bad because I have always tried to curb your passion.'

He took Sudha into his arms.

Sudha had decided to meet Soumya the next day. But her parents arrived without notice and she remained preoccupied with them for the next couple of days. She hoped Soumya to turn up to know about the result of the contest. But she did not. Nor did she make a phone call to inquire about her result. Many of her friends, acquaintances and relatives called to congratulate her. But not Soumya. Was she really in the venue that evening? Why did she leave without meeting her. She must have known the result from the newspapers, Sudha guessed. At least she could have paid a courtesy visit. What was the matter with her? Sudha wondered vaguely.

Sudha set out searching for Soumya after her parents left. Soumya had said she lived in the next block, and she always disappeared into the street that branched off to the right.

She wandered uncertainly into the street that slithered to the right looking for Soumya's house. Soumya had said that she lived in this street, but she had not mentioned the exact location. It felt embarrassing to scan every house on the street to spot Soumya's. A few passers by were looking at her curiously. 'Are you looking for someone?' A gentleman, who stood by an open gate of a house to her left asked.

'I am sorry to bother you,' Sudha said apologetically. 'Would you be knowing where the music teacher Sharada Soumya Subhadarshini lived? She is a music teacher at the Symphony Music Institute. She has moved in here recently.'

‘Music teacher? Sharada Soumya ... and whatever..! The gentleman’s face wore a vague look. ‘Never heard the name. And as far as I know there is no music teacher living in the vicinity.’

‘Thank you,’ Sudha moved forward, hoping someone else must be knowing where Soumya’s place was. It was possible not many people knew about her since she was a new arrival here.

To her disappointment no one in the street could give her a clue to find Soumya’s house. ‘Perhaps she mentioned some other street and I have misunderstood it. But she always takes the turning to the right.’ The wasted efforts had made her vexed and upset.

The morning sun had climbed up to quite a height and was shining bright. Sudha decided to return.

‘I will go to the Symphony Musical Institute and meet her there. I don’t think she will mind that.’ She made up her mind as she walked back home.

‘Sharada Soumya Subhadarshini...? That is a name hard to remember, and to forget too,’ the office clerk in the institute said, an amused smile flickering on his face. Sudha felt blood rising to her temples. ‘I am serious. You have a teacher here by that name. She has recently joined this institute. Could you please let me know where can I find her?’

The office clerk looked apologetic. ‘I am sorry ma’am. I did not mean offence. But we have no teacher by that name. and no new one, as you say, has joined in the last six months. You have been wrongly informed.’

Sudha stared at the office clerk in surprise.

‘Wrong information? Had Soumya lied to her about her job in the music institute? Why? It was hard to believe. But if she told her the truth why nobody knew her? Neither in the institute nor in the block where she said she lived? Why did she have to do that?’

Sudha walked back home, puzzled and disturbed by the unsolved riddle of Soumya’s mysterious disappearance.

Another fortnight passed. There was no news of Soumya, not even a phone call. The festive occasion of Durga Puja was nearing. The autumn air was serene and jubilant. Everyone was in a mood of celebration. Sudha’s parents -in -law arrived from village. They used to visit Sudha and Ashok routinely during the occasion. Her father and mother -in -law congratulated her effusively on her success. Sudha was so happy at their reaction that she broke into tears when her mother-in-law took her into her arms. She had forgotten all her grievances against her husband and his parents. Life seemed to have taken a new turn. And Soumya had a great contribution towards that, she thought, feeling obliged. She remembered Soumya’s beautiful face, the divine glow in it and the hypnotic music that spilled out from the sitar when she touched the strings. The memory cast a shadow of gloom

on her joyous mood. Why did she come to her life almost out of nowhere and why did she go out of it so mysteriously? Sudha had no answer to the questions.

‘Will you not get the house cleaned and dusted before the puja?’ mother in law asked.

‘Yes Ma, I have asked the housemaid to bring an extra help with her tomorrow and get it done.’ Sudha answered.

It was a practice in most Hindu families to get their houses spruced up before the festival of Durga Puja. The housemaid and her cousin took up the responsibility and engaged themselves assiduously in the task.

By afternoon they had tidied up the bedrooms and the hall. Only the living room was left to be dusted and reshuffled. To dust and clean the living room was a tricky job because it needed extra care to handle the delicate and artistic assortments displayed on the shelves and the glass cabinets, the wall hangings, and several other decorative pieces. The carpet also needed a thorough cleansing. Sudha helped the maid and her companion in wiping the dust off the expensive statues of bronze and bell metal and polishing them. The sun had set and the day light was fading fast. The tidying up was at its final stage. Only one item, the idol of goddess Saraswati which stood on a round-topped table of ebony in one corner of the living room was left to be brushed up. The glossy white, elegant statue of the goddess made a striking and pleasant contrast to the dark ebony. ‘I will dust it,’ Sudha said to the housemaid who was advancing towards the statue carrying the micro fibre-duster. She took the duster from the hand of the maid and gently brushed the dust off the statue.

The corner-edge of something like a folded paper under the statue caught Sudha’s eye. She tilted the heavy statue slightly and looked. Wedged under the pedestal of the statue there was an envelope of light brown. She pulled it out gently. The light in the room was dimming. She looked closely at the envelope and turned it up and down against her hands trying to guess what could be inside it.

It struck her like a sudden flash of lightning.

It was the envelope she had given to Soumya.

Wide eyed in surprise, her heart thumping erratically, she pulled out the contents inside with a sweating hand.

Inside it were the fifteen thousand rupees she had given to Soumya, thousand rupees per day for fifteen days. Soumya’s remuneration, her *guru-dakshina*.

How did the envelope find its way here? Sudha looked at the money in disbelief. She remembered clearly that Soumya had put the envelope in her handbag before taking leave of her that morning. Had she sneaked into the house sometime when both Ashok and Sudha were out of home? But that was impossible. They always locked the doors and windows of the house securely before going out. How then.....?

She recalled her futile search for Soumya's house in the next street, and in the music institute. She recalled her glowing face by the exit door of the auditorium. The brief flashes of her face which she had reasoned out as passing hallucinations resulting from an obsessive desire to see Soumya watching her performance.

Who was Soumya, the lady in white?

Sudha looked at the idol of the goddess settled on her seat of white lotus, cradling the veena in her lap. There was the same beatific smile on her face like Soumya's. The goddess looked hazy and blurry to her eyes now blinded with tears.

Her mind refused to accept it but she knew now who the lady in white was!! ■

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A Kite's Plight

K.V. Raghupathi

Tirupati, A.P.

Scary Dream

Sumitra Mishra

Bhubaneswar, Odisha

I'm running madly
Holding her hand tightly in mine
Pulling, dragging her into the unknown.

The ground is uneven
Rocks, dead branches, old leaves
Smell of damp earth on my nose.

She is frightened, crying
I give her a pill to keep her quiet.

As I carry her, too heavy though,
Drag my body
Oh! A river in front of us!

But I can't swim
I hear footsteps chasing us
Then a few shots
Not loud like firecrackers
But crisp like the snapping of a branch
I hear voices behind us.

I am floating
No more inside my body
Somewhere in the air
Sweat, tears.... I hit a stone
Flounder and fall,
I feel the harsh hands on my arms
She is snatched Away....
We come apart
I feel the darkness devouring us. ■

The shooting structures
thwarting my God-given freedom
I cannot fly with no wing power, above;

The rising ploughing blood-sun
and the sinking ship in the dusk
I cannot see,
but only the shielded
hip-hopping tall slanting shadows;

The wind winks on my wings
and smog blurs my vision
to land within the vicinity
as every inch is speckled with concrete
obelisk-like;

The call of my palls faint
in the din of whirring, humming, and
honking
of the crowded roads and lanes;

I cannot build my nest
on dusted wearied trees
of the fading city;

Now I lay half-buried in bleeding smoke
with a rupture in ligament and necrosis
as I hit the half-broken billboard. ■

Mentor

Debendra Kumar Bauri

Rayagada, Odisha.

I wanted to fly high
You gave me wings
I wanted to dive deep

You gave me gills
To breathe

I wanted to run fast
You gave me wheels
To roll

You taught me
How to paint dreams
On the open sky

I filled my bag
With the collected thrills
From every catch of the rainbow
In my fishing net

When the night opens
Stars wishpear
You are not a mentor
You are my path
My guiding star
An open book of
Wisdom and treasure. ■

You gave us Hope

Sai Prakash
Kakinada, A.P.

Like a beacon of light
You stood tall
Spreading hope and light
Paving path to many
To follow in your footsteps
An art and language rarely rewarded
You are the torch bearer for many
Who being Indians
Write in English
An art rarely appreciated and recognized

You showed light to the wandering souls
Writing poetry in a foreign language

That one-day we too can garner glory
I am not referring to the awards you won
But the confidence you instilled in each bard

How else can I express my sincere gratitude
Writing an elegy from the bottom of my
heart

Oh! Poet, philosopher and guide
As you leave on to your eternal journey
I offer my floral tributes
May your pious soul find it's rightful place
at the Almighty's lotus feet ■

Crocodile's Tears

Shiv Shankar Singh Thakur
Madhubani, Bihar

Everyman's a fighter as he
Keeps suffering silently,
Grievously day by day
Without any grudge against
The destiny, against the lot
Subsiding and swallowing pains
One after another, years after years
Encountering layers of emotions;

Sensitizing the toughest hearts
Those who nev'r cried ever
Also showed crocodile's tears
Of course in the fox's skins;

Saw all the colours of him in life
I won't have come to know his reality
Had I not come in this helpless
Situation, for the last time I guess;
It's a worn off memory not a part
Of this body, neither in my mental abode
He exists, nor will he in future be
A part of this cursed, soulless soul. ■

The Light Shows the Way

Himanshu Bhushan Jena,
Odisha

India kisses the dizzy celestial height
with wings of Chandrayan-3
marching towards a new era
of space exploration
A step towards knowledge explosion

What a perfection in our lunar mission!
What an ecstatic moment
with silvery smile!
What a historic moment that cherishes
crores and crores across the globe!

The voyage is on
The spirit is on fire
We are not between or behind the lines
but beyond the border, beyond the sky,
beyond space too....
No wonder, We are for the universe,
for the humanity and for the humility

The whole world witnesses
our vision and strength
The whole world adores the sacred blend
of our rich ancient wisdom and
modern science and technology

The light shows the way!
The light glorifies the day! ■

Bricks

Jernail S Aanand,
Punjab.

Bricks knew it well,
They were no different
From those which made these walls
And the houses across them.

They came from the same earth
Baked in the kiln
With same fire
And lined by the same bonded labour.

The cement had different brands
But how does it matter?
It's job is to keep the bricks
In good humour and happily glued.

A cement which the masters promoted
And gave huge subsidies
Was much in demand
Bricks wanted to try its power.

Every brick went for the new cement
Which however refused to work
Until it knew from which kiln
They were baked.

Bricks now realized they had
Sects and sects had their own principles
Who taught them
The lessons in isolation.

The was now infighting among the bricks
The walls crumbled
And the houses caved in
Turning the entire city into debris. ■

He Who was a Poet

(a tribute to Jayanta Mahapatra)

Original in Urdu : **Gulzar**

English rendering : Rakhshanda Jalil

He who was a poet used to stay silent
And say the strangest things
With his eyes trained at one's ears
he would listen
To the sound of mute silences
He would collect the shadows
of the moon
And the damp drops of light
Filling the dry leaves of the night
in his cupped hands
He would rattle them
From this dense forest of Time
He would pluck ripe-unripe moments
Yes, he, that strange poet
Would wake up in the night and
Raising on his elbows
Kiss the moon on its chin
I heard he departed
from the earth yesterday. ■

Sublimity

Harekrishna Mohanta,
Odisha

Moon is the God of charm & coldness,
So beautiful, so blissful essence..
During our childhood days,
Every mother shows Him,
the Monarch of the skys..
Do you know..?
Lily blooms looking at Him..
Moon is the God of sublimity..
The God who never gets angry.
He is always sincere and honest.

No matter if he's not in full every fortnight.
He teaches us to remain with good looks.
Even if the ageing influences..
How..?
By being sublime and kind.
A kind person is always with good looks.
He's adored by all humans.
Look at Mahatma Gandhi or Jesus,
Abraham Lincoln or the Buddhas.
They are always having nice looks.
Because of spiritual essence..
Kindness and sublime thoughts.
No anger, no vengeance..
Scientists have discovered gold mines,
On the moon surfaces..
But the Moon is still kind and generous,
No sorrows, no angers.
Lunar rays are still cool,
Teaching us sublimity unparallel...
Be like the Moon,
So benevolent, so serene..
I always try to be like the Moon.
During my life's short span... ■

Bharat in us

Gajanan Mishra,
Odisha

Bharat, eternal Bharat, changeless Bharat
and ever-changing Bharat here it is with us
to make a new world, peaceful world.

Season of Bharat is in knowledge
and is here with us and all over the world
each one is looking at Bharat
with a new hope, new dream.

Bharat is here in us and we reassure
ourselves to stay in truth and in non-
violence and tackle the current situations.

Bharat is in our blood, in our soul
and we are ready to take responsibility
to stay united all for continuance
of life and livelihood.

Bharat is the truth, we are all the fruits.
We grow we rise but not to perish.
In and out we are in moon, we are in sun.

We have our own tastes, own sights,
own sounds and smell.
We are well and good in Bharat.
So also Bharat is fine in us
with a new look. ■

How Far is Vietnam's Halong from Chilika?

Original in Odia - **Prasanna Kumar Patasani**
English rendering - Debiprasad Dash

From the limitless Skies
To expanding Universe
Among the crowd of countries
Vietnam was once blazed with terror

With the rising sun
Fields painted yellow
Dancing crops looks gold in colour
Wind singing National Anthem all along

Where fools must have feared
Forgetting above all there is GOD
On Earth where the vast ocean resides
It's a reflection, the limitless sky

The early sunrise between the mountain
ranges
beholding the meadows
Murmuring river flowing in between

Once was turned red in blood

Like fire in the water
Like fire among the souls
Once these beauteous forms
Turned to burnt gunpowder's smoke

What a terrific site to see
Lightening of this war struck on land
Thunderstorm stopped the beating of
the hearts
All there was piles of corpses on the road

There was no sign of villages
As if they were never traced on maps
No one left to hear pains and sufferings All
there were cries and rants

Uncontrolled flames, uncontrolled thoughts
Everything chartered in the devastating war
Nationalism stood up
Burnt in youth's voices

In that sad realization
Only the rants of lost humanity
could be heard
Where once nature was at its bliss

Now the gunpowder has trapped it all
It lost all its serenity
Bowling to war now portraying no action

With reckless deforestation
Like choking neck of nature
These mere humans what they think
They are only digging their coffin by war

Humans thrive to breathe
Need love and care
But being selfish in this feverish world
They all lost self-control

How a soul will survive
If kept hungry
If anger and envy are food
Then morality will be lost among all

There are now Gallant of roses
Were dancing with the flirting breeze
No boy is alive to admire their beauty
Oh! What a pity.

Where the youth has gone
The bloodsheds tell the story
All died in that great war
And some are busy in making their country

Among these struggles to survive
The massacres people have witnessed
Vietnamese still stood firm
To defeat America again in the war

Clouds hover above restlessly
Summers pass with many winters
Sometimes it rains unexpectedly
All ready to die for the nation
Rather than dying by the landmines
It's better to fight for your rights

Only the moon seems to hang
in the lonely sky
Now in the unrest fire in youth

Death; the real truth
However, darkness surpass life
When it all comes to an end
Still, people struggle to live

Vietnam is a name
For so many struggles

Come! Charge! Join the crowd

Let's fight against poverty
Extortion and let's shout

It's a continuous fight
A war that will never stop
Till America and its capitalization stays
Their restlessness will survive
Whose name is Vietnam

When the war is going to stop
Till now America never fails to invade
Through the sea, it tries to enter
And Vietnamese stood to fight them back

The burning flame inside
Gives strength to us
Ranting of the people we lost
Could be heard in 1910 songs

The whole world celebrates its birthday
Rich smiles with cakes and creams
on their faces
Poor longs for food, clothes, and shelter

It's us who is a foreigner in our own country
Following their culture, we forget ours
The mirror reflects the shape of
modernization
And we like poppets fell in its trap

Just look around
While rich celebrates birthday
The poor die in hunger
They don't have shelter to live in
Blanket to take cover
Hunger sleeps in that
Hungry stomach
where the face daren't speak a word

Have you ever seen Chilika
The beauty no one has seen before

With 428 types of birds
Fly with the first light of the sun
Creating an unforgettable moment

The motorboats and its pollution
Still couldn't stop the bud to bloom
Birds chants in the morning
And bids valediction in the eve

Whoever has seen Chilika
Could imagine the beauty of Halong
The beauty where no capitalization resides
Where mermaids enchant the beauty
The stilly night sky sleeps on its water

The boats slowly cross the mountains
Where blush resides with bliss
In silence stars chatters
And their lustful desires
Rests on the lap of mountains
My dear love, Oh! Chilika
You're the real beauty in this whole world
In your love, I forgot
The counts of days and nights
When the morning turns into eve

In the sea of Halong
Once Dragon came and protected the land
America lost the war
Dragon called for peace
He first landed in this lonely sea
This land embraced it in

The Vietnamese who loved their land
Will never be defeated
Till dragons protected their land

Someone who might have loved
Chilika truly
could understand how beautiful Halong is

Among the mountain ranges, the island's
greenery beheld the stars and throws them
away

When the first sunlight kisses its scars
When Halong wakes up
Chilika's hard sun rays brushes up
birds feathers
Birds seem to play
In the cradle of clouds

You just fall in love
With these beauteous forms
Be it Chilika or Halong
But just like sometimes
You fail to understand your lover

Dear Chilika!
You were so pure when you were a roe
But now I can see the
Curse in the darkest hour

The day comes with the sunrise and its bliss
Nights fall in lustful desires
In the ships on Halong's bay
In numerous submarines
Or in Goa-Daman Diu's islands
Everywhere you can see
Nights drunkenness and naked women
dance

When the season's change
I can see the turns of birds in Chilika
The scenery of these serene scene changes

Halong's restless struggle
Where the muse of war never fades
It keeps Vietnamese stay awake
For any intruder who enters the sea

Humans and their thirst
Thirst for body could be seen in Halong

Whereas Chilika is trying
to keep her safe from Mafias
I could see the fish-nets
Trying to steal different types of fishes
To sell in the black market

Dolphin, the queen of the sea
Plays in Chilika's salty water
And adores its beauty
Estuary where the lake meets the sea
Such confluence couldn't be found
in Halong

But Halong's struggle gives the message
They want peace and longs for happiness
But this 'Lavanyavati' Halong
Seems cursed with lust and ecstasy
As if there is no end to the thirst for body

Sometimes it stands like a virgin
In reality, no chastity left within

Sea, a dream, an angel
Upon which reflects the red flag of freedom
with early sunrise
Boat of clouds slowly moving on waves
Where war never ends
There is no end to love and nature
Days and nights come in turns till centuries
In that way, there will be no end
to Nights in Chilika and Halong

When I see birds bathing in the sun
There standing in Halong
I see Devotees bathing in Manasarovar
Kailash Mountain covered up with snow
Oh! What a pious scene to behold upon

What I will write about Halong
I fall short of words
Chilika is Halong, Halong is Chilika

That's I feel in every way

Here standing in Chilika I see Halong
Sea meeting each other
Same sun rays
Chirping of birds
Beauty at its bliss
Stilly nights with dazzling stars

How far is Vietnam's Halong
from Chilika? ■

A tribute to Jayanta Mahapatra

Sampath Kumar

Kolkata, W.B.

The defiant pyre confronts the elements
the rain and the heavy winds
there lies the great poet
mingling with nature
through fire, bonding with earth
the leaping flames seem joyful
mingling his spirits with the wind
freeing him from the earthy pains forever

I watch from a distance
wondering if a true poet can really die
his mortal remains
will soon return from where it came
the holy ashes sprinkled in the flowing rivers
the words and thoughts of the poet are ready
to reveal the beautiful immortal tapestries
his memories will live forever. ■

Why Stories Work

The Evolutionary and Cognitive Roots of the Power of Narrative

Author - Somdev Chatterjee

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Right from the beginning of human civilization story-telling has been a continuous process. Hence, story-telling is not somewhat new; it is infact an age-old myth, and this myth however has been well worked out by Somdev Chatterjee in his book, **Why Stories Work: The Evolutionary and Cognitive Roots of the Power of Narrative**. Drawing from inter-disciplinary sources and discourses such as anthropology, sociology, psychology and philosophy, Chatterjee's book has emphasised the power, importance and structure of stories in human life and living in an innovative way.

The book is devided into four chapters such as: (1) Tell It like your Life Depends on it; (2) Learning to Inhabit Unreal Worlds; (3) Maps of Experienced Reality; and (4) How Stories Work. The 1st Chapter deals with humans that they, having been subject to evolutationary pressures, felt the need of communication, co-operation and shared knowledge for their survival and created evolutionary language and story-telling. However, stories in fact became a means of human survival and existence and also a complex phenomenon over time. The author very beautifully works out this aspect of stories by adopting Yuval Noah Harrari's understanding of 'inter-subjective realities' in his book, *Homo Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*. Stories, according to Chatterjee, are maps of experienced reality in a narrative form. This experienced reality opens up new avenues for meta reality. The function of story-telling also embraces the cocepts of 'memory conformity', 'memory bias', 'articulated knowledge and embodied knowledge'.

The second chapter, " Learning to Inhabit Unreal Worlds" is based on Richard Dawkins' idea of brain simulation as a learning tool. Simulations of social interaction give rise to consciousness and are in turn in narative form. However, simulations of social interaction generate an unreal/ fictional world. Humans like children respond and inhabit

these fictional worlds with fictional settings. This in fact is a play of narrative, giving pleasure and entertainment.

In the third chapter, “Maps of Experienced Reality”, Chatterjee is of the opinion that humans create narrative about what they observe and what matters to them. In other words, humans create narrative in terms of their value judgement for their living and survival. It is by virtue of the observations made by Chatterjee that there are certain strange worlds which humans never interact.

The fourth chapter, “How Stories Work” is very interesting and thought provoking. In this chapter Chatterjee emphasises and highlights the influence and importance of neuroscience on narrative form. The author takes recourse to cognitive psychology to justify his stand. In fact he talks of mirror neurons and how it operates in the human psyche.

The book is an exploration of story-telling mechanisms and strategies from the point of view of evolution and psychology. The innovative attempt the author has made in presenting the story of story-telling is highly laudable. He however does not stick to the traditional theoretical realms of story-telling. On the contrary, the author has put his ideas of story-telling in a very different and interesting way. Even though the book grounds on a separate footing, yet the content of the book is not so easy to grasp and decipher. ■

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Dt. 12.09.2018

Peer-reviewed Journals are at par with UGC Approved Journals

In a bid to make it easier for university and college teachers to earn points to enhance their research score for recruitment and promotion, the University Grants Commission has decided to treat all peer-reviewed journals at par with its own list of approved journals.

The recently-notified UGC minimum qualifications regulations make the point amply clear. The methodology for calculating academic/research score offers points for "research papers in peer reviewed or UGC listed journals". For each paper in languages, humanities, arts, social sciences, library, education, physical education, commerce, management and other related disciplines, teacher will earn 10 points.

The regulations say: "Assessment must be based on evidence produced by the teacher such as copy of publications..." This step has been taken to make recruitment and career growth easier for college and university teachers.