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**Department of English
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Department of English
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Rajasthan (India)

*This is my prayer to thee, my lord -
strike, strike at the root of penury in my heart.*

*Give me the strength lightly
to bear my joys and sorrows.*

*Give me the strength
to make my love fruitful in service.*

*Give me the strength
never to disown the poor
or bend my knees before insolent might.*

*Give me the strength to raise my mind
high above daily trifles.*

*And give me the strength
to surrender my strength
to thy will with love.*

--Rabindranath Tagore

Gitanjali

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Nature did never betray

The heart that loved her.

SO

Fill your paper with the breathing of your heart...

----- William wordswoth

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Editorial

During these unprecedented times of pandemic, where doors were shut to human touch and physical communication became difficult, then the world of letters opened its numerous windows that helped us to sustain in life. “They say that nothing can substitute books”.

We are indebted to the contributors who fought their complacency and continued to kindle their fire of curiosity and creativity during the times of adversity.

Once again, we felt overwhelmed with the response that reiterates that,

“We should not cease from exploration

And the end of all our exploring

Will be to arrive, where we started,

And know the place for the first time"

- T.S. Eliot, Four Quartets

As a connoisseur of expressions and a colossal amphora of variegated emotions and experiences are brought together in addition to vistas of thoughts in the collection of articles presented hereby in this issue **of Jodhpur studies in English: Vol. : XIX, 2021.**

It embodies, every word we believe in, what we aspire for; that is of maintaining **high order of excellence.**

We are sure that this may appeal the readership and offers an everlasting treat of perfumeries – in the Kaleidoscope of human experiences - panorama of reflective themes, moods that are intricately sowed in the garden of ideas by the Contributors to the delight of all those who embark on the literary voyage.

Happy reading!

Editors

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Damn Pigeons

-Meher Pestonji

She hated herself for hating pigeons. She had never hated anything living or dead before. But this pair crossed all limits. Helplessness fed frustration.

Frustration. A new word. Just a few months old. A dot in a lifetime of sixty-three. And to be frustration free for sixty-two years is to have had a good life. So she told herself day after day.

But the immediate impinges stronger than the past. Not the seven-month-immediate but the two-week-immediate. More specifically the last two days that slammed her prison walls shut.

Damn pigeons.

The first day they flew in she had smiled, made welcoming sounds. They grew embolden. Flew from windowsill to bookshelf, to couch, to the top of the cupboard as if the house belonged to them. While she flailed arms from her bed.

Helplessness. An alien experience. Medically imposed. Inescapable.

After the third day a fetid stench started pervading her room. Ruby had to clean up pigeon droppings each evening. Her poor sister, the pampered baby of the family who rarely entered the kitchen, was forced into domestic labour. Soup, food, fruit left on the bedside table. The daily newspaper. Library books. Day after day returning from office - to cook.

She had been the athlete in the family while her sister was the studious one. She won inter-school races, was the college cross-country champion two years in a row. Now confined to her four poster bed, facing a mahogany cupboard with a full-length mirror. Staring immobility back into her face.

Between bed and window was a book-shelf. Utility books. Dictionary, Atlas, a 2007 railway timetable, a Time and Talents cook-book, Readers Digest. A shelf above held equally staid curios. Cupid with arrow, ballerina, a gold-edged plate embossed with Buckingham Palace. A porcelaine dog with floppy ears.

It was not a bright room. The single window was almost ledge to ledge with the window on the second floor of the next building. Sunlight reached only between 10 and 11a.m. Shadows kept the room cool. That's why it attracted pigeons.

They were building a nest in the cupola of the fan above her bed. Straggly straw ends dangled over her head. "Shoo! Shoo! Shoo!" she cried wildly waving arms. The male cocked his head, looked into her eyes, then coolly proceeded to tuck the string in his beak into the mess over the fan.

Snubbed by a pigeon!

She was not one to tolerate insults. Not even from Jamie, her one-and-only love. Jamshed, but to her, Jamie. Now bald and paunchy, but rich, with an equally plump wife and a son who looked exactly like him.

When he called her 'castrating bitch' at a New Years Eve party twenty-seven years ago she dropped him. Made no allowance for the whiskey in his head. Refused apologies. She was The Inter-College Long Distance Champion, he still a struggling student. She would find a better catch.

But she didn't. And he went on with his life.

She was the first graduate in her family. Became sports mistress at a prestigious school. Training youngsters to extend body skills, take on challenges. Till she retired five years ago she had not taken a single sick leave in thirty-two years.

They should have given her a bonus for that.

Unappreciated. That's what she felt as she left the school compound on the last day. After a flurry of farewell parties from younger teachers. Including the one replacing her.

He had grown into the Branch Manager of an international bank. Earning more than her retirement package each month. But he had refused the posh premises offered as a perk, preferring to remain in the Parsi housing colony where they had grown up. With all Parsi neighbours like herself.

Every day she saw him drive past in his shiny sedan. Every day his wife strutted past, pointy heels clicking against asphalt, gold bangles gleaming in the sun. Every few days she had to hear laughter and music gurgling from parties in their flat.

She couldn't move away from her ancestral home. Property prices were far beyond their reach.

Instead she moulded his son, driving him hard. Called him to practice early mornings, made him shed puppy fat, toned his flabby muscles. He won inter-school sprint races. Became cross-country college champion. Like she had been.

Jamie avoided meeting her eye.

Her savings would see her through what was left of her time on Planet Earth. She had lived frugally for the proverbial rainy day. Had enough to be comfortable. So she thought. Till the damn accident.

Foolishly falling off a bus! Multiple fractures, surgeries, leg amputated. Hospitalisation wiped savings clean. Reduced her to passing days in bed. With boring books, boring TV serials. Remote control. The toy to play off and on games with.

That day a pigeon perched on the shelf with the floppy eared dog. The precious memento fell, shattered to smithereens. Adding insult to injury the pigeon flew to the horizontal pole above her bed waddling up and down over her feet. Furious, she thwacked the bed with her only weapon. A rolled newspaper. He flew to the crest of a cupboard from where he kept staring. Mocking her immobility.

Tears flowed. Why the dog? Why not the cupid with its aimless arrows? Why not the ballerina? Why not Buckingham Palace?

The dumb bird did not deserve an emotion as powerful as hate. But she was no longer satisfied flailing arms at the free bird. She had to taste blood.

She tore the newspaper into shreds. Rolled it into balls hard as marbles. Piled a small hill beside her pillow. And waited.

Soon the pair flew in, waddling and cooing as usual. She waited till they were perched on the bookshelf above the shattered remains of her dog. Then put a paper ball to the index finger of her

left hand, pulled back with the index finger of her right, raised hands to eye level, aimed and fired.

The paper pellet hit target on its wing. “Yee-aay!” she grinned, thrilled that a skill from her youth was still sharp.

The startled bird flew from bookshelf to cupboard dropping shit on her bed-sheet. “Filthy creature!” she yelled, ““That’s what you deserve for destroying Jamie’s gift! Breaking my heart again!”

She kept aiming pellets at the birds, grinning when some hit, grimacing when others fell harmlessly on the floor. The birds fluttered, enjoying the game. Kept returning to the ragged nest above the fan. Pigeons don’t take humans seriously when their only weapon is paper pellets. Stupid pigeons.

That evening Ruby came home to find the room strewn with paper pellets, cracked china, pigeon shit staining floor, walls, bed. She lost her cool.

“Enough is enough!” she cried angrily surveying the mess. “You’re going senile! Bad enough I have to look after you. Now clean this huge mess too! Tomorrow I’m shutting the window before going to work....”

Damn pigeons. Still cooing - outside her window....!

Literary Representation of Disease: A Study of Selected Works

-Loveleen

As the human race struggles with the outbreak of Covid 19, it must be remembered that disease has been a fairly common area of interest for literary writers. References have been made to the Antonine Plague (165-180CE), the Plague of Justinian (541-543 CE), and the Great Bubonic Plague in Europe (1346-1353), the Spanish Flu (1918-20) HIV (1981-) and the Asian Flu (1957-58), the Ebola virus disease (1976) and so on. It was Homer who first used the term epidemios for the returning travellers in Odyssey. The word was first advocated as a medical term in the 5th century BC in a treatise by Hippocrates titled Corpus Hippocraticum to mean “that which circulates or propagates in a country.” (Rey, Alain). For the Humanities in general and literature in particular, the emphasis has been on disease as a human issue, an individual’s trauma or the sociological repercussions of a disease and not just the anatomical or scientific analysis. Medicine is a clinical practice which has not just biological, but also social and cultural implications. Literature and art offer suggestive and aesthetic latitude, where an interface of disease and health, physical suffering and the situations of healing, get cultural and social representation. Philosophy and literature have facilitated an empathetic understanding, a humane consideration and a subjective evaluation of an otherwise objective field. They have also enhanced vocabulary and provided varied situations for aesthetic rendering of disease and healing. Narratives of disease and related conditions are subversion of an account where life has been interrupted, encumbering the protagonist with restrictions on life-choices, altered identity and reassessment of the present. It necessitates modifications related to the literary devices, plotline, protagonists and structure. There is a shift in stance from the subject to the diseased – subject which is not just in medical terms but also in literary representation. This is what marks literature on pandemics or disease as different. COVID-19 is certain to reshape the institutional framework and economic system with renewed emphasis on work from home and online learning. Texts which foreground disease present an altered life situation with lineaments of characters redrawn and plots which trace the socio- psychological perspective.

The disease or illness motif in literature has been there since times immemorial. The Decameron by Giovanni Boccaccio (c1353), A Journal of the Plague Year (1722) by Daniel

Defoe, *The Last Man* (1826) by Mary Shelley, *The Masque of the Red Death* (1842) by Edgar Allan Poe, *The Plague* (1948) by Albert Camus, *The Andromeda Strain* (1969) by Michael Crichton, *The Stand* (1978) by Stephen King, *The Hot Zone* (1994) by Richard Preston, *The Pesthouse* (2007) by Jim Grace are a few substantive examples. If the thematic recurrence of the concept of madness is concerned, there are literary writings, dating back to Homer, Miguel de Cervantes and William Shakespeare. More than the physical, it is the mental illness that has fascinated readers. The epidemic as primary concern has been employed very often in literary history of which *The Plague* (1948) by Albert Camus is probably the best known example in the twentieth century. It provides a credible and relatable point of reference for any literary analysis of disease in contemporary writing. Camus' narrator traces the outbreak of a plague that attacks the city of Oran and the resistance of the community against the scourge. The novel lends an allegorical analogy to the French resistance to Nazi occupation during World War II whereas the destruction caused by Nazism has been contextualised in the endemic spread of Plague in the city. The motif of the text is suggestive of the imminent struggles and destruction brought about by Nazism. Fictional or factual rendering of wars and military invasions have often been the backdrop for literary rendering of disease. The present text vivifies suffering and alienation caused by the coinciding factors of epidemic and the rise of Nazi Germany. Yet the most important underlying subtext seems to be the human condition and the ethical undertone cannot be missed. The argument remains as to how much of ethical connotation can a text subsume while maintaining literary credentials and aesthetic considerations. Frequent emphasis on the allegorical or the didactic subverts the aesthetic dimension. The critical reception of the novel confirms that Camus' artistic project is as cogent as its ethical undertones. There is no inherent contradiction between a text's felicity to make moral judgments and its aesthetic contribution. Perhaps not so surprisingly these thematic and critical questions are most relevant to contemporary writing and literary criticism. The consonance between the temporal and the allegorical generates multiplicity of interpretations and density in the meaning of the text. This is equally true about literature on disease where an ethical message is obliquely or overtly expressed. The critical assessment of the prognosis is an amalgam of the literary, the imaginative and the conceptual, an engaging exploration of the forms and functions of the epidemic.

Literature on disease speaks significantly about ethical concerns and moral impoverishment without compromising literary innovation. Many of the references seem apocalyptic, with an

element of déjà vu. The repetitive pattern of events suggests a coherence of the epistemological and the eschatological questions. Hence, the narrative has two different strands of thoughts, style, world view and metaphorical representation producing a complimentary image. So while the ethical and the aesthetic are simultaneously expressed, the literary endeavour avoids purely ecclesiastical interpretation. Traditionally, the emotion of pain and helplessness is contiguous to the subjective description of disease expressed through gestures of ensuing pain, discomfort and unpleasantness. Besides being a bodily condition, disease also implies reassessment of the capabilities of the protagonist who is encumbered and limited by corporeal factors. The description of a healthy character is a normative situation whereas the diseased body requires some modified viewing. The disease imposes existential changes on the protagonist who negotiates and manoeuvres through the rough and tumble of life. It requires a different treatment and interpretation by the author. The subject performs, challenges, questions and reconciles, giving birth to a new story and its interpretation, a narrative adapted to the new circumstances. Often narratives talking about a disease look at the multi layered ramifications that a disease may have in shaping and charting the plot and characters. Whether a physical ailment or a mental disorder or problems of maladjustment in social set up, the lineaments have to be re-drawn by the writer and the diseased-subject takes a new meaning. It is not that the body is anatomically and medically different; it is also the way the protagonist looks at oneself, gauges the acceptance of society and the temperamental changes envisioned in the protagonist by the writer. The idea of a disease-subject goes further, representing the lived body suffering existential disruption and the possible limitations that disease most probably will impose. In this situation, the disease-subject assumes a new story, a new dimension of character or way-of-being-in-the-world. It becomes a different subject. The predicament and self-questioning faced by the protagonist gives the author ample space and possibility to create a different world, perhaps with limited possibilities or where possibilities are challenges, redefining the human spirit. There is a point of inflection where the narrative traverses from a linear to a jagged trajectory. Often, in narratives about disease, the text becomes more laden with meaning. There is a twin objective: to metaphorically recreate how the character feels and how the writer understands and expresses feelings. It can neither be a pathological account nor can it be a saga of self-pity. Literature thus becomes a potent tool to explore and express the existential questions and also appropriates the privilege to visit the inner recesses of a diseased character's mind. What Foucault calls the medical gaze,

flourished on the notion of the pathological state of the diseased being, the patient being seen as a mechanism in need of repair. However, literature offers a larger backdrop to look at intricate questions of human life and recreates them through complex characters and intense plots.

The present paper shall focus on selected works with disease and epidemic as the primary thematic concern. The Decameron (1353) by Giovanni Boccaccio, set during the Black Death, is an interesting interface between the epidemic situation and the art of storytelling. Normal life has been disrupted due to the disease and the ten characters are self-isolating. During the course of their stay in a villa outside Florence, they interact with each other through sessions of storytelling, bringing forth the social picture of their time. The stories are engaging enough as these veer around topics such as power, trade, sexual politics, love and so on. The characters tell their stories, creating a semblance of normal life which has been drastically affected due to the pandemic. Story telling as a narrative technique have been employed by Chaucer, Bunyan, besides many other writers, however pandemic time offers a sombre and introspective tenor to the tales. They also provide some kind of solace as the story tellers share the good times and experiences, suggesting that life goes on despite all trials and crisis. Talking of William Shakespeare, we are familiar with the Bard's prowess to probe and imaginatively explore the debility of the human mind with conditions such as insanity, depression, paranoia, and guilt. His portraits of Hamlet, Othello, King Lear and Macbeth and many more, attest to his expertise for reaching the deep recesses of the mind and soul, unravelling the covert emotions which trigger unusual responses. Shakespeare is equally adept at discussing bodily conditions such as gout, typhus, delirium, and convulsions and so on. In his plays, mental and physical afflictions befall the high and the mighty as well as the commoners. These seem like the Furies of old come to torment the Renaissance England. Disease drew varied responses in Shakespearean time. Some believed disease was nemesis for sinful behaviour. Some thought it resulted from the celestial movement of the stars and the planets. Whatever the cause, virtually everyone agreed that disease of any kind set off an intolerable imbalance in four vital fluids in the body: blood, phlegm /flɛm/, black bile, and yellow bile, called "humours" (from a Latin word for liquids.) . These fluids were believed to control health and human behaviour and excess of any of these led to behavioural abnormalities and physical maladies. Shakespeare's knowledge of both physical and mental illness enabled him to enlighten the readers about the character's bodily symbols of

mental machinations. He frequently exhibits surprising insights into medicine. For example, in *Henry IV Part II* (1591) Northumberland, suffering from a fever, describes the principles behind immunization when he receives bad news from the battlefield: "In poison there is physic [healing]; and these news,/ Having been well, that would have made me sick,/ Being sick, have in some measure made me well" (1.1.153-155). In *Romeo and Juliet* (1595) Friar Laurence presents a similar medical paradox: "Within the infant rind of this small flower/ Poison hath residence and medicine power" (2.3.25-26). The friar is referring to plants that are poisonous when eaten but salutary when isolated ingredients in them are used to prepare remedies. In *The Winter's Tale* (1611) Camillo presents a revolutionary concept: that a person can be carrier of an illness even though he or she remains disease-free:

There is a sickness

Which puts some of us in distemper, but

I cannot name the disease; and it is caught

Of you that yet are well. (1.2.447-450)

Such descriptions are highly symbolic, having ominous undertones of how disease may lurk and seize the victim with no prior warning. What the Covid19 does to vulnerable humanity today is a living illustration of what the Bard wrote centuries ago.

There are umpteen examples in Shakespearean plays of characters with mental illness hinting at the prevalence of mental disorders and subsequent concerns in Shakespearean London. Mental illness is of keener interest to the student of literature as it hints at some underlying personal, inter-personal, social or familial cause. These days there is a raging concern about depression. Many a time it is misunderstood, ignored, wished away or conflated with other flimsy reasons. Shakespeare analysed its germinal factors and etched out characters who embodied, defined and clarified many a socio-medical cause. Shakespearean plays abound with characters having excess of any one or more humours or emotions that determine and define their evolution, growth and culmination. The scheming behaviour of Aaron the Moor in *Titus Andronicus*, the vengeful and callous actions of Shylock, the Jew, in *The Merchant of Venice*, the melancholia of Jacques in *As You Like It*, the conspiratorial actions of Cassius in *Julius Caesar*, the manipulative disposition of Claudius in *Hamlet*, vile antagonism of Iago in *Othello*, jealousy in

Edmund, the illegitimate son of the Earl of Gloucester in *King Lear*, villainy and lust of Caliban in *The Tempest*, display a variety of behaviour patterns that transform the characters from the human to the para normal level. Their retrogressive thoughts shape up the psychic pattern and lend a bizarre edge to their persona. Equally intriguing are some other characters that seem to suffer from low self-esteem and show paucity of emotions rather than excess of it. The timidity and inertness of Ophelia, the willing surrender of Desdemona to an ever suspicious husband, the obsessive disorder of washing hands by Lady Macbeth, are some examples at the other end of the spectrum.

Scholars conjecture that Shakespeare's knowledge of medicine was in part the product of his relationship with John Hall (1575-1635), an English physician and herbal expert. However Shakespeare seems to depend on his astute understanding of human nature and much of his understanding of disease appears to be based on his personal observation and interpretation. This is substantiated by the fact that Shakespeare had already written more than twenty of his works, including plays and poems with medical terms, before Hall settled in Stratford. Besides, Shakespeare had lived in London in the early 1590s. It was a time when writers such as John Stow wrote *Survey of London* (1598) and Thomas Dekker produced *The Bellman of London* (1608) discussing a London with rapidly ballooning population and constant flow of new arrivals, which was especially vulnerable to diseases, crime and sordid surroundings. Shakespeare seems privy to the lurking health hazards and their manifestation in public life. It is equally true that despite the best attempts of the government, plague remained a part of daily life in London. The theatres, considered to be hotbeds for contagion, were closed off and on throughout Shakespeare's career. A literary representation of the travails and trials in human life brought about by disease is a natural corollary.

The theme of disease and its aftermath is also the focus of Mary Shelley's apocalyptic novel *The Last Man* (1826). Themes of ecological crisis along with disease forms the backdrop of this futuristic novel about Britain between the years 2070 and 2100. It was also converted into a movie in 2008. The novel delves on the life of Lionel Verney, who becomes the "last man" following a devastating global plague. Amidst the time of multifarious crisis – global famine following the eruption of Mount Tambora and the first known cholera pandemic from 1817–1824. Shelley conjures up a time when humanity undergoes the test of tenacity and

perseverance. Cholera has spread across the Indian subcontinent and Asia, moving to the periphery of the Middle East. There is a financial fallout of the pandemic with mass deaths throughout Britain's colonies and trading partners, causing bankruptcy amongst bankers and merchants. Besides giving an ominous side of the calamity, the novel upholds the value of friendship and humanism. The protagonist, Lionel Verney, on his wanderings is accompanied by a sheep dog which is a beautiful reminiscence of how pets are a source of solace and friendship in difficult times. The novel is particularly scathing on the topic of institutional responses to the plague. Shelley conveys two salient points. Firstly, our humanity is shaped by shared feelings of camaraderie and compassion and community feeling and not by artistic expression, or religious or political priorities. Secondly, we belong to just one of the many species on Earth, and we must learn to think of the natural world as existing not merely for human consumption and utility, but as a self-sustaining and animated presence.

Edgar Allen Poe's short story "The Masque of the Red Death" (1842) is a critique of the callous official attitude of the elite towards an epidemic. It is a scathing comment on the failure of authority to adequately and humanely respond to such a disaster. It is a tale from the medieval times when, a plague, allegorically addressed as the Red Death, ravages the populace with a hasty and painful death. Unconcerned about the plight of the people, Prince Prospero seeks respite and succour in his castle along with a thousand knights and ladies. As he shuts out all clamour and care, it is assumed that the festivities will keep the plague at bay as the rich and mighty are impervious to such threats. In a suggestive development of the plot, the Prince arranges a masquerade ball with courtiers attired in weird garb. Ominously, the Red Death appears as one of the guests in an equally sinister clothing. One by one he picks up his victims who fall dead as also does the Prince. So nothing rescues them from death and their vain attempts to make merry in exotic surroundings finally end in death. The story has overt ethical message, transporting the reader to the medieval times with a battle between good and evil and how the cruel rulers are penalised for their apathy and indifference.

In the 20th century, Albert Camus' *The Plague* (1942) and Stephen King's *The Stand* (1978) discuss the social implications of plague-like pandemics – particularly failures of the state to either contain the disease or to moderate the ensuing panic. The most meaningful action within the context of Camus' work is to face calamities collectively and concertedly. It is a fight of

common conscience against personal suffering. In the early days of the epidemic, the citizens of Oran are indifferent to one another's suffering because each person is selfishly convinced that his or her pain is unique compared to "common" suffering. The message of the novel is surprisingly ominous yet true:

As he listened to the cries of joy rising from the town, Rieux remembered that such joy is always imperilled. He knew what those jubilant crowds did not know but could have learned from books: that the plague bacillus never dies or disappears for good; that it can lie dormant for years and years in furniture and linen-chests; that it bides its time in bedrooms, cellars, trunks, and bookshelves; and that perhaps the day would come when, for the bane and the enlightening of men, it would rouse up its rats again and send them forth to die in a happy city.

In King's *The Stand*, a bioengineered, extremely contagious and lethal strain of influenza gets leaked, much like the Covid19 virus which is allegedly addressed as the Wuhan virus. One of the security guards, Charles Campion, manages to escape before the facility is locked down. However, when he meets with an accident, the ambulance men and some others get infected at a place called Arnette in Texas. The authorities go to the extent of killing the victims in order to contain the virus. Pandemonium ensues. Adding a political dimension to the tale, the virus is unintentionally released to some antagonistic countries resulting in mass deaths. Very few have immunity from the virus and those who are immune also die mourning the deaths of their loved ones. The novel has much resemblance to the reality which mankind has been encountering for nearly more than a year now.

As we face the Corona 19 pandemic, listen and helplessly swallow the increasing number of infected and those who succumbed to the highly infectious disease, one is reminded of literary references to sinister epidemics and disease. Diseases are not just about mental and physical health, these are symptomatic of what ails at the bottom, the heart of the matter. Many of the characters are reasonably sound and sagacious but become hyper active, melancholic, withdrawn, paranoid or vituperative in strenuous moments. As part of the chain of existence, humans have the audacity to incur maximum harm, but they also have the capability to realise, rectify and revive. It is not only about the statistical data of lives lost, it is about realisation and introspection. Writers have been foretelling about a world that could undo unbridled growth ideals cherished by the fast paced world. Whatever they imagined much earlier seems to be

showing déjà vu visions in the present times. Is it a necessary cost of civilisation and technological advancement or is it excess of a humour called greed, acquisitiveness and self – centeredness? We all know the answer.

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Art and Human Existence

-Vivek Sachdeva

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought fundamental questions of human existence back in focus. During the lockdown of Covid-19, many events of music, dance, theatre, poetry and film festivals have been organized online. There is a flood of intellectual activities as well as what Anne Sheppard calls 'aesthetic activities'. The crisis has opened many new platforms for human interaction and has also changed, though temporarily, the nature of human interaction. From online seminars to online performances, new platforms of engagement with and consumption of art have come into practice. Every new event on the virtual platform begins with invoking the dread, distress and fright caused by Covid-19. The question is if such a flood of activities is going on the internet during the lockdown, would music or poetry hold no meaning after the corona-threat is over? Is Covid-19 so important a moment that it can change the paradigm of all human activities, including creation and appreciation of art? Lockdown, the sense of confinement associated with it and the trauma of impending infection precipitated into existential question among many. This necessitates a reflection on questions like - What is Art? What is the nature of Art? What role does it play in our lives? What is the position of art in human life? What role does art play when the questions of life and death are looming large? How is the relationship between art and human existence understood? Is pandemic the only threat to human freedom or threats as well? These are some of the questions that bother. They seem to be different, but at some level, all of these questions are interrelated; or at least they have a converging point. The attempt in this article is - one, to visit some old and well-established ideas about art and imagination; two, to understand its relationship with the human existence in the times of pandemic with special focus on human existentialism and art; and three to understand the basic form and function of art. The attempt is not to discuss the literary dimension of existentialism by discussing 'absurdist' literature or horror or writers like Kafka and Ibsen or filmmakers like Ingmar Bergman or any other form of art which has been influenced by the philosophy of existentialism. However, the attempt is to go back to the ideas of some philosophers who have reflected on human existence and also commented on art. Their views on both – existence and art – shall be helpful to understand the relationship between the two.

“Existentialism owes its name to its emphasis on “existence”[...] existence indicates the special way in which human beings are in the world, in contrast with other beings” (Deranty). Existentialism is not a pessimist philosophy, as it is popularly (mis)understood. It is a philosophy of human existence, and about man engages with the world around him. Existentialism might have been considered as a “bygone cultural movement rather than an identifiable philosophical position” (Crowell), the argument is that as long as human mind reflects on the human condition, the question of freedom of man, the conflict between determinism and human will, and the debate between God and man – the questions of existentialism shall remain relevant. In the larger philosophical debates around existence, an attempt shall be made to understand the role of art in relation to human existence and to engage with what other challenges does human ‘existence’ face in our present times and what role art can play in ascribing meaning to human existence.

There is an array of questions that deal with the theory of art. Whether imitation or expressive; didactic or escapist, there are different ways to understand the nature and function of art. Each function among the above-given categories engages with a philosophical question of life and art in its own might. The pandemic brought back all those questions that once bothered Heidegger such as ‘anxiety’, ‘dying’, ‘death’, ‘being’ and also ‘the end of art’. A range of existential questions about human existence and experience is linked with the fundamental nature and function of art as well. Questions that come to mind is - Is art mere sensation or an affect or artist’s reflections on life presented through a sensational experience? Does the present situation alter its nature, function, scope of art and its language? This brings us closer to questions like - Why do we need art? Why do we create art? What is its role in our society? All these questions resonate with various debates in the domain of aesthetics.

Though the debate of art dates back to Plato and Aristotle, the term ‘aesthetics’ was first used by Alexander Baumgarten in the eighteenth century, which meant the science of sensation and imagined. Terry Eagleton responds to the sudden surge of aesthetics in the eighteenth century as suddenly waking up of philosophy to include the world of sensation and emotion within the purview of epistemology, as the debates in the preceding centuries were focused more on Taste. “The world of feelings and sensations can surely not just be surrendered to the ‘subjective’, to what Kant scornfully termed the ‘egoism of taste’; instead, it must be brought within the majestic scope of reason itself” (Eagleton 15). According to Eagleton, though the eighteenth-century

German philosophy woke up to the world of aesthetics to understand its relation to knowledge, the history of association between art and truth goes back to the times of Plato and Aristotle. Plato's ideas constitute the basis for understanding if art holds any relevance in human lives. By understanding reality at the level of forms or ideas, Plato problematized the relationship between art and truth by calling art an imitation of imitation. Art, in his scheme of ideas, turn out to be thrice removed from reality. Perhaps, according to Plato, a carpenter is closer to the idea of a chair than a poet who imitates the imitation in his poetry. Plato dismissed poetry and poets in a single breath by saying that if poets write in a state of "divinely inspired", then poet cannot be given credit for their art as the poetry is the result of a possessed mind, not the result of anyone in one's senses. Much discussed Plato-Aristotle debate lays down the foundation of debates on the nature, scope and function of art. If Plato dismissed poetry calling it 'an imitation of imitation', Aristotle preferred Poetry over History. To Aristotle, poetry was not merely a figment of imagination or a work created by a poet who is not in his senses; rather, Aristotle found the truth of human emotions in poetry or drama. Though Aristotle was not an existentialist philosopher, as the term is understood now, Aristotle understood art in relation to the human condition. Aristotle had shown acceptance of emotions in poetry, which Plato had rejected. So, one can find debates of art and truth; art and imagination; art and rationality; form of art resonating in the Plato-Aristotle debate. From medieval times through early days of Enlightenment, the rise of empirical rationalism and Kantian attempt to reconcile rationality and imagination, down to Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, and then post-structuralist times art has been understood in different ways and ascribed different functions. There are different schools of thoughts that define art differently and ascribe different functions to art. From the beauty of God through art, to perception of art as a cognitive activity to universal beauty or Hegelian understanding of art and the human spirit, art has been perceived in consonance with the world view.

There are many schools of thought that have understood art in relation to human life and society. Their reasons might be different, but they all agreed that the purpose of art is not to create merely sensuous beauty, creation of art for its own sake or art for art's sake, which is often referred to in the famous Kantian phrase – purposiveness without purpose. To them, art serves a purpose. The purpose of art does not imply to reduce art to a propagandist function. Art cannot serve as a slave

even to an ideological agenda. To use Jacques Ranciere's terms, the relationship between the 'politics of aesthetics' and 'aesthetics of politics' is not so simplistic and linear.

The social and political function of art is served through the medium of aesthetics. By reconfiguring the space, it opens debates, raises issues and expresses concerns over the issues that affect humanity beyond borders of nationalities or identities. A work of art critiques the times in which it is written. An artist engages with human reality and presents human experiences garbing in an aesthetic form. The beauty of the art is maintained while giving a perspective on human experience, social and political times. Artist transforms the essence of human experiences into the world of aesthetics. The subjective experiences or perspective of an artist is transformed into an objective entity in the form of art, which is perceived by the reader. Art constantly moves between three worlds – the subjective concept of the artist, the objective sensation of the work of art and the cognitive concept of the reader. A reader's cognitive concept can, in all possibilities, be different from the subjective concept of the artist. Besides the concept of art, the sensation it produces or the affect it creates on the minds of the reader is its important components. The sensation or affect of the work does not imply that art is ontologically not more than a sensory experience. A work of art is an embodiment of ideas, feeling and worldview of the artist. A work of art gives a sensation to the 'reader', creates an affect and through an aesthetic experience, it also conveys the artist's worldview. A reader's journey of understanding a work of art begins with perception and moves towards conception – from sensation to conception; from experiencing its affect to developing an understanding by engaging with ideas embedded in it and critically responding to its ideological underpinnings. In the schema of intentionality, text and reader's cognition, creation and perception of art become conscious acts of human beings. It is a process through which both the author and the reader also become, though at different stages of the process.

Art contains the truth of human spirit, predicaments, pain, sorrows, joys when seen in the broader socio-historical context. This could be one reason that the times of distress – any kind of distress be it social, political, psychological, individual, collective –the best of art has been created. In the times of distress, conflict, transition, disturbance human mind reflects on fundamental questions of human existence, which makes every work of art primarily existential in nature. Every existential concern is primarily humanist. Human consciousness and human

experiences in its wide array of emotions, feelings, experiences constitute the basis of what we call human concerns in art. As Sartre says,

Each of our perceptions is accompanied by the consciousness that human reality is a 'revealer', that is, it is through human reality that 'there is' being, or, to put it differently, that man is the means by which things are manifested. It is our presence in the world which multiplies relations. It is we who set up a relationship between this tree and that bit of sky. Thanks to us, that star which has been dead for millennia, that quarter moon, and that dark river are disclosed in the unity of a landscape. (48)

This statement by Sartre is not to be read as typical of a Western man trying to dominate over Nature, but as the manifesto of an artist announcing the importance of human consciousness in perceiving, understanding and representing the world. Man's critical and creative response to the world around him/her makes art an expression of human reality in its myriad forms. Empathy gives human beings the consciousness that they belong to the world and are a part of a larger universe. "When I am enchanted with a landscape, I know very well that it is not I who create it, but I also know that without me the relations which are established before my eyes among the trees, the foliage, the earth, and the grass would not exist at all" (Sartre 58). Sartre believes that he may not be the creator, but his consciousness as an onlooker is important in perceiving the landscape, which makes a group of trees, foliage and earth a landscape. As an authentic being, meaning to human self is also the concomitant of human consciousness. In Sartre's scheme of ideas, the consciousness of the reader is of paramount importance in ascribing meaning to the self, the text and the world. A reader's response to a work of art or an onlooker's response to a landscape is the meeting point of the subjective and the objective; of the real and the imaginary. "Sartre insists that it is a mistake to think that two worlds – the imaginary and the real – exist as ontologically separate entities" (Levy 84). Art is the space where the aesthetic imaginary and the reader's cognition meet. In the aesthetic imaginary meets the author's or creator's consciousness with the reader's consciousness. Though Sartre's theory of imagination has been much discussed and critiqued as he has been accused of arguing that imagination takes one away from the real by opening a chasm between the real world and human consciousness. Edward Casey in his criticism highlights the gap between perception and imagination, which is based on "reduction of imagination to the experience of present and existent things" (Levy 130). The argument is that

imagination to Sartre was not an activity which results into a split; rather “is an activity through which consciousness intends the world” (Levy 134).

Different existentialists have tried to understand the meaning of human existence in the world. The emphasis on existence does not denote that human “beings” are nothing beyond existence; rather challenging deterministic view, if existence precedes essence, it puts the ontological question of human existence in the world in the philosophical purview. Instead of being a predetermined “being”, man’s awareness about his existence becomes crucial in deciding the role man would ascribe. According to Sartre, the doctrine of ‘existence precedes essence’ means that “the man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world – and defines himself afterwards. If man as existentialist sees him is not definable, it is because to begin with he is nothing. He will not be anything until later, and then he will be what he makes of himself. Thus, there is no human nature [...] Man simply is” (Sartre 3). The authentic being understands the challenges and responsibilities that come along with exercising the freedom of existence. Man engages with the world around him because he exists in this world, and art becomes a way through which he expresses his engagement with the world. Artistic practice is thus one of the primary activities of asserting man’s existence in the world by responding to the world around him through the language of art. From Hegelian idea of freedom of human spirit to existential emphasis on existence, art is seen as a medium to realize and assert human freedom, either of spirit or human existence.

As stated earlier, the aesthetic beauty of art does not lie in its sensory appearance. By making a composition of colours pleasant to the eyes or composition of notes pleasing to the ears, any construction does not become an art. In the artistic expression, an artist gives his readers/views/listeners an aesthetic experience impregnated with the meaning of existence; a different perspective of the known things; or sometimes, the vision to see the extraordinary in the ordinary. It is not necessary to tell stories of great men to create great art. Modern narratives, in the form of novels, have given us stories of common men and women with extraordinary potential to suffer, endure and live life through all odds. Through the lives of common individuals in novels, one understands the structure of a society, concerns of common people and how their lives were affected by larger economic and historical factors. The emphasis on marriage in Jane Austen’s novels, the strife of characters in Dickens’s, individual tragedies of

Hardy's characters or Chekhov's characters are not the cases of individuals. As Milan Kundera says that characters or human beings are primarily historical, their rootedness in their respective historical contexts gives readers the vantage point to look at a historical epoch from the point of view of the ordinary men and women. Their narratives exemplify how the lives of ordinary human beings are affected, determined and controlled by circumstances which were beyond their control. Modern understanding of tragedy reveals that characters suffer not because of any divine conspiracy against them; rather because of their socio-economic circumstances. Perhaps in the premodern worldview, men and women could be seen as puppets in the hands of God, but modern sensibility engages with the question of human freedom differently. It is, thus, the truth of human suffering which constitutes the truth of art, a question that has always bothered the human mind since antiquity. Truth in art has never been the empirical or historical truth. Its meaning lies in human emotion expressed in the realm of aesthetics. The 'thingness', a term used by Heidegger, of art belongs to the world of aesthetics.

There have been debates around what constitutes 'beauty' in art. Beauty has been understood as a matter of order and symmetry. Schiller disagrees with Kant and Hegel agrees with Schiller in understanding beauty as an objective property. On the other hand, certain works on art, which do not look beautiful to look at have also been considered as 'beautiful works of art'. The debate suggests that beauty of art is not merely a matter of sensory perception. It is not an empirical entity which is seen in its physical properties. The judgment of beauty is based on the 'effect' it produces on the minds of the viewers or readers when it sets the 'understanding and imagination in free play', in Kantian terms. Linking it with the idea of free human spirit, Hegel postulated beauty as a manifestation of the freedom of human spirit. Whether beauty is understood in idealist terms or in material terms, beauty has been theorized and understood in relation to more than its appearance. Even Hegel also opined that beauty is also a matter of the content. The truth in beauty in Hegelian scheme lies in the truth of human spirit, with which the viewer's or reader's mind interact. Art becomes the space where the free play of cognition and imagination of the artist and the reader meet. Reader's response to art ensures that through the interaction between two human minds one free human spirit interacts with the other. The free interaction of human spirits results into a space in which art continues to be created; art ceases to be static or fixed and art is in a state of constant becoming. It is in the freedom of human spirit that an artist also offers a critique of things they find making the world far from becoming an ideal world or a

place of beauty. It is through the artist's engagement with the times and a reader's engagement with the artistic imaginary that the complete art is born. Thus, art becomes a space where an interaction, across time and space takes place. Reader's visiting old works of art in literature, painting, sculpture, cinema and any other form are the ways to establish a connection between the present and the past. By revisiting the past, readers understand their present and also explore the relevance of art, created in the past, in their present times, which contributes to the aura of the beauty of a work.

Literary works or paintings or songs are not mere objects or things of the world. These works of art are not caskets in which human emotions are packed and served for consumption. They are the real beings. They are worlds in themselves; and they very much belong to the world. Heidegger compares the real world, the world worlds with stone or trees which do not have a world. By having a world Heidegger seems to be suggesting that "world is not collection of things, countable and uncountable." As Julian Young also opines that the world is that always-nonobjectual to which we are subject as long as the paths of birth and death, blessing and curse, keep us transported into being. Every decision made in history affects the human condition. From that perspective, according to Heidegger, a peasant woman, on the other hand, possesses a world. She possesses the world by staying in the openness of beings, in Heidegger's terms. In short, Heidegger understands art not merely as an object, but as a part of the human world. The constant presence of human concerns in art makes every art form essentially humanist. It is this truth of human reality that art was found and appreciated even by Aristotle. The truth in art is the truth of human spirit, emotions, joys and suffering which art conveys under the garb of aesthetics. Truth in art is not empirical; it may not be the scientific; or pure historical truth, in its conventional sense, but in the poetic or artistic truth can be found the truth of human experiences. In Hegelian ideas, art, along with Philosophy and Religion, is a source of knowledge. "Whereas Philosophy is speculative grasp of truth, art is the presentation and apprehension of truth by means of sensuous images, that is the image of sight and sound and touch" (Gordon 53), and knowledge is the source which frees the human spirit from its animalistic impulses. Julian Young begins her summing up Heidegger's view on Hegel's the End of Art by stating that "Art is its 'highest vocation' [...] is art in which 'the truth of beings as a whole i.e. the unconditioned, the absolute, opens itself up' to man's historical existence" (Young 6).

If art is reduced only to a source of entertainment or recreational activity or to provide human beings an escape in the times of distress, it takes away an important component from the art. There have been many works written around pandemics, black death or plague; but when hasn't human suffering been the subject of art? Our sweetest songs have always been those that tell us of our saddest thoughts or when hasn't literature taught us "to suffer with a quiet spirit," in the words of Shakespeare? There is no need to refer to the long list of literary works that were written on one or the other kind of pandemic which includes numerous famous novels. There is a list of other fictional and poetical works which were written in the backdrop of the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution, the Great Depression, two World Wars, Holocaust, Israel-Palestine conflict, Partition of India, communal riots in India, works based on caste-based and gender-based oppression, and other such instances of distress and human tragedy across time and space. Epidemics, Plagues, Black Deaths and other pandemic do create a situation of crisis for human civilization, the frame in which art operates includes other moments of suffering too. The attempt is not to undermine the seriousness of the latest pandemic, but I do not wish to reduce the art of the entire world to the panic created in our minds by media around Covid-19. Art is not meant to be reduced to any "pandemic syndrome". Art has always been expressing human concerns in different forms. De Sica, in his films, narrated the pain of the working class in post-war Italy, Truffaut gave us the stories of the anxiety-ridden French society through his cinema, Abbas Kiarostami's and Makhmalbaf's cinema give us stories of complicated human lives after the Islamic revolution and Picasso's *Guernica* and War poetry are different responses to the world destroyed by war, Gustave Courbet's *The Stone Breakers* or Van Gogh's *The Potato Eaters* and Thomas Hardy's novels show us the plight of the working class and peasantry; be it William-Adolphe Bouguereau's *The Shepherdess* or William Wordsworth's *The Solitary Reaper*, they are all creative responses to the world of human experiences in its myriad forms.

The Covid-19 in our present times or for that matter any other pandemic or natural disaster, social or political upheavals or crisis brings the fundamental question of human existence such as free will, determinism, the function of art in life back in the focus. Aesthetic cognitivism, in contrast to aesthetic hedonism, describes such issues with profundity and provides us with a deeper understanding and also "makes good sense of the concepts of insight and profundity, superficiality and distortion in art" (Gordon 59). In the debate between lockdown and opening the market to revive the economy echoes the non-humanistic tendencies of capitalism and human

life. Opening the markets, urging people to spend money to revive the economy at the risk of human lives is an evident example of cruelties of capitalism. Though capitalism in the form of a liberal economy has been posing a threat to the human self. Sartre's categories of being-in-itself, being-for-itself and bad faith stand relevant to understand threats posed by the consumerist market on human self, which results in the reification of being as well. Consumerism has not only changed the consumption patterns of people; it has also altered the sensibilities of people resulting into placing art too in the market as a consumable commodity. Thus, one of the major challenges in the pursuit of aesthetic cognitivism has been given by commodification of art in the age of consumerism. With the rise of the corporate economy, deciding the nature of art, the free nature of art has been challenged. Consumerist art promotes celebrity cult; it can shape consumerist patterns; visual and auditory signs may please senses; ordinary objects may look extraordinarily attractive, yet they are only objects, only things not worlds in terms of Heidegger. Pure sensory aesthetics of consumerist art and market-driven popular art are subservient to the needs of the market. Its ominous side lies in shaking the authenticity of being. Man fails to justify his 'existence' in the world; misses the opportunity to engage with the world and thus, adds to the absurdity. The public sphere of consumerist art is the market controlled public sphere, not the public sphere where poets would sit to share their poetry or storytellers telling stories or soirees celebrating music. Aesthetic activity is, thus, reduced to a sensory experience wanting in freedom of human spirit or a meaning engagement of 'existence'.

The commodification of art in the age of consumerism brings back the debate in the history of aesthetics i.e. the End of Art, a phrase that reminds us of Hegel and the Death of Art by Heidegger. Hegel laments that art in his modern times was no longer capable of representing the divine, which it did during the medieval times; nor was it capable of representing freedom of human spirit of classical Greek times. By the End of Art, Hegel means that in the post-reformation age, art was representing the ordinary and fleeting, and thus performs a limited function. In his times, Hegel thought that art was no longer capable of representing the complex and layered conflict between Antigone and Creone, as shown by Sophocles. Art's tendency to capture the fleeting and transient aspects of life are very well echoes by John Keats in his odes in which he reflects on permanence and transience of life. Keats's declaration of "Beauty is Truth; Truth Beauty" resonates with Hegelian ideas on art and beauty. Consumerism takes away even the mundane or ordinary fleeing world from art and changes it into commodities of consumption.

The reified things of art are just things, object without a sense of history attached to it or giving a critical understanding of the times, which snaps the relationship between art and philosophy. It is a hollow construction of verbal or visual signs lacking meaning or giving an alternative perspective to the readers. This art does not show the truth that happens to people; it does not represent the ontological strife between humans and the world. Heidegger continued the reflection of the challenge in front of art started by Hegel. But more serious a blow to art is given by the age of consumerist society of neoliberal capitalism, which reduced the idea of beauty in art to the level of sensory of beauty. The universality of artistic beauty is thus not a matter of sensory beauty. It goes beyond that. Beauty in paintings, melody in music and harmonious narrative or poetical works are signs of the beauty that an artist imagines and visualizes or misses. To quote Heidegger, “In the fine arts, the art is not itself beautiful, but is, rather, called so because it brings out the beautiful.” by bringing Artistic beauty is not an amalgamation of signs appealing to senses. Most of the best works of modernism in painting and poetry shock human senses. Brushstrokes are not smooth, poetic images are shocking, narratives are of depressing side of life, yet they all are the best of artistic works – they are the works of artistic beauty because they bring our attention to the missing beautiful world. Such works connect human minds to the world, even if the reality is ugly and depressing.

The use of language and specificity of its medium is other questions associated with understanding the art. A painter uses colours, a poet uses words, and a musician uses sound or musical notes to convey an idea and to express his/her emotions. Conformity to or breaking away from the conventions of form does not constitute the basis of art. Besides the use of the language of the particular medium, expression of thought and emotions through a particular medium are central to any art form. Random use of colours to make new shapes on canvas or to create patterns of musical notes or to experiment with language and forms does not make work an art. Different mediums of art are expected to express truth and beauty. Different mediums may seemingly have different languages, such as words in literature, colours in paintings, shots and camera angles in films, sound or notes in music; but these signs are outer manifestations of the inner core of art. The inner language of art is truth, and beauty is the result of the presence of truth in it. Appreciation of art begins with understanding the outer form or its language, but it does not stop there. If literature were written in verbal language, then every piece of writing in any verbal language would have been literature; any arrangement of notes would have been a

song or a Raga. Art is conceived in the womb of strife. It is in the eternal conflicts between man and nature, human conscience and the world, the question of ethics and predicaments, morality and challenges of modernity that the essence of art can be found. It may not be possible in our contemporary times to seek universal truths, yet it is important not to give up the search for the truth, to ascribe meaning to human existence. The beauty of art lies in conveying the truth of human spirit and its innumerable emotions. By expressing the truth of the human situation that a good work of art transcends its own boundaries. It is at that level a painting is like a poem; a song is like a painting or cinema acquires profound meaning going beyond the visual composition of the shot. That's where the visible in cinema becomes the sayable dimension and vice-versa, in Jacques Ranciere's terms. Any pandemic or a moment of distress takes us back to the fundamental questions of life. In the times when the entire world is worried, concerned and also scared, it becomes important to reflect on the need of art in life. The search leads humanity to the truth; the truth adds beauty to art and meaning to human existence.

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Writing of Love in the Letters of Separation in Love in the Time of Cholera (1985[1988]) by Gabriel Garcia Marquez

-Anil Kumar Prasad

Introduction

The paper concerns itself with two aspects in its proposition 'writing about love' in 'the letters of separation' in a 'text' which I have called 'writerly' taking Barthes' categorization. Obviously, it implies that all writers write but this kind of fictive discourse considers readers as co-authors or producers of the 'text.' Let us attempt to understand in what ways the readers contributed to the production of the 'text'? The 'text' is already 'written' by an 'author'/ 'writer'. The reader reads and while reading he will 'produce' the text. S/he will 'investigate the infinite possibilities of love dramatised' in the novel.

The love that is dramatised in the novel is primarily among three persons: Florentino Ariza, Dr. Juvenal Urbino and Fermina Daza in the centre. Fermina Daza's beauty and haughtiness have attracted both the suitors: Florentino Ariza and Dr. Urbino. Florentino Ariza's love for Fermina is known to the readers through their exchange of letters and meetings and finally it is snapped by Fermina on the basis of thinking on the part of Fermina as 'nothing more than an illusion' (LTC 102) and a superficial attraction. Dr. Urbino's courtship begins between a doctor and a patient who is suspected of cholera. Again, letters are exchanged. Dr. Urbino's personality is unfolded through the meeting of Fermina's cousin, during their ride through the city. And finally, unwillingly and unwittingly, Fermina succumbs to the pressures of her own personality and paternity.

The novel begins with a general statement about the fate of the 'unrequited love' (LTC 3) foreshadowing both the suitors and their pursuits of love. Duty and domesticity are the pivots of the blessedness of Fermina's married life. Dr. Urbino is a famous modern educated doctor with a passion for social reforms in the field of health and sanitation which he inherited from his late father. Despite a happy domesticity and children from Dr. Urbino, is Fermina Daza not happy in her married life? Does she still remember her first suitor? The scene of the two elderly lovers in which they show attachment on the ship in the river requires a deep understanding of the events

and their minute analysis. Is Florentino Ariza remembered by Fermina Daza in such a way that the readers can be sure of the final 'requited love' of Florentino Ariza? Florentino Ariza is greatly frustrated and devastated by the refusal of his proposal by Fermina Daza and the opposition from her father. But he has never forgotten her. His promiscuity and cruelty that he showed in his myriad affairs make the readers believe of the kind of love he 'practised' as 'sickness' and a metonymic variation of love as plague. Eventually, his proposal on the day of the funeral of Dr. Urbino is first vehemently refused and later takes an amazing turn that proves that the affair they started fifty years ago has its culmination in the old age.

The paper will explore how the different aspects of love are manifested through letters in *Love in the Time of Cholera*. The paper will further explore the different aspects in Florentino Ariza's choices of relationships for survival for a prospective union with Fermina Daza for which he has been waiting so long. In this exploration of Marquez's *Love in the Time of Cholera* as a 'writerly' text 'asks for reader a practical collaboration' in which s/he is invited "to produce the text, open it out, set it going" (Barthes 1971 : 171) by writing about it, by going ahead further ideationally, thereby we create ourselves, 'we write ourselves' (Rolfe 1997: 447), in the process we recreate the 'text' for further 'play, production, [and] practice' (Barthes 1971: 170).

Discussion

The promise of 'Perfect fidelity and everlasting love'--'To the crowned Goddess'

One of the aspects that make this 'text' of *Love in the Time of Cholera* 'writerly' is the circularity/ non-linearity of the narrative. The story opens with the death of Dr. Juvenal Urbino whose 'respectability and prestige in the province 'is unmatched. As the story progresses unfolding the domestic, social and professional lives of Dr. Urbino we have been told also about the attraction of Florentino Ariza about the young Fermina Daza. On the day of the funeral of Dr Urbino Florentino Ariza expresses his love to Fermina by saying, 'Fermina, I have waited for this opportunity for more than half a century' and reiterates his 'vow of eternal fidelity and everlasting love "(LTC 60-61). From the beginning to the end((there is no end of the story as the New Fidelity is ordered to 'forever' move to and fro in the river symbolising as what Florentino Ariza says in the novel that 'life has no limits' (LTC 204) love is expressed through letters. Letters have been used more than a narrative device -- the adolescent letters of Florentino Ariza to Fermina Daza first create infatuation for him and later after the death of Dr. Urbino

when they meet again the letters provide her solace and ‘help her recover her peace of mind’ (LTC 302).

Encouraged by the news that Fermina, the daughter of Lorenzo Daza is studying at the Academy of the presentation of the Blessed Virgin and Florentino Ariza feels that ‘the beautiful adolescent with almond-shaped eyes’ is ‘within the reach of his dreams’ (LTC 56). His ‘chronic romanticism’ (LTC 325) forces him to take ‘the secret life of a solitary hunter’ (LTC 56) and to follow the movement of Fermina Daza. Florentino Ariza, in turn is encouraged by his mother and his own passion, relentlessly pursues Fermina Daza following her when she is going to school and in the park. He first sees her in her house when he goes to deliver a telegram to her father and ‘that casual glance was the beginning of a cataclysm of love that still had not ended half a century later.’ Fermina appears to him as an ‘impossible maiden’ ‘who walked with natural haughtiness’ and ‘her doe’s gait making her seem immune to gravity.’ ‘[L]ittle by little he idealized her’ ...and now he thinks of sending her a note in ‘his exquisite notary’s hand.’ (LTC 56) The note keeps on growing in content as the day of delivery is postponed. It is ‘turning into a dictionary of compliments, inspired by the books he had learnt by heart because he read them so often during his vigils in the park. ‘And finally it ‘contained more than sixty pages’(LTC 57). Under the almond tree Fermina Daza seems different to him, not a school-going girl but a ‘crowned goddess’ (LTC 59). After much thinking and trying, in a dramatic way, he delivers the letter to her.

The letters, like this letter, are exchanged in this novel among various characters but we seldom know the contents. With regard to the first letter of Florentino Ariza we are told by the omniscient narrator that it contained a promise of ‘his perfect fidelity and everlasting love’ (LTC 61). The delivery of letter by Florentino creates feverish expectation in him making him unwell. Then follows the forgotten breviary with an envelope and the exchange of letters between Florentino Ariza and Fermina Daza continues. The narrator informs,

Sometimes their letters were soaked by rain, soiled by mud, torn by adversity, and some were lost for a variety of other reasons, but they always found a way to be in touch with each other again. (LTC 69)

About the way Florentino writes the letters the narrator informs again,

Florentino Ariza wrote every night. Letter by letter, he had no mercy as he poisoned himself with the smoke from the palm oil lamps in the back room of the notions shop, and his letters became more discursive and more lunatic the more he tried to imitate his favorite poets from the Popular Library, which even at that time was approaching eighty volumes.... Desperate to infect her with his own madness, he sent her miniaturist's verses inscribed with the point of a pin on camellia petals. (69).

Florentino Ariza is a "love's creature" and a "poet dedicated to love both carnal and transcendent" (Pynchon 1988). His dream of marrying Fermina Daza is not fulfilled. Her father threatens him to leave his daughter, and Fermina's forced going away from him, though always in touch with her through telegraphic messages, do not allow them to come together. After arrival from her journey and during a chance meeting Fermina Daza declares, 'I realized that what is between us is nothing more than an illusion' (LTC 102). Despite Fermina's cousin Hildebranda's sympathy for Florentino's love for Fermina and Hildebranda's later realization that Florentino is 'all love' (LTC 129) they do not live life together. They again come closer, with letters as a mediating strategy, after half a century keeping their love intact creating it as "a crypt for themselves" (see "Emotional Crypt ..." 2016).

'Only God knows how much I love you.'

If Florentino imagines Fermina as a 'crowned goddess' and he has a feeling that 'the beautiful adolescent with almond-shaped eyes was within the reach of his dreams' (LTC 56), for Dr. Urbino she is 'like a new-sprung rose'(LTC 118). Dr. Juvenal 'is the most desirable of bachelors ... he managed to keep himself in a state of grace, intact and tempting, until he succumbed without resistance to the plebeian charms of Fermina Daza' (LTC 105). Fermina is suspected of contracted cholera and the Doctor visits him and the courtship ensues. While leaving Fermina's house Dr. Urbino

did not renounce his hope of saying goodbye to her, but Lorenzo Daza did not suggest it. He yearned for the innocence of her pulse, her cat's tongue, her tender tonsils, but he was disheartened by the idea that she never wanted to see him again and would never permit him to try to see her. (LTC 120-121)

Fermina also has a dream about Dr. Urbino in which the tongue depressor which he uses to examine her throat is not made of aluminum but of a 'delicious metal that she had tasted with pleasure' (LTC 123). The same night she finds a letter with the initials "J.U.C" on it. She opens the letter and finds it 'brief and proper.' She is 'impressed by its simplicity and seriousness.' She keeps the letter in the bottom of her trunk where she has already kept 'the perfumed letters' of Florentino Ariza's. She 'is shaken by the rush of shame' and finds another place to keep it. She remembers Florentino Ariza 'and even she was surprised at how removed he was from her life: the poor man' (Ibid.) Two more letters arrive and she recognizes 'the cryptic scrawl' as a physician's handwriting.' The narrator comments that 'beneath their propriety one could begin to detect an impatience that was never evident in the parsimonious letters of Florentino Ariza' (LTC 124).

After she has a reluctant ride with her cousin Hildebranda and Dr. Urbino she slept uncomfortably thinking of Dr. Urbino all the time. Next day she writes a letter to Dr. Urbino that he can talk to her father. They get married. During their honeymoon, after coming closer physically, the narrator observes,

He was aware that he did not love her. He married her because he liked her haughtiness, her seriousness, her strength, and also because of her vanity on her part, but as she kissed him for the first time he was sure there would be no obstacle to their inventing true love (LTC 150).

The honeymoon trip to Europe brings back Fermina as a mature human being. The busy life of managing the affairs of the home keeps her occupied. Florentino Ariza is not completely forgotten. He cuts her path sometimes on social occasions, at the church and poetry festivals. Florentino Ariza keeps his love for Fermina intact though he is not able to share the 'truth' from 'the bleeding wounds of his heart' (LTC 277). Despite the bonfire of her husband's belongings after his death she cannot erase his memory. His benign figure follows her on her trip with Florentino Ariza.

4. 'The requited love'— 'Thank you for coming'

On the day of Dr. Urbino's funeral Florentino Ariza proposes to widow Fermina Daza and it is vehemently rejected. After a few days he receives a letter from her. The letter is written in a rage. Florentino gives a reply to the letter, 'attempting a new method of seduction' (LTC 293)

this time not by hand but by typing it out on a type writer. Fermina is surprised to see that her letter ‘written in a blind rage’ has been ‘interpreted by Florentino Ariza as a love letter’ (LTC 279). Florentino Ariza gradually comes closer; a number of letters are exchanged between them. This time they are numbered and preserved by Fermina Daza. She thinks that they belong to the addresser and they should be returned. Her grown up children have different reactions to this development of intimacy between them. Her son, though surprised, approves it, but the daughter is not able to reconcile with this reality. Fermina Daza makes a ‘firm decision to go on with her life, remembering her husband as if he had not died’ (LTC 281). At the age of seventy-two Fermina Daza ‘could only understand it as a miracle of love’ (309). Now Fermina Daza ‘maintained her connection to Florentino Ariza by means of the Anachronistic thread of letters’ (LTC 315). Fermina Daza misses Florentino Ariza on Tuesdays. Her loneliness is lit by the presence of Florentino Ariza and she is grateful to him for his presence again in her life. The camellias of yesteryears turn into white roses.

Writing of love in the letters of separation

It is seen that Florentino Ariza and Fermina Daza are united again, after a hiatus of half a century, never to be separated again, to be ‘[F]orever’ (LTC 348) together sailing in the ship of ‘requited love’ on Magdalena river with a flag of cholera as if quarantined for the epidemic of love. They are able to ‘write for themselves’ an enigmatic unusual story of love in which some episodes (like the promiscuity of Florentino Ariza) are the dark patches on ‘the new fidelity’ of both Florentino Ariza and Fermina Daza. Their ‘new fidelity’ is untraditional, unusual, ‘revolting’ (to daughter Ofelia), difficult to understand (by some readers) and praised by many (“a revolutionary step” “this shining and heart-breaking novel” Pynchon 1988). Florentino Ariza writes his destiny together with his ‘crowned goddess’ Fermina Daza in his letters. A letter written in response to her ‘insulting letter’ he sent the typewritten one. After receiving it and hiding it from her daughter Fermina Daza’s

intention was to burn the letter later, when she was away from her daughter’s questions, but she could not resist the temptation of looking at it first...She was so intrigued that she locked herself in her bedroom to read it at her ease before she burned it, and she read it three times without pausing.

And Florentino Ariza has written ‘ourselves’ by reading that Fermina Daza discovers herself. Let us deconstruct it together because what we write as a reader is not for ‘presentation’ or ‘publication’ but we are ‘writing ourselves.’ Fermina’s reading of the letter helps her understand the meaning of their relationship,

It was a meditation on life, love, old age, death: ideas that had often fluttered around her head like nocturnal birds but dissolved into a trickle of feathers when she tried to catch hold of them. There they were, precise, simple, just as she would have liked to see them, and once again she grieved that her husband was not alive to discuss them with her as they used to discuss certain events of the day before going to bed. In this way an unknown Florentino Ariza was revealed to her, one possessed of clear-sightedness that in no way corresponded to the feverish love letters of his youth or to the somber conduct of his entire life. They were rather, the words of a man who...was inspired by the Holy Spirit...that this letter from a wise old man...but a very noble way of erasing the past. (LTC 299)

Evidently, the letter goes beyond fulfilling only the function of a narrative device rather it is a way to measure the depth in Fermina Daza’s change over the years. The letter deconstructs the emotions that were not visible from the crusts of Fermina Daza’s personal haughtiness and superimposed paternity first by her father and later by her husband.

6. Conclusion -‘Writing ourselves’

The letters of Florentino Ariza in Fermina Daza’s adolescent days, create confusion and infatuation, in her old age bring her ‘complete calm’ and ‘seemed of such great human value’ (LTC 290). Florentino Ariza through his letters create “reflective cognitive stance” (Van Manen 1990: 125-26 quoted in Rolfe 1997: 444), he writes for “discovery” and he is like the readers together “we are writing not for others but for ourselves” (Ibid. 445). As readers “[W]hen we write, we are not merely creating ideas, we are creating ourselves, we write ourselves” (Ibid. 447). Thus Marquez’s *Love in the Time of Cholera* is more than a love story. Its ‘text’ is ‘plural’ (168). It “asks of the reader a practical collaboration” (Barthes 1971: 171). A collaborative reading deconstructs the text and recreates a new one. At the end of the novel, at the age of 78, Florentino Ariza begins his new journey “he journeys into love against time” (Pynchon 1988). He tells the Captain with utmost conviction, “Let us keep going, going, going, back to La Dorada.” At this the Captain asks,

“Do you mean what you say?”

“From the moment I was born, said Florentino Ariza , “ I never said anything I did not mean” (LTC 348)

Florentino Ariza, President of the Caribbean Riverboat Company and his love, Fermina Daza start a new journey “Forever” beyond death, towards eternity. Marquez in his ‘writerly’ text has signified a new dimension of love through a ‘magic; that centres around writing as space for “[A]n epiphany to late-flowering love” (Shakespeare ND).

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Social and cultural constructs in Indian diaspora literature

-Kalpana Purohit

“The formation of a diaspora could be articulated as the quintessential journey into becoming; a process marked by incessant regroupings, recreations, and reiteration. Together these stressed actions strive to open up new spaces of discursive and performative postcolonial consciousness.”

-----Okwui Enwezor (a Nigerian curator, art critic and writer)

Postcolonial literature; a whole body of literature that emerged both as a ‘resistance and reform’ of ideologies, identities and experiences has garnered significant fresh concepts about race, colonialism, gender, culture, borders, politics and language. Diaspora being one of the most widely acclaimed key concepts of postcolonial literature has a lot in its arena to explore and understand about the constantly evolving impacts of colonial rule and the aftermath. The writers of diaspora not only aim to create a new genre of literature but also a literature that lays its roots in the past experiences, takes the nourishment from them and grows its branches in the present scenario that will bear the fruits of future. Indian diasporic movement/literature has produced works of wide social-cultural constructs in the wake of settlements beyond the national boundaries. The impact on plots and characters through the years is a subject of intrigue. In the age of globalization, the literature of diaspora is a platform to multiple voices that were silenced by dominant forces. The present paper is a modest attempt to delineate how alienation, displacement, rootlessness, nostalgia, gender and race form the centre to the periphery of the Quest for Identity. It also aims at exploring the disintegration of cultures, identity crises and hybridity in the shadow of borders and spaces. An effort to comprehend these concepts will be made with references to some women writers from Indian Diaspora.

The process of globalization and the inevitable expansion of “markets, transportation, communication, capital and skills have challenged the geographic hegemony of national governments” and their borders (Centre for Development Enterprise, 1997: 17). Globalization transcends territory, location, distance or borders, and has been accompanied by rapid migration of people across borders, and has raised questions about identity, citizenship and nationality. (Sahoo and Maharaj 1)

The massive movement of people across national borders around the globe due to globalization has led to the blurring of the definite borders between cultures and societies, creating newer cultural concepts. Postcolonial literature stands at the outset of the beginning of the age of globalization post 1950's and has produced works about race, colonialism, gender, politics, language and identity crises. These literary creations are crucial in forging new cultural identities and diaspora is one of the single most influential concepts that build the background to these cultural and social constructs.

A diaspora is a social construct founded on feeling, consciousness, memory, mythology, history, meaningful narratives, group identity, longings, dreams, allegorical and virtual elements all of which play an important role in establishing a diaspora reality. At a given moment in time, the sense of connection to a homeland must be strong enough to resist forgetting, assimilating or distancing (Shuval 43). Diasporic communities thus have a stronger emotional expression towards the ideas of identity, alienation, reformation and merger. However, scattered apart these diasporas may be, a common ethnic identity and relation to native homeland binds them together.

Diasporas are positioned somewhere between the nation-states and "travelling cultures" in that they involve dwelling in a nation state in a physical sense, but travelling in a astral or spiritual sense that falls outside the nation-states space/time zone. (Cohen 135-6). Diaspora is referred to a movement of population from its original homelands (Webster 22) thus signifies scattering, migration and dispersion of people. These migrated people, whatever their reason for migration be, financial, social, political, no matter whether they migrated for trade and commerce, as religious preachers, as laborers, convicts, soldiers, as expatriates or refugees, exiles (forced or voluntary), or as guest workers in search of better life have shared some common things as well as differences. It is observed regarding this migrated population;

A majority of them are international migrants who are potential immigrants in countries of their destination and who often converge into diasporic communities. These international migrants not only take their skills and expertise but also their culture and lifestyles with them. (Sahoo and Maharaj 3). This displacement and settlement procure deep socio-cultural experiences which can be understood under the umbrella of "diaspora" that has undergone a significant and diverse evolution in the field of social sciences. Associated displacement, dispersal and migrancy the

term 'diaspora' has outgrown its key concepts beyond human migration and mobility in the recent decades.

In the initial phases mostly, the migrants suffer from the pain of being far off from their homes, the memories of their motherland, the anguish of leaving behind everything familiar agonizes the minds of migrants. Settlement in foreign land makes them experience dislocation which in turn results into a break with the old identity. They experience the sense of loneliness in an alien land feel as they face non-acceptance by the host society and also experience ethnic discrimination. The immigrants attempt to assimilate, adapt and amalgamate with the society of their host country. Their attempts of adaptation and adjustment are not without their concern to maintain their original culture and identity. It is an attempt of the marginal groups to protect themselves against the dominant host group. The most prominent means used for insulation is the continuation of the cultural practices and social traditions.

It is also observed that, going back to the original land/ motherland is a natural desire of many diasporans, and this natural desire may well become a perpetual and utopian longing. On the other hand, strict alliance with co-ethnic members in the hostland may lead these people to turn their backs on the reality of the country in which they are now living. Contradictory feelings such as loss and gratitude, frustration and hope or joy and sorrow lie at the core of the diasporic position. To make matters even more complicated, the members of a specific diasporic community may greatly differ in terms of gender, race, class or ethnicity (Sahoo and Maharaj 7)

This ethnicity forms the cultural identity of diasporic communities and is based on a constant struggle within the community with other ethnic communities and with the state, thus it is an ever-changing and ever-reforming complex process.

The literature created around past one century is largely dominated by diasporic writings as it has witnessed the end of colonial empire and the dawn of globalization thus creating a platform to reform, research and revive the lost identities and wake up to the new independent existence on the global scenario. In the words of Peter Barry, 'the three stages (Adopt, Adapt and Adept) provide a way of seeing postcolonial literature' (Barry 190). Wherein the first phase implies an acceptance of the colonial authority and is observed as the 'Adopt' phase; the subsequent phase of 'Adapt' focusses on adapting the colonial forms into native subject matters, thus allowing a partial intervention and finally 'the 'Adept' phase, since its characteristic is the assumption that

the colonial writer is an independent 'adept' in the form, not a humble apprentice, as in the first phase, or a mere licensee, as in the second.' (189) There is a declaration of cultural independence in the final phase.

Originally used for Jewish dispersion from their homeland, the term 'diaspora' is now applied as a 'metaphoric designation' for immigrants, exiles and refugees who have shuttled due to multiple reasons across the globe. Africa, the Middle East, and the Indian subcontinent form the breeding grounds for diasporic literatures and thus provide the most extensive works that create and explore the key concepts of postcolonial studies. South Asia which reflects the nations of Indian subcontinent, however the concept of South Asia has been a subject of confusion in regard to its sociological identity, since 'It encompasses distinctly different categories of people who trace their origins either directly to the Indian subcontinent (India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh), or else indirectly through their ancestors who migrated to East and the South Africa, Fiji, East and South-East Asia, the Caribbean and elsewhere. Being South Asian refers not so much to individual personal qualities as to social characteristics that have been constructed and reconstructed in historical and ongoing social relations in specific social, economic and political contexts (Sahoo and Maharaj 13).

As mentioned earlier migration is a subject to various reasons, but Diaspora migration differs from other types of migration in that in many cases it is based on claims to a "natural right" to return to an historic homeland. In this type of migration an ascriptive, ethnic or religious criterion is used to claim the right to return and entitlement to specific benefits... It is incorrectly assumed that diasporas are always a result of exile. Indeed, they are often initiated by processes of uprooting, pogroms, political, religious or racial oppression... In many- perhaps most cases migrants seek to become parts of the host society and culture and many relegate their previous cultural baggage to their past (33). Wherein such diasporic movements are not that make them different from migrations based on other grounds but it is observed that the continuous and re-awakened attachment and loyalty to their earlier culture of the native land they left. The sense of diaspora is associated with its three appropriate referents: the diasporic group itself, the host society and the homeland.

Diasporic writings unfold these experiences of unsettlement and dislocation, at some or the other level. The social function of diaspora is specifically to maintain a sense of community and

belonging to a more warm, rewarding and welcoming social entity amidst the context of exclusion, limited opportunities and social-political discriminations in the host countries. Hence, a diasporic text can be observed in the light of location, dislocation and relocation. The intense feelings about changing designation of home and accompanying nervousness about homelessness and unfeasibility of going back are certain and most relevant in diasporic literature. The close connection of the diaspora writings with such socio-cultural constructs often poses a need to understand culture with its characteristics, history and influences on civilizations. Though not similar to diasporic culture but a parallel subject of culture studies has also developed in past two decades, Stuart Hall pioneered the subject in his various lectures.

Cultural studies emerged as an interdisciplinary field of research that explores the ways in which “culture” creates and transforms individual experiences, everyday life, social relations and power. After the Second World War, England was no longer the centre of Western industrial society. America, became the harbinger for what was to come due to the rise of media and free markets. In a land where rags-to-riches mobility is—or so we tend to imagine—just one hit away, culture is about what you want to project into the world, whether you are fronting as a member of the élite or as an everyman.

Combining the strengths of the social sciences and the humanities, cultural studies draws on methods and theories from literary studies, sociology, communications studies, history, cultural anthropology, and economics. By working across the boundaries among these fields, cultural studies exposes new questions and problems of today’s world. Rather than seeking answers that will hold for all time, cultural studies develops flexible tools that adapt to this rapidly changing world. Stuart Hall a British Sociologist propounded culture studies as a separate discipline in the year 1983 and ‘Culture, he argued, does not consist of what the educated élites happen to fancy, such as classical music or the fine arts. It is, simply, “experience lived, experience interpreted, experience defined.” And it can tell us things about the world, he believed, that more traditional studies of politics or economics alone could not.’

Cultural life is not only concerned with symbolic communication, it is also the domain in which we set collective tasks for ourselves and begin to grapple with them as changing communities. Cultural studies is devoted to understanding the processes through which societies and the diverse groups within them come to terms with history, community life, and the challenges of the

future. Cultural themes, expressions and constructs also remain integral to diasporic literature and have been widely explored in the context of Indian diaspora. There is so much of cultural mixing in the postcolonial era that it has given birth to 'hybrid culture'. Graham Huggan asserts that the present era is the era of hybridization. Culture is a derivative of past and present, individual and collective, regional and alien experiences that influence and formulate the identity of a society. Culture is both individual and social construct; "Culture as social, as a way of life whereby it expresses the structure of feeling of social group... meaning and values of ordinary behaviour and social institution as well as in terms of their place in art and learning" (Smith 23).

India is a country with unmatched variation and abundance in regard to cultures, religions, folklore, languages, regions, societies, arts, casts, food and such socio-cultural elements that form the extensive and intricate cultural and social fabric of India. And acknowledging this fact it is quite acceptable to find vast networks based on language and region, religion and caste among the Indian diaspora. Research has been carried out in the recent years to study this versatility in Indian diaspora; they include the production of diasporic identities in Mauritius, Tamil Hindus in Malaysia and the ethnicity over the generations of Indian Jains in the United States etc.

The modern Indian Diaspora is one of the most demographic dislocations emerged with the "multiplicity of histories, variety of culture, tradition and a deep instinct of survival" (Baubock and Faist 9). This includes the different phases of evolution in diaspora that are migrance, hybridity and quest for identity. Thus, a contemporary writer whether in India or abroad, writes from different perspectives. Regarding this Salman Rushdie one of the most prominent creators of Indian Diaspora Writing has rightly observed in one of his articles, "We are Hindus who have crossed black water, we are Muslims who eat pork... as my use of the Christian notion of the Fall indicates... we are now partly of the West. Our identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times that we fall between two stools... (The Indian Writer in England 11)". The postcolonial condition entails this experience of loss and the ability to inhabit multiple spaces simultaneously. Edward Said also observed identity in the light of mixed notions of belonging and longing as he goes on to write in his *Culture and Imperialism*, "between domains, between forms, between homes and between language (65)."

“--- one physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of redeeming precisely the thing that was lost, that will, in short, create fictions not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indians of mind.” (Salman Rushdie)

The literature of the Indian diaspora constitutes an important part of the burgeoning field of anglophone postcolonial literature. Some of the better-known authors in this archive include V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry, Bharati Mukherjee, Amitav Ghosh, Jhumpa Lahiri, Anita Desai, M.G. Vassanji, Shyam Selvadurai, and Kiran Desai. While the first-generation immigrants from India constantly nurse their grievances against the homeland, the second and third generations look at India without prejudices and take pride in India's accomplishments. For them, India is a brand name, which they can use for their own advancement and they become true assets for the country. This feeling of elation at India's exalted status is present in the writings of young people.

Generally, diasporic literature deals with alienation, displacement, existential rootlessness, nostalgia, quest of identity. It also focusses on the issues related to amalgamation or disintegration of cultures. It reflects the immigrant experience that comes out of the immigrant settlement. Indian diaspora remains a major platform to these continuously evolving themes in the age of globalization. Uma Parameswaran has defined it in a series of phases;

The first is one of nostalgia for the homeland left behind mingled with fear in a strange land. The second is a phase in which one is busy adjusting to the new environment that there is little creative output. The third phase is the shaping of diaspora existence by involving themselves ethnocultural issues. The fourth is when they have 'arrived' 42 and start participating in the larger world of politics and national issues. (Parmeswaran, 165)

As the expatriate writer experiences cultural, geographical and emotional displacement, there emerges a diasporic sensibility that mirrors the plural identity of the writer. Their writing is characterized by a pluralistic vision. There is a constant shifting between two worlds, voyaging back and forth between two locales. Expatriate writing is the outcome of the existential, political and metaphysical unsettlement. The safety of the members often provides an illusion of homes and shelter from an alien and hostile society. Caught within the system of binary oppositions that label them as an outsider and the others, they tend to highlight differences and assume a particularization that negates the universalizing principals within western discourse. Arnold

Harrichand Itwaru in *The Invention of Canada: Literary Text and the immigrant imaginary*, stated;

“The immigrant writer is not merely the author who speaks about the immigrant experience, but one who has lived it, one whose response is an irruption of words, images, metaphors, one who is familiar with some of the inner as well as the outer workings of these particular contexts.” (245)

The expatriate novelist's works investigate the cultural displacement and its impact. The uprooted immigrants face varied situations, problems of rejection and acceptance. If accepted, the problem would be an adjustment, coping with the anxiety, monotony, disappointment, isolation and finally they face failure and rejection. Rejection: The works of expatriate writers depict the effect of cultural uprootedness and the never-ending experiences of which social rejection is central. Social rejection is when a group of people decides, to reject one or more persons from participation in their group.

Class and gender also play an important role in the shaping of not just the diaspora but also diaspora's interface with cultures. A major theme in diasporic writing is their occupation of liminal space. This writing remains an outsider looking in at the new culture, but it is also an outsider to the homeland, looking in at a past of space that has altered in their absence. Another significant theme is dual identity, the conflict between a person's ethnic inheritance and individual identity. This issue develops the tension between a desire for assimilation and the need for ethnic identity. This is at the base of the conflict between generations, between mothers and fathers who wish to preserve cultural ethnicity, and children want liberty to maintain their individuality. As Esman relates in the study of Diasporas,

These peoples all of whom share the same homeland, in order to preserve their customs and culture and to recreate the familiar sort of surrounds much associated with their idea of their homeland formed communities through to which they can hold on to their roots. Such diasporas then extend and expand including not only the original immigrants... but also their posterity, the second generation “as long as they choose to or are forced to remain a separate community. It is possible though, that in the next generations to come and through the continuous process of assimilation, some diasporas melt into the mainstream culture and gradually disappear as a distinct community through time. thus process however, is a very long-lasting and slow-moving

one and the first and even the second generation of immigrants, those who around Lahiri's fiction in general, often have to face up to problems and to be afflicted with scars and traumas to their national, ethnic, culture and gender Identities. What needs to be taken into account here is that the notion of identity in general and diasporic identity in particular is not a set, fixed and essential whole but is rather "constructed, fluid and multiple" (Brubaker, 1)

Stuart Hall, also in his essay "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" indicates that we conceive the identity "as a production", which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (222). In the diasporic experience then, "boundaries of the self" are as fluid as ever and this is when the postcolonial concepts of hybridity and liminality come to the foreground. On the other hand, Homi K. Bhabha in his *The location of Culture* (1994) sabotages the long held binary way of thinking about cultural identity in terms of the yawning gaps between Self / Other. He presents an inter-crossed version of identity according to which the self is present in the other and vice-versa. The literature of the Indian diaspora constitutes an important part of the burgeoning field of anglophone postcolonial literature. Some of the better-known authors in this archive include V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry, Bharati Mukherjee, Amitav Ghosh, Jhumpa Lahiri, Anita Desai, M.G. Vassanji, Shyam Selvadurai, and Kiran Desai.

The impressions such as hybridity, migration and identity are explored extensively in select works of prominent women writers of Indian diaspora --- Bharti Mukherjee's 'Wife' Jhumpa Lahiri's "The Namesake" and Kiran Desai's *Inheritance of Loss*.

Bharti Mukherjee's second novel *Wife* (1975) is a story about the predicament of cross-cultural dichotomy and its negative effect on the self of Dimple, the protagonist which leaves her undecided knowing how to react. The story builds up on how being caught between the two cultures of the east and the west, the past and the present, the life in America with its immigrant problems create chaos and disorder in the relationship between a husband and wife. The novel also exposes how a woman's immigrant experiences and her encounter with new culture are bound to be different from that of a man; a woman needs love, care and time from her husband and the lack of this compels a woman to think herself doubly marginalized: as a woman and as an immigrant.

Mukherjee's works reveal her movement from Canada to U.S.A. and the consequent aloofness of expatriation to the exuberance of immigration. Her beginning works can be classified under the stage of expatriation revealing her dark days of alienation, love and betrayal and racial discrimination she suffered in Canada and portrayed through her protagonists. *The Tiger's Daughters* (1971), *Wife* (1975) and *The Canadian Stories of Darkness* (1985). Abha Panday in *Indian Diasporic Literature* writes,

"Bharti Mukherjee has shown dual cultural shock. This migration or cultural transplant lends to a crisis of identity and final reconciliation to the problem of a displaced person in America as well as India... In all fiction of Bharti Mukherjee covering many moods of expatriations, nostalgia and frustration. (Pandey 125) and to quote Mukherjee herself admits, "The finding of a new identity... the painful or exhilarating process of pulling yourself out of the culture that you were born... then replanting yourself in another culture."

Concerning the themes of cultural displacement and search for identity, Bharati Mukherjee's *Wife* (1975) explores the challenges of the protagonist Dimple who is a traditionally raised Indian woman who finds herself sinking into cross-cultural conflicts in New York City. Dimple is aware about her marginal position in the conventional society which has little regard for women. To make the matters worse her marriage to Amit Basu who himself struggles for a decent living in America, further brings psychological conflicts of selfhood, love and emotions in Dimple's life. As an Indian, Dimple never wants to be a part of American society and feels a constant nostalgia about her candid life in Calcutta. She tries to settle in the American culture but fails to assimilate into it. To quote from the text;

"she is scared of self-service elevators of policemen, of gadgets and appliances. She does not want to lose her identity, but feels isolated, trapped, alienated, marginalized" (*Wife* 112). It seems utterly difficult for her to settle amongst the people who know nothing about Durga pooja. "how could she live in a country... where every other woman was a stranger, where she felt different, ignored, exposed to ridicule in the elevator" (112). She accepts her inconvenience and emotions as she says, "I am sorry, Dimple whispered. There are some things I can't do. Wearing pants is one of them... I just don't want to start all this. If I wear pants to eat pizza in the winter, who knows what I'll be wearing to eat at the Dairy Queen next summer" (154). Mukherjee

succeeds in displaying the sole shattering identity crises faced by her protagonist amidst the culture divide.

Yet another celebrated women diaspora writer is the Pulitzer Prize-winning author Jhumpa Lahiri who is known for her depiction of immigrant and Indian-American life, the universal themes of longing, loneliness, the lost-self and barriers of communication also remain at the centre of her stories. A common thread running through Lahiri's writings is the experience of being "foreign". *The Namesake* (2003), Lahiri's first novel, was wisely received for her deft portrayal of the immigrant experience and her characters again deal with complex issues of cultural and generational gaps. The story travels between Calcutta, Boston and New York city, examining the nuances involved with being caught between two conflicting cultures with their highly distinct religious, social and ideological differences. The story builds around the struggle of Ashok and Ashima a Bengali couple, who leave Calcutta and settle in Central square, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Gogol Ganguli, the novel's protagonist, son of Ashok and Ashima is a young man negotiating the divide between his parents' traditional Indian roots and his own American identity. Thus, setting the socio-cultural construct between generations, identity and boundaries. To quote from the text;

"Without a single grandparent or parent or uncle or aunt at her side, the baby's birth, like most everything else in America, feels somehow haphazard, only half true. As she strokes and suckles and studies her son, she can't help but pity him. She has never known of a person entering the world so alone, so deprived." (Lahiri, 24) a portrayal of nostalgia, loss and misery in these thoughts of Ashima are weaved with extraordinary sensitivity.

"In so many ways, his family's life feels like a string of accidents, unforeseen, unintended, one incident begetting another...They were things for which it was impossible to prepare but which one spent a lifetime looking back at, trying to accept, interpret, comprehend. Things that should never have happened, that seemed out of place and wrong, these were what prevailed, what endured, in the end." (286)

Saloni Prasad while praising Lahiri opines rightly about Gogol's separation from his parents and his cultural displacement: Lahiri, as a second generation immigrant seems to have a delicate understanding and empathy of her characters. Gogol, moving away from his parents, in seeking a life separate from theirs might be interpreted as an exercise in cultural displacement [...] She

shows great skill in her exploration of human psyche, their inner turmoil and growth, the reaction of changes in culture and the powerful effect that our heritage can have on us. The search for identity with culture in the background is dealt prolifically by Lahiri and everything including gender, homeland, geography, occupation and role within the community can be a decisive factor in the growth of her characters.

Kiran Desai's Booker winning novel *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) stands as one of the finest works of Indian Diaspora Literature staging multiple diasporic inner experiences of the people away from their motherland. Set in the New York city and in Kalimpong a small town in India in the North-eastern Himalayas of 1980's, it is the story of Sai who lives in Kalimpong and Biju an illegal immigrant in New York. Sai is the orphaned grand-daughter of an old retired judge, Jemubhai Patel who lives with his cook and dog, Mutt, Sai joins the judge in the decrepit mansion. The three lead a tightly knit solitary life with occasional distractions from Sai's Anglophile sisters down the road and Gyan – the tutor. Sai's arrival reminds the judge of his journey to England as a young lad, he recalls; "He envied the English. He loathed Indians. He worked at being English with the passion of hatred and for what he would become, he would be despised by absolutely everyone, English and Indians, both," Desai writes. Nevertheless he strikes up a tentative attachment to his grand-daughter perhaps because she is a lot like him, a westernized Indian, an "estranged Indian living in India"

Arguably the most charming portions of the novel are the nuggets Desai paints of the cook's son Bijju who shuttles between jobs struggling with low wages. Describing one of the Indian restaurants Bijju works in Desai writes, "In the Gandhi café, the lights were kept low, the better to hide the stains. It was a long journey from here to the fusion trend, the goat cheese and basil samosa, the mango margarita. This was the real thing, generic Indian, and it could be ordered complete one stop on the subway line or even on the phone: gilt and rad chairs, plastic roses on the table with synthetic dewdrops." The imagery and observation of the surroundings makes the story lifelike.

Immigration has been viewed from different angles and Desai in this work proposes it as a act of cowardice, "He knew what his father thought: that immigration, so often presented as a heroic act, could just as easily be the opposite; that it was cowardice that led many to America; fear marked the journey, not bravery; a cockroachy desire to scuttle to where you never saw poverty, not really, never had to suffer a tug to your conscience; where you never heard the demands of servants, beggars, bankrupt relatives, and where your generosity would never be openly claimed; where by merely looking after your wife-child-dog-yard you could feel virtuous. Experience the

relief of being an unknown transplant to the locals and hide the perspective granted by journey.” (Desai 329) The diasporic cultural conflict that poses the concepts of sub-nationalism, identity crises and subaltern experiences have been extensively weaved in this masterpiece by Kiran Desai.

Thus, it can be opined that multiculturalism is that parcel of civilization which has continued to ignite varied human emotions, creativity and societies reforming and resisting the orders of life. Diaspora is all about the creation of new identities, spaces for growth, boundaries to limit and explore, resolution of conflicts and a new culture, either composite or plural. That is to say, Diasporic writings are constructed not on the principles of harmony but on the principles of simultaneity. Mahatma Gandhi said in *Young India*;

“I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the culture of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any”

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The Third Gender: Challenging Stereotypes

-Madhuri Chawla

Gender is a multifaceted construct, viewed differently in different societies. Traditional views of gender enforce either a female or a male role. In the Indian society, there exists an institutionalized third gender role which is, as Serena Nanda says, “neither male nor female, containing elements of both” called hijra, distinctly different from the Western concept of transgender. The hijra identity challenges Western ideas of sex and gender as it has no exact match in the modern Western classification of gender or sexual orientation. .

The word hijra is, derived from the Arabic root “hjr” meaning "leaving one's tribe". It has traditionally been translated into English as "eunuch" or "hermaphrodite", defined by "the irregularity of the male genitalia", that is, those having been born with intersex variations.

Traditionally, the hijras in India have an active and celebrated lifestyle. They are unique because they have an active social organization that is both traditional and ritualistic (Freilich, 150). They live in well-defined and organised all-hijra communities, led by a guru, which have sustained themselves over generations by "adopting" young boys who are rejected by, or flee, their family of origin. (Vinay Lal, 199) Though the hijras themselves distinguish between those who are born hijras –(that is, born with ambiguous genitals) and those who undergo natural or artificial sex change later, the term nevertheless is generally used to describe all cross dressers, intersex people and transgender people, who are recognised as the country's 'third gender' today.

Hijras exist all over India, and have a recorded history in the Indian subcontinent since times immemorial. Mention of a third sex, ‘tritiya prakriti’ can be found in the famous work ‘Kama Sutra’, compiled in the 2nd Century. The hijras were not only recognized throughout Hindu history, they have also been recorded as honourable and dependable servants (eunuchs), hired to specifically serve the women of the noble classes of Islamic societies.

The popularity of hijras has been backed by many inherent stereotypes and myths giving the hijra community a supernatural status. The construction of the hijra identity draws its inheritance

from the portraits of hijra characters playing significant roles in popular Hindu epics like the Mahabharata and the Ramayana as well as in Islamic history .

It is commonly believed that when Lord Rama left Ayodhya for the 14 years' exile, he asked all the men and women who had followed him to the edge of the forest to wipe their tears and go back. When Rama returned after 14 years, he found many people with long beards and nails in deep meditation who had not gone back 14 years ago, for they were neither men nor women. Lord Rama, moved by their devotion, bestowed upon them 'the power to bless' on auspicious occasions like childbirth and weddings. This boon, according to tradition, is the origin of badhai in which hijras sing, dance, and give blessings.

Mahabharata includes an episode in which Arjun, during the year of agyatvaas of his exile, assumes the identity of Vrihnnalla, a eunuch-transvestite, and performs rituals that are now performed by hijras. In another episode, one finds the story of Aravan, the valiant son of Arjuna and his wife Ulupi, the Naga princess. According to Peruntevanar's ParataVenpa, a 9th-century Tamil version of the Mahabharata, believing that Goddess Kali ensures victory for the forces of the warrior who sacrifices his life, Aravan volunteers to sacrifice himself. But to be entitled to the right to proper cremation and funerary offerings (bachelors were simply buried), he wished to be married before the sacrifice. As no woman wanted to marry him, fearing widowhood, Krishna took on his female form, Mohini, married Aravan and spent that night with him. As Aravan's widow after the sacrifice Krishna as Mohini mourns his death before returning to his original masculine form to return to the war. The hijras therefore are also known as 'Aravanis' as they trace their lineage from this couple, consider themselves to be Mohini, the female form of Lord Vishnu. They also annually celebrate the 'Koothandavar' festival to recall this incident. The Aravanis take part in this annual festival celebrated in Koovagam by re-enacting the marriage of Aravan and Mohini. Hijras are also associated with Shiva, worshipped in the 'lingam' form, which represents a fusion of male and female genitalia. The belief that, coupling of the masculine and feminine in the 'Shivalingam' symbolizes an inseparable cosmic unity, supports the perception of the hijras' spiritual speciality due to which, their blessings on special occasions are considered to be auspicious. The cultural dynamics of the role of hijras in the Indian society is very complex. They are revered, sought after, and at the same time, socially marginalized. Today, two types of hijras exist in India. There are some hijra communities in which spiritual

meanings are preserved; and there are also some individuals and groups who assume the identity of hijra to scratch out a living through begging, menial jobs, and even sex work. In popular perception, they are intersexed, impotent people who undergo emasculation, and adopt female dress and other aspects of female behaviour. At a busy intersection, one commonly sees a group of hijra flit gracefully among the rows of cars and knocking on their windows for money. They just clap their hands in a particular manner and have their way anywhere and everywhere. Although their role requires them to dress like women, one observes that their dress and mannerisms are generally exaggerated, and they demonstrate a burlesque of female behaviour, expressing sexual overtones, which is in total opposition to the Indian ideal of demure and submissive femininity. Their speech is coarse and abusive, and one often finds a hijra dressed as a woman but exposing hairy muscular arms. They are popularly considered to be ‘shameless people, who would often threaten to lift up their skirts to expose the genitals in order to extract money’. People are fearful to talk to them because of the fear of their outrageous behaviour and language. By and large derided and scorned they are relegated to the margins, alienated, looked at as freaks and denied participation and presence in schools, workplaces, and other institutions. So, paradoxically, for hijra, the same gender ambiguity that grants her a holy status, makes her a social pariah also. And one generally finds a stereotypical representation of the hijra in literature, cinema, paintings, sculpture and even mythology.

The hijras in the Indian society/culture occupy a place which is totally self-contained. They are not accepted within the normal social or family structures. Ostracised from the mainstream, and relegated to the margins, they are deprived of education and employment opportunities and are forced to earn their living through doles, extortion, dancing at weddings, etc. They are never considered an integral part of the whole. Though their blessings are sought when a child is born, a new house is built and even at weddings their appearance is considered to be auspicious, yet they are perceived as a curse on the society and the word ‘hijra’ is often used as a derogatory term.

Veena Verma, whose short story ‘Sati’, written in Punjabi, is the focus of the present paper, is a narrative about one such hijra. A diasporic writer of South Asian origin, Veena Verma, is a remarkable non-conformist writer who portrays the subjugation of the marginalized members of the Indian society, be they women, children, men or hijras. In all her works one discerns a deep

concern for the oppressed and the marginalized, and their responses to oppression which manifest severally but most strikingly at the psychological level.

The Paper attempts to analyse how the hijras, trapped within the codified gender roles, try to adapt to their circumstances, though perpetually searching for happiness which is ever evasive and eluding for them.

Veena Verma in the chosen short story 'Sati' re-presents the popular perception about the hijra. The narrative is designed in a manner that it makes us relook at these issues concerning the hijra and the need to assimilate them into the normal and the ordinary.

The selection of a hijra as the protagonist is in itself the writer's attempt at inclusion defying the normative, and precisely for this reason, the reader is not introduced to the fact that the central character, Krishna, is a 'hijra' when the narrative begins. The story does not represent her as per the popular notion of the gendered identity. As we enter the tale, Krishna who is addressed as a 'kudi' is described in entirely feminine terms. She is rendered with a traditionally feminine comparison of a free flowing river without any reference to the fact that she is not a woman. With a heightened aesthetic sensibility, she is shown as any other young girl, conscious of her youth and beauty and its effect on others. Krishna does not merely have looks to her advantage, she dresses up in latest style as well, has a God gifted melodious voice and is in addition also a graceful dancer who holds her audience captivated. A carefree, confident 'Kudi' she casts her magic spell or 'sammohak jaal' on the beholder. The popular notion about the hijras as ugly, unattractive, and who put on aesthetically repulsive loud makeup is countered by the portrayal of Krishna being 'as beautiful as a fairy', which is what we initially learn about her.

The reality of her 'being' only gradually unfolds as the story unravels, her bargaining power, the details about her group and the strategies used by them. The writer Verma here attempts to delineate her as an individual, a human, a being like any other, focussing on her attributes that make her distinct rather than look at her through the coloured social construct and assign to her a stereotyped portrayal..

The author's presentation of Krishna as an epitome of 'womanhood', of being admired and adulated by other women, voices a sentiment which stands in total contrast to the general perception about the hijras as a nuisance. In fact, the story indicates that women respect her,

understand and empathize with her fate and invariably refer to her as a 'Kudi', and often lament the fact that the 'izzat' of a respectable family had been destined to such a fate. Enamoured by her beauty, charm and conduct, they develop a fondness for her, discuss her life and are intrigued about her antecedents, finally finding solace in the theory of karma and fate.

The absence of genitals generally constrains the hijras, and the theory of Karma is very conveniently woven into the social fabric as also in the narrative of discrimination. Krishna does not have a complete body and so she does not have a place in the body politic. Her destiny is bound by her body, she feels choked, and suffocated by all the so called narratives which restrain her within her role which Veena Verma wants to deconstruct.

Curtailed within her sphere, her domain of exclusion, segregated from the 'normal' sphere by custom, Krishna pines for a family. While the other members of her community accept their fate with the theory of karma, Krishna thinks that she does not gel with others and yearns to assimilate into the conventional. The hijras, as a community, are considered to be different, and from this construction of differences, comes the idea that they have no feelings, have no need for a family or familial bonds or any socially accepted relationships, and are socially perceived as the 'other'. But the writer subverts this popular notion by giving us a peep into Krishna's psyche, her desire for a 'normal' life -to be loved by a husband, to take care of her children, to look after her home. The pain and angst discernible in her voice even when she sings on a happy occasion corroborates the fact that she deeply misses a normal family life. Krishna sees herself as an aberration of nature and believes that she is 'serving a sentence for a crime she has not committed'.

The author is de-constructing the popular perception that the hijras are conditioned to accept their lot and are contented with their situation. The author questions this notion, by projecting Krishna as being discontented with what she is made out to be by society. Though she has been reared and groomed from childhood as a hijra, has been ideologically brainwashed, and plays her role well, yet her inner being yearns for a better fate. She knows that had she been a girl this cursed existence would not have been her destiny. The author discretely, critiques the deterministic approach of gender difference on the basis of biology..

As the story progresses, Krishna falls in love with Namdev, a young, handsome, rich man from a neighbouring village who treats her as a woman, even though he calls her a 'kanjari'. The

acceptance as a woman, even if addressed as a prostitute or a sex worker, is sufficient to help her transcend the constructed identity. The ultimate analysis revolves around the popular perception of gender binaries and that the third gender is devoid of normal emotions. When Namdev begins to visit her, one discerns a transformation in Krishna as her body begins to bloom, becomes fuller, and she appears to be psychologically and physically gratified. She behaves like his wife, believes herself to be pregnant, taking all the precautions meant for a pregnant woman.

All her life she has craved to be considered a woman, interrogating her hijra self, not accepting the given identity. The mutual love/attraction between her and Namdev makes her feel very feminine, and through her love Krishna illustrates that it is possible to go beyond the stereotype. Krishna challenges her fate and tries to live another reality.

Through the trope of the image of the hijra, the narrative questions as to what or who is 'normal'; is it essential to be a woman, or to be able to bear children, or can the so called unfeminine hijra, perceived to be sans emotions, sans desires too be called 'normal'? When a man treats her like any ordinary woman, Krishna blossoms. Their love for one another becomes a kind of anchor for her. She assumes the role of a wife, cleans the room for his visits, looks after his needs, stops performing the role of a hijra despite constant pressure from her community. Even her language and mannerisms undergo metamorphosis. Krishna turns into a docile, domesticated housewife.

When Namdev falls ill Krishna, like an ideal wife, offers all her jewellery and savings to the doctor to save his life. Through her bickering with Namdev's wife, Verma reveals the feelings of a jealous, possessive wife in Krishna, who refers to him as 'mera aadmi'. Her not being 'normal' does not hamper or make her doubt his love for her and her right over him. She tells Dev's wife "he's your husband only in name, actually he's only mine." She also shows the humane and socially responsible side of the hijras when she says that she could have any time taken away Dev from his wife but the innocent faces of his children kept her from doing so. On Namdev's death, Krishna religiously performs all the rituals that his wife performs, insists that the grief and loss are all hers and not of his wife. She insists to be treated as his widow and given the same status. The sympathy and empathy of people for Krishna at this juncture also signify a departure from the established norms. Namdev's family lets her be a part of the household, accept her as their second daughter in law, and post the mourning she is not asked to return to her space. The parents accept her grief as genuine and the wife begins to think of her as a 'sister' in her grief

and loss, rather than the 'other' woman in her husband's life. Krishna, thus, manages to get acceptance, not only in the family but also as a woman, which is evident when Namdev's wife hands over her own child to Krishna to be looked after and also says that she can sense Namdev's presence through her. The narrative reveals the writer's desire to open up motherhood, make it relational and disassociate it from biological reproduction. Being close to Krishna, the wife could feel closeness to Namdev. This manifests the transcendence from the bodily, the physical to the spiritual. Krishna has no desire for money, renounces life, gives up her profession, pines for Namdev. The hijra's body is no longer a restriction for not being a part of the normative society. Whether it is Krishna, Namdev, his wife or his family members, the institutions and social constructs do not rule the heart. Even the society no longer rejoiced with the juicy gossip of their love affair, rather they shared her sufferings and struggle. Thus, through Krishna, Veena Verma questions the possible and the probable.

Her spiritual upliftment leads Krishna to renounce the worldly activities and the lively young river turns into a 'calm ocean'. As she pines away in love she refuses to take treatment for her illness and finds the body a burden, for she feels her soul has already left with Namdev as she bears the yoke of this life waiting to be united with him. Inconsolable in her grief she soon dies. In her death too, Verma breaks the stereotype as Krishna is not given a hijra funeral which is generally marked by celebration at being released from the cursed existence. Rather, the entire village becomes a part of her funeral procession and mourns her death. Her 'womanhood' is further emphasized in their grief and mourning as if a young girl of the village has been unjustly taken away by death. . Though rejected in life by the society, Krishna, in her death, is given a place with the other women of the village. She is exalted and deified as a 'Devi' who blesses women with fertility and children with longevity. The renunciation and spirituality that she exhibits is, once again, not in accordance with the popular perception of the hijra. Primarily for this reason, she's accepted as Sati, 'the epitome of womanhood' and her memory becomes a part of folk narrative, and one discerns a celebration of the breaking of stereotype rather than ostracism towards the end of the narrative.

Veena Verma, a Punjabi diasporic writer located in the United Kingdom, has objectively critiqued the social fabric of her roots. Having herself faced double marginalization of being a woman and being displaced, her empathy towards the other marginalized sections of the society

is genuine and comes forth distinctly. Her own desire to integrate and to be accepted is reflected best in the narrative through the protagonist's struggle to deconstruct her marginalized identity through her non-conformity which forces the others also to reconceptualise the clichéd. The portrayal of Krishna challenges conventional ideas about the relationship between gender, beauty and desirability, and coaxes the reader to re-examine their own ways of 'seeing' and 'being'.

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Doris Lessing's the golden notebook: transcending across golden genders

-Anita Sharma

Introduction

The Golden Notebook by Doris Lessing, the winner of Nobel Prize for literature, 2007 was first published in 1962 and is now considered one of the classics of the 20th Century novel. The novel in post modern context ranges over a period from about 1944 to 1957. The action is primarily set in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and London, England. It is a story of two women Molly and Anna, primarily of the latter, a divorcee, a single mother and a novelist with a block, as Lessing put it. There has always been literature about the shaping of artists, such as James Joyce's the Portrait of an Artist as a Youngman. Anna has already published a novel The Frontiers of War but suffers from a block thereafter. Molly urges her not to waste her talent but she cannot understand why Anna is held up for writing. Anna lives with her young daughter, Janet and perhaps do not want to remarry. Molly's case is different. She will get married, so she says and have more children, besides Tommy who is now grown up but is handicapped young man. Anna feels that they both wish to get married, though she gives it a lighter turn. Anna Wulf attempts to record her life in her four colored notebooks and knotting them in unison in The Golden Notebook towards the end. The book intersperses segments of an ostensibly realistic narrative of the lives of Anna and her friend, Molly Jacobs, as well as their children, ex-husbands and lovers—entitled Free Women—with excerpts from Anna's four notebooks. Each notebook is returned to four times, interspersed with episodes from Free Women, creating non-chronological, overlapping sections that interact with one another. This post-modern styling, with its space for "play" engaging the characters and readers, is among the most famous features of the book.

The notebooks

Anna is a writer, author of one very successful novel, who now keeps four notebooks. In one, with a black cover, she reviews the African experience of her earlier year and focuses on her experiences with the reception and adaptation of her novel.. Anna is the main character and protagonist of the novel. She also functions as the antagonist because her struggles with

creativity, self-awareness, and emotional stability impede her from thriving in her career and finding happiness. In a red one she records her political life, her experiences and disillusionment with communism. In a yellow one she writes a novel which contains a narrative called "The Shadow of a Third," which seems to be a thinly fictionalized account of Anna's relationship with Michael and relives part of her own experience. And in the blue one she keeps a personal diary that records her dreams, memories and reflections. Finally, in love with an American writer and threatened with insanity, Anna tries to bring the threads of all four books together in a golden notebook. In an autobiographical tone the novel is a chronicle of disenchantment and failure intertwining the political and emotional conflicts through her imagined protagonist Ella.

Reality and fiction

The novel has become a function of the fragmented society, the fragmented consciousness of male and female genders often transcending across love, sex and relationships. Human beings are so divided that they reach out desperately for their own wholeness, and the novel is a means toward it. Anna's use of four different notebooks is initially meant to help her keep different parts of her life separated and organized. However, as Anna's mental health declines, it becomes increasingly difficult for her to see herself as a coherent individual. Because she sees tensions between her identities of mother, lover, writer, and political organizer, she begins to feel more fragmented and conflicted in the Cold War era. "The idea behind consciousness-raising is that the personal experiences of women should not be separated from the political movement of feminism. In fact, the personal experiences of women reflect the political state of society." (459) "I see Ella, walking slowly about a big empty room, thinking, waiting. I, Anna, see Ella. Who is, of course, Anna. But that is the point, for she is not. (57)"

This quote shows Anna thinking about the relationship she has with her characters. It is clear to a reader that Ella shares many similarities with Anna, and this quote shows Anna acknowledging that she draws on her own experiences and emotions in order to write about Ella in the yellow notebook. Writing about a character that is similar to her, gives Anna a chance to reflect on her own behaviour and emotions because she is forced to look at herself with an outsider's perspective hastening Anna's sense of inner fragmentation and mental breakdown.

"It struck me that my doing this—turning everything into fiction—must be an evasion." (228)

Anna deliberately breaks the illusion of the yellow notebook and treats it as metafiction, a place where the voice of the writer breaks in to reflect on the process of writing and composing. . The title "Shadow of a Third" seems to have primarily referred to Paul's wife, and her impact on the relationship between Paul and Ella, but it might also hint at Anna as a kind of "third" who hovers over the narrative and occasionally breaks in to speak explicitly. This increasingly confusing and fragmented narrative signals Anna's own increasing inability to remain in control of her thoughts and feelings.

Anna as a writer

The novel itself is a paradox as Anna talks in it about her struggles as a writer, writer's block, and inability to produce something for the public, the role of psychoanalysis in Lessing's novel explains Anna's interest in her dreams: both she and Mother Sugar believe these reveal something about the workings of her unconscious mind. The idea of a repressed unconscious that is both difficult to access and essential to self-actualization is also reflected in Anna's struggle to say what she means and write in an authentic way. Psychoanalytic theory is also reflected in Anna's description of her sexuality since she is concerned with having different types of orgasms and what this might reveal about her. Freud had theorized several stages of sexual development and identified them with different types of sexual gratification. . Anna creates a parallelism between herself and her fictional character Ella by giving Ella similar experiences and interests. Ella's friend Julia also seems to be a parallel for Molly, while Ella's lover Paul parallels Anna's former lover Michael. Anna writes in four different notebooks, which symbolizes the way she compartmentalizes her life and tries to see different aspects of her history and personality as distinct from one another. The notebooks also symbolize Anna's tendency to view her experiences analytically and in an emotionally detached way. She writes about her life as if it were a story or simply an objective list of events, which prevents her from truly understanding what she is feeling.

Writers' block

Anna's writer's block seems to be connected to her repression. she writes: "Words. Words. I play with words, hoping that some combination, even a chance combination, will say what I want ... The real experience can't be described ... I think, bitterly, that a row of asterisks, like an old-fashioned novel, might be better."

As Roberta Rubenstein explains, "Her writer's block is inseparable from her emotional paralysis; she cannot create artistically until she can free herself from destructive, often emotionally masochistic, responses in her intimate relationships" (pg. 109). These sections show Anna wrestling with a sense of futility and stagnation. The black notebook ends with a vision of Anna seeing what she had tried to document and express (the lives and experiences of the Mashopi Group) be twisted and misrepresented. She stops writing because it seems like the tension between what she wanted to show to the world and what kept being represented has become too wide of a gulf to be crossed. Likewise, the red notebook ends with an anecdote pointing towards futility and the foolishness of believing in something. Earl Ingersoll argues that "It may be in that sense, finally, that *The Golden Notebook* cannot actually end but must circle back to the beginning again—to begin again—with the frame novel."

There is always a touch of the comic, of the 'play' in Anna's voice, to the extent that Molly blames her for making jokes of serious situations. It is this play in Anna that ultimately enables her to overcome her block. She thinks that, "after all, it's not your fault or mine that we seem to play the same role for people ..." (TGN, 29). The narrator-protagonist Anna, in comparison with Molly, is on the whole, satisfied with her. For example, she is least involved in her past, while Molly is still engaged with Richard even after divorce while he is involved with Marion and of course in the career of Tommy. She indeed tells Molly in no uncertain terms that her marriage has broken up, that it was a failure. She is also very clear about her involvement in the Communist Party, which too has been a failure. Thus she touches on her 'block' that things can happen to them so bad that they are not able to get over them. As for Michael, she does not think about him. She has really got over the affair. She thinks that it is finished, that he has ditched her. She has asked Molly to admit failure. "It might be better for us if we did. And it's not only love and men. Why can't we say something like this- we are people, because of the accident of how we are situated in history, who were so powerful part-but only in our imagination, and that 's the point of the great dream, that now we have to admit that the great dream has faded and the truth is something else –that we'll never be any use ..." (TGN, 66)

Freedom and creativity

This is perhaps the clearest statement at the end of first Notebook, which records her writing life. she refers to the golden 'truth', that freedom alone is creative, freedom from the desire to

possess the world . The novel is autobiographical in this sense that it is about Lessing herself. In the Preface to the novel, she states among other themes, the theme of the artist:

“Another thought that I had played with for a long time was that a main character should be some sort of an artist with a “block” this was because the theme of the artist has been dominant in art of sometime-a painter, writer ,musician ,as exemplar. Every major writer has used it and most minor one...” (TGN, 11)

She further says that there was a time when the heroes used to be soldiers and empire-builders and explorers and clergymen and politicians –too bad about women. As for the women, there was not even a dog’s chance for them to be artist or even to become Florence Nightingales says Lessing:

But to use this theme of our time ‘the artist’, ‘the writer’, I decided it would have to be developed by giving the creature a block and discussing the reason for the block ...” (TGN, 11-12)

She points out that these reasons have to be linked with the disparity between the overwhelming problems of war, famine, poverty, and the tiny individual who was trying to mirror them .In the first Notebook, *The Black Notebook*, Lessing draws attention to some sources of the block, primarily the war. Anna herself wrote *Frontiers of War* now changed to *Forbidden Love*. The novel showed Anna’s minor talent in depicting the atmosphere of restlessness, money-driving white settlers against a background of sullen dispossesses Africans, foregrounding a love affair between a young Englishman thrown into the colony because of war and a half –primitive black woman. Anna herself was not happy with the novel, not only her own, but the novel in general, the novel in the old sense of the world, as for example , that of Thomas Mann, who used the novel, “For philosophical statement about life”. (TGN, 75). Thus materialism whether of communist or capitalist ideologies of race and gender politics to which artist rush, thinking them to be disciplines, lose their creativity? Lessing finds all disciplines ‘blocks’ for writers, for art is never written with some discipline or ideology in mind. Art is spiritual as taken up by Virginia Woolf. it is not borne by creating a culture of film-making, newspaper reportages, musical innovations, paintings, writing books, taking photographs. Thus art has become externalized.

Fragmented consciousness

Unfortunately the function of the novel, according to Lessing, seems to be changing; “It has become an outpost of journalism; we read novels for information about areas of life, we don’t know ...we read to find out what is going on. One novel in 500 or a thousand has the quality a novel should have to make it a novel –the quality of philosophy.” (TGN, 75) Lessing deplores the absence of this quality of philosophy in contemporary novel. She herself reads novels with the same kind of curiosity for information to the general literate consciousness. Thus the novel has become a function of fragmented society of fragmented consciousness. It is an attempting to heal this fragmented consciousness that Lessing wrote *The Golden Notebook*. But this would come about when Anna will be able to find out the reasons for the block in the fragmented society and consciousness. So the ‘golden’ about *The Golden Notebook* is a quest for discovering the reasons for the block as well to the feminine gender for which the novel –report is only a means, not an end. But it is easily said than done. . Hence her dissatisfaction because of her inability to enter those areas of life- education, sex, politics, class-bar. Lessing feels that it is a new kind of sensibility, very “fatal to art”. (TGN,76). In the *Black Book* she writes: “I’m interested only in stretching myself, in living as fully as I can”. (TGN, 76) . She rightly avoids writing “out of an incapacity to live “ (TGN ,76) . According to her, the business of art and the artist has become so debased that any person like her with a real connection with the arts wants to run a hundred miles at the sight of “small satisfied nod, the complacent smile”. (TGN, 76).

Double standards

Truth for Lessing is golden but the problem is how to purify this truth, this gold from rough metals, from common-places. This truth is so mixed up with the falsehood that there are two moralities. She has been a victim of these double standards. Her first novel was sought to be made into a film, the real reason as she puts it, is to destroy it, “unconsciously that’s what he (the filmmaker) wants to justify himself with , by destroying the real thing –he calls the victim an artist” (TGN, 77). The reason in existential psychoanalytical terms, particularity of Jean – Paul Sartre, is to possess things, unless one should be able to destroy them. This is what Lessing does not want to happen. She does not want to sell her novel, though ultimately when she does in the interest of supporting her daughter and herself, she consents to the destruction of art. There is another way of killing creativity, perhaps more fatal; i.e to take to politics, what is

euphemistically called 'commitment' if it is the politics of the Left, such form of politics provides artists a secure haven to save them from the poison of the world 'artist' used by the enemy.

Human subjectivity

Lessing feels that the theme of the artist she has undertaken to write *The Golden notebook* with, 'had' to relate to another (besides material and external concerns), i.e., 'subjectivity' (Preface 12). This Theme that the artist as an isolated, creative, sensitive figure is connected with the other theme that he should not be subjective, should be impersonal, should even be dead so that the reader may be born, began inside Communist movements, 'as a development of the social literary criticism developed in Russia in the 19th century by a group of remarkable talents, of whom Belinsky was the best known, using the arts and particularly literature in the battle against (Czarism and Oppression....)' (TGN, 12) Soon this movement as Lessing observes, spread fast everywhere, finding an echo as late as the 50s, in England too, with the theme of commitment. Together with material concerns-- war, sex, economy. Communist's Ideology of Commitment further alienated the artist from his subjective self. But it is human subjectivity, according to Sartre, that gives value to things which otherwise have no value of their own. If values are subjective, they can as well be dispensed with allowing a 'play'. It is what art is. Lessing thus is of the view that it is by subjectivity that values exist in the world. But with Communism and other objective pursuits, all of which tend to appropriate the world a priority that art has become a hand maiden of the pursuits of the world for appropriating and possessing it including human beings.

Anna feels when the film maker argues that her novel when filmed will become a successful novel. She finds this logic far from truth. It can be novel without the truth in it. She thinks of an analogy, as for example remembering a particularly intense love affair or a sexual obsession. It is like committing a crime. How many novelists think as Anna does? The same is the case with the theme of race and gender. But the most criminal act against art, more than that of Hitler against the Jews perhaps, is when people become, as Anna says emotional about Communism, about their own communist parties and thus make art reductive, as if it were nothing but the question of making possible a classless society. What is more surprising is that the communist ideology spread like a jungle fire in academia and outside it. It is as Lessing writes in the preface, still

potent in Communist country, particularly the argument that the artist has no reason to be subjective when Rome is burning. This has an immediate appeal for the ordinary man. In fact it is hard to withstand this argument, that it is worthwhile to fight color prejudice in Southern Africa. Yet all the time Novels, stories and art of every sort became more and more divisive says Lessing.

Chaotic communism

Anna along with Molly has been in the Communist movement for a long time and together they tasted sweet/sour experiences. Anna has a real talent for writing but the 'block' in her always obstructed her creativity in two ways: one was war, presented as a crusade against the evil doctrine of Hitler. The war in Southern Africa was mainly racial—that the whole of that enormous landmark about half the total area of Africa was conducted on precisely Hitler's assumption—that some humans are better than others because of their race. The other side of the 'block' was communism, that the artist must take to politics, meant commitment to communism. For Anna, art is born in the artist's subjectivity, or else art is something other than art, more so because, in existential terms, that of Sartre, communism is inherently dualistic. Anna also says:

But when 'left' or 'progressive' or 'communist' feeling-whichever word is right, and at this distance it's hard to say—was at its height in our town, the inner group of people who had initiated it were already falling into inertia, or bewilderment or at best worked out of a sense of duty. At the same time, of course, no one understood it: but it was inevitable. It is now obvious that inherent in the structure of a communist Party or group is a self dividing principle... (TGN, 80)

Lessing elaborates this point by saying that any Communist Party anywhere exists and perhaps even flourishes by this process of discarding individuals or groups; not because of personal merits or demerits but according to how they accord with the inner dynamism of the Party at any given moment, that is, what she calls 'centralism'. Much of the narrative, or documentation of events of the life of Anna and Molly has gone into this dualism and their attempt to recover their wholeness or what Lessing has called 'the quality of philosophy'. Anna Joined the Party for her 'need for wholeness, for an end of the split, divided, unsatisfactorily way we all live. Yet joining the party intensified the split—not the business of belonging to an organization whose every tenant, on paper, anyway, contradicts the ideas of the society we live in; but something much deeper than that...' (TGN, 157)

Quest for wholeness

Lessing knows that this confusion lies in the promise of progress but as Sartre would say, ``...man is always the same, being in a situation which is always changing, and choice remains always a choice in the situation..''(EH, 60) Lessing's search for wholeness whether in the individual or in the party lies through the path of subjectivity, that is, what we choose? This choice, however does not exclude others in Sartre, as in Lessing subjectivism is, on the one hand, the freedom of the individual subject and on the other, that man cannot pass, as Sartre says, human subjectivity. It is the latter which deepen the meaning of existentialism. To put in Sartre's words: When we say that man chooses himself, we do means that every one of us must choose him; but by that we also mean he chooses for all men. For in effect all the actions a man may take in order to create himself as he wills to be, there is not one which is not creative, at the same time, of an image of man such as he believes he ought to be. To choose between this or that it is at the same time to affirm the value of that which is chosen; for we are unable ever to choose the worst.(EH,31-32)

This means that what we choose, adds Sartre in Existentialism and Humanism, `` is always better; and nothing can be better unless it is better for all. If moreover existence precedes essence and we will to exist at the same time as we fashion our image; that image is valid for all and for the entire epoch in which we find ourselves.'' (EH32) Lessing's search through Anna in the Notebooks is precisely the same, that is, the search for wholeness, oneness and unity. It is a metaphysical ideal which philosophy has ever sought amidst diversities, as a staying point; that is why Anna breaks open the shackles of dualism which bound the artist in her age to the communist ideal that literature and literary criticism should be objective-should cater to social and political amelioration, progress and liberty. Anna's Journey through the thickets of artist's objectivity has been arduous. . Lessing gives an example in the preface how Anna in The Blue Notebook writes of lectures she has been giving, about art being communal and not individual in the middle Ages. She urges her audience to return to ``an art which will express not man's self divisions and separateness from his fellows but his responsibility for his fellows and his brotherhood....''(TGN,12) This ideal looks to be the same as the existential ideal but the difference between them is clear that the latter moves from the concrete to the abstract; former from the abstract to the concrete. Anna, as Lessing writes was stammering in her lectures

because`` she was evading something. Once a pressure or a current starts, there is no way to avoid. There is no way of not being intensely subjective:

`` It was if you like, the writer's task for that time. You couldn't ignore it: you couldn't write a book about the building of a bridge or a dame and not develop the mind and feelings of the people who built it...his either/or is at the heart of literary criticism in communist countries at this moment...writing about oneself, one is writing about others, since your problems, pains , pleasures, emotions—and your extraordinary and remarkable ideas can't be yours alone; way to deal with the problems of `subjectivity` that shocking business of being preoccupied with the tiny individual who is at the same time caught up in such an explosion of terrible and marvelous possibilities is to see him as a microcosm and in this way to break through the personal, the subjective, making the personal general...(TGN,13)

Conclusion

Doris Lessing in *The Golden Notebook*, in all its books records not only her dread of the loss of insinuation, as a writer, as a political activist, as emotive self and as her sexual self, but also in the final notebook, *The Golden Notebook*, she through Anna's experience shows that this dread, inhibiting oneness or wholeness, can be overcome, as Anna does, by fighting out the male, Saul Green, who also fights in return. Anna realizes that through this `sadistic masochistic cycle` (527)., both sexes realize that oneness lies not in mutual objectification but in mutual limitation. It is here that Anna loses her fears of The Other and longs for Saul's company. While other man, especially Michael, Nelson, De Silva betray her because she submitted herself to them. With Saul she fights back, making him see that the woman is not always on the receiving end, she then recognizes in him a mate, who also sees in her more than a sexual playmate, a mother figure, who is also a sexual playmate and sister:

.....and because I have become part of it, this is what I was looking for too, both for myself, because I needed her, and because I wanted to become her. I understood I could no longer separate myself from Saul, and that frightened more than I have been frightened. (TGN, 512)

But Anna knew that he was repeating a pattern over and over again: courting a woman with his intelligence and sympathy, claiming her emotionally; then, `` when she began to claim in

return, running away, And the better a woman was the sooner he would begin to run...’’ (TGN, 513) This is what she has learnt through her long ordeal as a single woman. In the last book, she moves forward into a new knowledge, a new understanding; out of this knowledge comes of Anna’s frightened little animal self. She has come to know how war of sexes could explode, bringing in chaos. Lessing in the novel finally explodes compartmentalization not only in sexes but in all spheres of life. In Sartarian existentialism, life is thus a conflict but it is only through conflict that realization dawns that we can survive only through mutual respect and understanding. This is the ‘Golden’ Path of life and this is what Doris Lessing suggests. However it is, as noted earlier, a slippery and slimy path. When Anna seems to fall in love, although saying so with her tongue in cheek—as if paroding herself, Saul Green packs up to leave. She wishes him all good luck, and asks him to come sometimes for a night or two. Thus they part as friends. That is the only relationship possible outside masochistic sadistic cycle, Lessing suggests that between sexes, all else is conflict. That is why Anna does not enter into any marital or extra- marital relation, for now at least. Molly marries a rich guy. Anna takes up social work. The story of Anna and Molly is without any terminal. Anna and Molly see themselves as “free women” trying to live their lives with the freedom of male gender.. Each has shed a man after bearing a child, and each now takes or leaves men as fancy dictates. the text consists of alternate sections framing third person narrative namely ‘‘Free Women’’ with the protagonist Anna Wulf who keeps four notebooks Black, Red, Yellow and Blue. The climax eventually features ‘The Golden Notebook’ transcending all four books and genders to give wings to the feminine free Golden gender as an artist.

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Indian Perspective on Orality and Translation

-Divya Joshi

Orality and oral literature serve as a spontaneous alternative discourse to the idealized canonical literature/text. Although there are many ways in which orality and textuality interrelate in the Indian context, still most discussions on orality in India owe their origin to the transmission of the Vedas (Rocher). The Vedas are also called Srutis because they are recited and heard, not written and read. Shruti or Shruthi in Sanskrit means “that which is heard” and Smṛti means “that which is remembered” (“Sruti”). The word Shruti, also means the rhythm and the musicality of the infinite as it is heard by the soul. The Vedas have been transmitted from generation to generation through the oral tradition. This implies that Indian speculations on language began with The Vedas; and the school of Grammar and Mimamsa seem to be an outcome of the expanded recommendations found in The Vedas. According to Sreekumar, the four auxiliary disciplines of The Vedas, namely Shiksha (phonetics, phonology, pronunciation), Chandas (prosody), Vyakarana (grammar and linguistics), Nirukta (etymology), have been the foundation of language philosophy. The divine nature of speech, the creative and illuminative power of the word and the different levels of speech, are the main doctrines, which formed the philosophy of language in the Indian context (Sreekumar 51). Language has always been at the centre in India, and all schools of language philosophy had given attention to the ultimate question of the relation between the “word” and “reality”. Talking about language philosophy and language function, Krishnaswamy and Mishra write:

In India, from the beginning, language philosophy took into consideration both performative and contemplative functions of language; the performative function included ritualistic as well as communicative or transactional functions of language in the outside world; the contemplative function considered the use of language for inward or private functions, like meditation and introspection in the inner world. (2)

Language thus had both phenomenal and metaphysical dimensions in the Indian language philosophy and was examined in relation to consciousness and cognizance. Grammarians like Panini and Patanjali were worried about human discourse in the ordinary exact world, and yet

they have additionally given equivalent significance to the powerful aspects of language. Similarly, Bhartrhari begins his Vakyapadiya with an account of its metaphysical nature, but then he goes on to explore the technical and grammatical points involved in the everyday use of language. According to Vakyapadiya, language is conceived as “being” (Brahman) and its divinity expresses itself in the plurality of phenomena that is creation.¹ The acknowledgment of supreme information and the profound freedom which results is unmistakably an ontological reflection on language. The knowledge of the “absolute” followed by spiritual liberation is only possible by comprehending the relationship between “word” and “reality”. The grammatical tradition of Bhartrhari identifies the Brahman as shabda (word) and the shabda as sphota (utterance). The inward nature of the Brahman (Lord of Speech), and the creator of the four Vedas, is thus hidden in consciousness, but it has the power to express itself as communication. This capacity of self-expression and communication gives it the character of “word”. Language then constitutes the ultimate principle of reality (śabdabrahman). Meaning (artha) stands for the object or content of a verbal cognition of a word (śābda-jñāna) which results from hearing a word (śābda-bodha-viśaya) and on the basis of an awareness of the signification function pertaining to that word (pada-niṣṭha-vṛtti-jñāna). The meaning further depends upon the kind of signification function (vṛtti) involved in the emergence of the verbal cognition. Therefore, the role of cognition as a process of acquiring knowledge and comprehending it through thought, experience, and the senses becomes very significant in derivation of meaning.

Almost all the Indian literary theories that deal with the meaning of literary discourse like Rasa theory of Bharata, Alamkara theory of Bhamaha and Dandin, Vakroktijivita of Kuntaka and Kavyamimamsa of Rajasekhara also emphasize the notion of consciousness and experience. In the Indian context, the reader is never a passive receiver of a text in which its truth is enshrined. The theories of rasa and dhvani suggest that a text is re-coded by the individual consciousness of its receiver so that he/she may have multiple aesthetic experiences and thus a text is not perceived as an object that should produce a single invariant reading. Orality helps us understand these structures of consciousness. According to Bhartrhari, consciousness is essentially the nature of the “word”. When he says that the essence of language has no beginning and no end, and it is imperishable ultimate consciousness, he in fact emphasizes the presence of language as priori similar to the “arche-writing” of Derrida. For Derrida, the consciousness is the trace of

writing and for Bhartrhari it is sabda-tattva. This sabda-tattva is Absolute, a distinguishing factor of human consciousness, and by saying this, Bhartrhari lends a spiritual character to speech (qtd. in Coward 132).

In the Indian language philosophy, a simultaneous co-existence of plurality as well as oneness, similar to Derridean “textualities” is evident. This differential plurality (in the post-structuralist sense) lies hidden in the text of the source language as well as the translated text. Therefore, the translations/retellings of the same text give different versions. It is a widely acknowledged assumption that translation is a form of transmitting culture across languages, and therefore, it is not only about transmitting meaning but also interpreting cultural contexts and practices. This is an issue which, in concurrence with later etymological speculations, removes the idea of significance from a limited semantic elucidation and reframes it to join cognizance. According to Aurobindo, translation is also a cognitive process that operates at three levels—nama (name), rupa (form of meaning), and swarupa (essential figure of truth), corresponding to reading, analyzing, and interpreting respectively (Gopinathan 10). These three levels are cognate to the three levels of language mentioned by Bhartrhari in his Vakyapadiyam viz vaikhari (spoken level of language), madhyama (intermediate level between articulation and conception) and pasyanti (the highest level where a thought is at its nebulous stage). Gopinathan also says that the text has to be grasped intuitively at the highest level of swarupa before it can be translated at the other two levels of nama and rupa, or the level of text and meaning. Therefore, in translation, “the process of text analysis, comprehension of the literal as well as the suggested meaning, and the process of decision making will also have three levels” (Gopinathan 9). During the process of cognition and translation there is a constant shifting of these levels. This is what distinguishes the Indian context with the Western.

In the words of Ganesh Devy, the Indian consciousness is a “translating consciousness,” and that language is operative only at the level of mind, thought and intellect, and he further argues that “the multilingual, eclectic Hindu spirit, ensconced in the belief of soul’s perpetual transition from form to form, may find it difficult to subscribe to the Western metaphysics of translation” (135). Sherry Simon and Paul St-Pierre in the introduction to their book *Changing the Terms* made a distinction between the Western tradition of translation and the Indian tradition. They maintain that the Indian tradition is “essentially oral, involves a much looser notion of the text,

interacts intensely with local forms of narrative and is a reinvigorating and positive global influence” (10). Not only the interaction between regional and national narratives, but also the whole history and pervasiveness of languages in India has impacted the way translation has existed and has been accepted. As per the 1971 census, there are more than 3000 mother tongues referred to as speech varieties in India. These vernaculars are divided into 105 dialects. Out of these 105 dialects, 90 are spoken by under 5 percent of the whole populace; 65 have a place with little clans. 15 of the dialects are written, spoken and read by around 95 percent of the general population, including Sanskrit. That is why Ananthmurthy remarks that:

We live everywhere in India in an ambience of languages. [...] The word “mother-tongue” doesn’t mean what it means in Europe. Most of the writers, poets speak two or more than two languages and therefore in the context of India this free play beyond the hegemonic nature of language allows for mixtures and shifts. First it was the language of the Gods making way for the languages of common people, now it is the official domain of English making way, however reluctantly, to the vernaculars in the process of empowerment of the people. Because of vernaculars India has been able to bear and digest not only cultural inclusion but also the languages of power that has dominated over the centuries. These vernaculars have a front yard of self-aware literary tradition as well as a backyard of unselfconscious oral folk traditions. (277-78)

The impact and the presence of vernaculars lends a significant and unique Indian ethos and phenomenon to the texts. Similarly, the unselfconscious oral folk tradition fills in the sense of continuity and makes the literary traditions alive. In the Encyclopedia of Postmodernism, this is reinforced as the return to orality in language use, as well as the look to visuality and sound as discourse methods in sign systems. This return to orality is the postmodern turn in linguistic analysis that takes exception to older notions of stable, fixed and ordered movement in language (Victor 224). This notion also subverts the earlier idea about language progressing in linear and temporal orders, and accepts simultaneity through unlimited expansion across time and space. Thus, translating orality is an attempt to reunite language with discourse, words with ideas, sphota with context and form with function.

This differential plurality is also the inherent core of what constitutes folk (lok) in India. In India, folk (lok) is not just limited to human beings, it is rather a broad word, encompassing all life and

denoting “all people”. In the Indian culture, it is believed that whatever is perceivable outside in the universe has a simultaneous existence inside and vice versa; therefore, it is essential to establish a relationship between folk (lok) and knowledge (jyana). The word lok is hard to translate as it covers different ranges of meanings and interconnected sub-concepts such as the world of appearance, the mundane world, the perishable phenomena, the cosmic divisions of space, any realm, mundane or transcendental, and the common people and their behavior. The Indian word lok is a pervasive term embracing cosmic notions of space on one hand and the world of direct perception, the world of sense objects, on the other; it is both space and what fills space; it is both the people and their behavior; it is both the object of perception and the process of perception. It is through lok that mystic experience is actualized as a commonly shared ordinary experience and vice versa. It is more a process term than a static concept. It is generally defined as, “lokyate iti lokah” meaning that which is perceived is the “world”. Kalātattvakośa refers to a comprehensive philosophical conception of what constitutes lok:

Lok is a generalized concept of space filled up primarily with activity of various kinds now and here, but secondarily of possible transformations at a higher or lower level. It can neither be equated with the world or with common people, or with the sphere of direct perceptions or the manifest, nor the folk or rustic as against the elite; or the oral unformed tradition as against the codified written tradition nor the real as against the ideal. And yet it covers all these ranges of meaning interrelated to each other. (155)

The relationship between lok as in folk/people and the sense of the world takes the concept and nature of orality beyond homogeneity. The Hindi term “lok” for western “folk” is plural in denotation, and therefore, it carries a sense of belongingness and inclusivity. Since the term is located in the plural and in community, there is a greater and wider scope for free play or recreation. Orality too travels across times without any string of authorship attached to it. In oral tradition, the words “author” and “original” have either no meaning at all or a meaning quite different from the one usually assigned to them. “The performance is unique: it is creation, not a reproduction, and it can only have one author,” says Albert Lord (101-102). Ben-Ami foregrounds the same idea when he claims,

The anonymity of folk narratives, rhymes, and riddles hardly solved the enigma of origin. The responsibility for authorship had to be assigned to some creator, be He divine or human. So in

the absence of any individual who could justifiably and willingly claim paternity of myths and legends, the entire community was held accountable for them. (11-17)

In the context of orality and folk, this notion of collective consciousness and plurality become primary. In oral traditions and folk, narrators, singers and performers accredit their tales and songs to the collective tradition of the community. This dynamism and collective consciousness is the most distinctive feature of oral cultures. Translation of orality is not merely intended as the act of transferring material from one language into another, but also includes the intra-lingual passage from oral to a different form; translations of oral material lend space to the collective voice rather than an individual. The concept of source beyond a textual context is thus extended in translations of oral traditions. “Source” here does not refer to a text, but rather to those who produce orality, in other words narrators, storytellers, performers, in fact, all oral sources. Therefore, the true calling of translation of orality is not just to reproduce but also to recreate the world of orality which inevitably involves creation; it also invites us to dispense with the polarized view of folklore and short story, oral and written, retold and authored, and so on. Each new rendition of oral tradition is open to reworking of content and theme, giving rise to variants ensuring relevance even in a novel spatial-temporal context. This conceptualization leads us to the theory and reception of translation in India. The Hindi word for translation with its Sanskrit provenance is *anuvaaad*, which means retelling, interpretation, transcreation. According to Krishnaswamy and Mishra:

The Sanskrit word *anuvaaad* has a temporal connotation which means the “discourse that comes later” or “what comes later,” whereas the word translation has a spatial connotation which means “transfer” or to carry across. (160)

This temporal connotation has also been elaborated by Christi Ann Merrill when she questions the definition of author with reference to folk. While the “logocentricity,” she says, encourages us to believe that the power of the story can be reduced to specific words in a fixed text, “*lok-ocentricity*” forces us to embrace the ambiguity and temporality inherent in plural play where all performers of oral traditions are translators that recreate the *lok* (Merrill 69-70). Thus, in *anuvaaad* the whole tradition is kept alive and is recreated through an endless line of performances. *Anuvaaad* is a creative activity and so is performance. The inherent multiplicity of narratives in oral traditions is dynamic and distinctive, thereby allowing convergences and

divergences. Some of the Indian words for translation like Anuvaad (speak after), bhashantar (linguistic transference), tarzuma (reproduction), or roopantar (change of form) do not imply the concept of carrying across of meaning from one language to the other. On the other hand, all of them point to the possibility of transcreation as opposed to mild transference of significance from one phonetic framework to the next. This infers that our fundamental idea of translation has always been different.

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Modern relevance of communisttotalitarian theme in nineteen eighty four and animal farm

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Introduction

Nineteen Eighty-Four is a political fiction published in 1949, is about a totalitarian regime of an Oligarchical collectivist society, where life in the Oceanian province of Airstrip One is a world of perpetual war, pervasive government surveillance, public mind control and the voiding of citizen's rights. Animal Farm a modern beast fable published in 1945, attacking Stalinism is a parable on Russian revolution and further evolving concentration of political power structures in its aftermath. Both these texts were written in the backdrop of world war two, witnessing large scale devastation and millions of deaths besides nuclear bombings on Hiroshima and Nagasaki resulting in surrender of Japan and victory of the Allied forces against the Axis powers in 1945. This period saw a sharp spurt and spread of communist ideology across the world with major world powers reeling under the pangs of communism which erupted on the pretext of socialism but bloomed into brute totalitarian regimes thereafter.

George Orwell's firsthand experience of fighting Spanish civil war and working with the poor slum dwellers of London gave him the impression of proles, oppression, subjugation of masses and totalitarian regimes in great detail. Both the novels have the common theme of totalitarianism which affected the lives of the incumbent populace occupying the geographical landscape during those contemporary times. There is a stark visible reality, similarities and meeting points of present regimes of totalitarian communism world over while considering and comparing with that of Nineteen Eighty-Four and Animal Farm. China, North Korea, USSR are examples of those prevailing communist states which have history of excesses and torture to its own people and brute imposition of state propaganda unequivocally and unilaterally by disparaging the international laws. Germany under Nazi Hitler and USSR under Stalin seized the power from the masses of their respective states to initiate a vicious cycle of torture, pogrom, propaganda and ethnic cleansing. Through the novel Nineteen Eighty-Four, both Nazis in Germany and communists in Soviet Russia ensured and manifested the vivid representation of

totalitarian regimes and its undying appetite to hold all power structures and information control to obliterate and alter past, present and future as per their suited convenience and vested interests. Propaganda is an important tool in communism to invade the popular cultural and social psyche of the masses by pervading with the controlled information that is deemed fit for the consumption of the populace with the overall pursuit of controlling their mind and behavior to rule over them perpetually.

Both the novels *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Animal Farm* were situated in the backdrop of widespread movements of communism worldwide and intermittent war cycles ravaging the lives of common man to a scale undreamt of. While erstwhile USSR was the motivation behind the description of Oceania state nevertheless what China is doing world over now by extending its imperialistic designs and hegemonical ambitions only makes it a befitting case of the nation state as mentioned like Oceania in the novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* crushing the legitimate political oppositions and ideologies within and without both. China and North Korea are two such identical states of communism and totalitarianism suppressing freedom of speech and independent thinking of their own people brazenly, conversion to Party's ideology through torture, continuous surveillance of its citizens, control on information by the state and degrading dignity of human life with millions in concentration camps or obliterated from the public imagery and memory.

Big Brother is the party leader in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Napoleon is the leader of the *Animal Farm*, both drawing parallels from the Russian Revolution and control of power and information structures by Stalin. 'One does not establish a dictatorship in order to safeguard a revolution, one makes the revolution in order to safeguard the dictatorship. No one ever seizes power with the intention to relinquish it. Power is not a means, it is an end.' These are the lines mentioned in *Animal Farm* but they hold true for both the texts where the theme of totalitarianism and communism is pervaded all through with the absolute abuse of power structures through incessant torture and perpetual ubiquitous snooping. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Oceania is a police state, ruled by INGSOC (English Socialism) led by Big Brother who is the party's disembodied face and voice. Power is exerted by a class of intellectuals and technocrats of the Inner Party, amounting to less than two percent of the population. In *Animal Farm*, Napoleon usurps the communist regime of Snowball, previously taken over by Old Major and

other animals in a bloodless coup deposing Mr Jones, the owner. The seven socialist commandments set by the collective communist ideology of Animal Farm, which separated humans and animals were altered in totality by the new leader Napoleon to his advantage for gaining absolute control over power and information structures with the overall aim of ruling perpetually.

Communism is a philosophical, social, political, economic ideology and movement whose ultimate goal is the establishment of a communist society, a socioeconomic order structured upon the ideas of common ownership of the means of production and the absence of social classes, money and the state. To ensure an equitable distribution of wealth and resources, the communist revolution would put the working class Proletariats in power by replacing the capitalist class bourgeoisie and thus establishing the social ownership of the means of production which is the primary element in the transformation of society towards communism. Oligarchy is a form of power structure in which power rests with the small number of people. These people may be distinguished by nobility, wealth, education, corporate, religious, political or military control. Such states are often controlled by families who pass their influence from one generation to the next, but inheritance is not a necessary condition of Oligarchy. Totalitarianism is a form of political and power structure that prohibits opposition parties, restricts individual opposition to the state and exercises an extremely high degree of control over public and private life. It is regarded as the most extreme and complete form of authoritarianism. In totalitarian states, political power has often been held by autocrats who employ all-encompassing campaigns in which propaganda is broadcasted by state controlled mass media. Totalitarian regimes are often characterized by extensive political repression, a complete lack of democracy, widespread personality cultism, absolute control over the economy, massive censorship, mass surveillance, limited freedom of movement, use of concentration camps, repressive secret police, religious persecution, state atheism, common practice of mass public executions, state sponsored mass murders and genocides.

Novels in Brief

Nineteen Eighty Four

‘It was a bright cold day in April and the clocks were striking thirteen’ is the famous opening line of the novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* suggesting of a larger indication that things

aren't what they seem rather manifesting that things and situations were very wrong relative to the past, which speaks volumes on the relevance and depth of the complete text highlighting the dreadful experiences of totalitarianism. It has some important characters like Winston Smith, Julia, O'Brien representing the contemporary political developments and forecasting a sorry sordid state of apocalypse in the year of 1984, thirty-five years ahead in future however written in 1949 on totalitarianism. 'The Last Man in Europe' was the earlier title of the same novel however George Orwell settled with the present nomenclature for the novel.

The ubiquitous character of Big Brother, leader of the INGSOC (English Socialism), manifests an indispensable figure who is the face and voice of the party triggering ripples of fear and pride alike amongst the citizens. The inevitability and ubiquity employed in the representation of Big Brother creates a larger than life imagery on behalf of INGSOC party, helping it control the minds of citizens with accentuated maneuverability fulfilling its vested interests. The world is divided into three super states viz Oceania (London and America) under INGSOC ideology, Eurasia (Europe and Russia) with Neo Bolshevism ideology and Eastasia (Eastern and Southeast Asia) with Death Worship ideology. All the three super states follow the same communist totalitarianism who are perpetually at war with one another to keep their subject engaged in eternal hate through rigorous and well planned propaganda. They ensured neither any people to people contact nor trans state movements either of men or material to keep an insulated state of mind of their citizenry unpolluted, without any foreign influence. The party is divided into three layers: The Inner party consisting of the ideologues and technocrats making less than two percent of the population. The Outer Party which is the hand of the state for carrying out torture and snooping activities, enforcing law and order and constituting less than thirteen percent of the population. The Proles are the dumb masses of the state and contributing eighty five percent of the population. 'The proles, the slave population of the equatorial lands who pass constantly from conqueror to conqueror, are not permanent or necessary part of the structure.' Since the essential structure of the society has never been altered. The party had four main ministries looking after the functioning of the state viz Ministry of Love oversees torture and brainwashing, the Ministry of Plenty oversees shortage, starvation and rationing, the Ministry of Peace oversees war and atrocity, and the Ministry of Truth oversees propaganda and rewriting historical records. The party enforced usage of new word dictionary called Newspeak, which had limited words to use and thus defeating any chances of inadvertent thoughts and ideas coming to the minds of the

populace of going against the party or Big Brother. 'War is Peace. Freedom is Slavery. Ignorance is Strength.' These are the paradoxical slogans deliberately targeting the minds of people to send a message home about the nuances and connotations bore by these words. War is to be considered as an instrument of Peace, Freedom is unethical since it leads to slavery and Ignorance is part of the popular culture of the state, a sign of strength.

Winston Smith a thirty nine years old denizen of Air Strip one, Oceania, a society set in future controlled by Big Brother, is the protagonist of the dystopia, who works in the Records Department of the Ministry of Truth where his job is to rewrite historical documents to match the constantly changing party line. Winston meets a mysterious woman, Julia a fellow member of the Outer Party who works in the Fiction Department of Ministry of Truth, whom he initially thought a spy of the Party but on his later interactions, she shared similar resentments against the party and Big Brother alike. Winston and Julia both fall in love and indulge in sexual relationship which is forbidden and punishable in Oceania since Desire is Thought crime. Winston was wary of serious and lethal outcomes since the voice that reverberated in his ears – 'Big Brother is Watching You' on the telescreen, was on a perennial surveillance on him and others. Winston soon meets O'Brien through Julia, who is a member of the Inner Party and claims to be a member of the secret resistance organization, The Brotherhood led by Emmanuel Goldstein. This secret organization is dedicated to overthrow the party's dictatorship. Winston and Julia join The Brotherhood on insistence of O'Brien. However O'Brien is actually an agent of the Thought Police, which had put Winston under surveillance for seven years. Winston and Julia are soon captured. Winston remains defiant initially and endures several months of extreme torture at O'Brien's hands. Winston finally breaks when he is taken into dreaded infamous room no 101 and confronted by his worst fears; the unspeakable and undreamt horror of slowly being eaten alive by hungry rats. 'Your one time existence was denied and then forgotten- abolished, annihilated and vaporized.' Terrified by this realization of further resistance, he denounces Julia and pledges his loyalty to the party and Big Brother. Any possibility of resistance or independent thought had withered and surrendered when he willfully said 'Do it to Julia' signifying his complete melt down and all his heart and mind now belonged to Big Brother and the Party. All reminiscent vestiges of Julia were obliterated to make space for refilling of the ideals and love for Big Brother. Thereafter his logical faculty had to surrender to 'Two and two make five', a

phrase in the lexicon of Newspeak to represent absolute submission and obedience to the ideology over rational truth or fact. By the end of the novel, Winston has reverted to an obedient, unquestioning party member who genuinely loves Big Brother in his total capitulation and submission to the party after the torture rendered by O'Brien. 'The Party can't breach your impregnable inner heart' the myth that Winston was fostering for long, had come crashing down when every inch and particle of his body and soul was invaded through torture to fulfill his conversion to the Party and Big Brother's ideology.

The Animal Farm – The Manor Farm is ripened for rebellion by the animal populace against the irresponsible and alcoholic farmer and owner of the farm, Mr Jones. Old Major, the white boar, organizes a meeting of all the animals in the farm. A clarion call for human free farm is echoed all around and in a bloodless coup, Mr and Mrs Jones are expelled from the farm to establish a animal friendly society of the animals, for the animals, by the animals. Seven Commandments are envisaged, embraced and brought into practice as a constitution to look after the daily business of the farm and animals there. 'Four legs good, twolegs bad' and the Manor Farm is rechristened as Animal Farm to validate the take over with the implementation of the seven commandments. After the death of Old Major, two emerging pigs Snowball and Napoleon vie for the top post, the administrator of the farm. Snowball emerges as all other animals consider him a true leader with compatible and innovative thoughts. Napoleon secretly hatches a plan to usurp Snowball with the help of the pack of hounds, he activates the coup and expels Snowball from the Animal Farm. Now at the helm of affairs, Napoleon gradually takes credit for all the good work and projects that Snowball has envisioned and practiced, nevertheless Snowball is discredited and held responsible for all the misfortunes and accidents. A death warrant is issued against his name along with all his sympathizers by Napoleon, who by now has created and crafted his own cabal and syndicate to rule indefinitely. All the resistance voices were brutally crushed as he slowly started altering the constitution and commandments one by one to facilitate all his moves and motives for a permanent totalitarian rule over the Animal Farm. Animal Farm is again renamed as Manor Farm since Napoleon and the pigs started replicating everything that of humans, with the last and only standing commandment which states 'All animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others.'

Discussion and Analysis of the selected texts

Nineteen Eighty-four and Animal Farm have a lot of similarities together in reflecting the contemporary world view of totalitarian regimes in vogue during those times. The analogy of Post Truth can be drawn in both the novels vis a vis today's contemporary world where construction of lies and lies shoved into pure truth as a raging phenomenon. Theory of Post Truth is being applied in the extension and development on further deliberation for the texts.

On Comparing the characteristics of Big Brother with that of contemporary communist states taking shape of totalitarian regimes, find relevance and prevalence in totality as propaganda, mind control, torture and ubiquitous surveillance do remain the existentialist tools for such states whether China or North Korea under present circumstantial world polity. In China's case, the party is power and the power is government where the communist party occupies a state having an army of millions, an oligarchical totalitarianism set up, a propaganda machinery, mysterious concentration camps, atheism and rejection of religion, absolute censorship of free press, conversion of the rebels into party's ideology, evaporation, forced assimilation, geopolitical imperialism, degrading human dignity and omnipotent surveillance to ensure total party control. Every truth is rejected and repeated lies are pervaded and converted again and again through propaganda in a post truth phenomenon routinely taking prevalence over factual truths.

The author has displayed his fears of an apocalyptic society in the future which will be more brutal than the regimes of Hitler and Stalin to stamp the power of its authority and dominance in a world led by power hungry totalitarian states bringing wars and havocs at a massive scale and magnitude than that of World War II. In a careful scrutiny of Chinese domination and aggression, the Communist Party of China has eroded the legitimate sovereign rights of its neighbours and secretly encroached land and sea routes to establish its hegemony and dominance displaying absolute contempt for the world order and international laws. China has border disputes with all its neighbours is a glaring fact that it wants to live in a continuous fog of war to create unrest in the global order unparalleled in recent times to establish its political and economic hegemony by flexing its muscles through encroachment. The take over of Tibet, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Xinxiang, Aksai Chin are a few examples to vindicate the Oceanic statehood of China fulfilling all requirements of a communist oligarchical totalitarian state.

‘The whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought. Ingsoc is Newspeak and Newspeak is Ingsoc.’ Every kind of existing logical faculty is snatched, desecrated and dissipated from the Oceanic populace to further the Party propaganda of two and two make five since the party continuously tells you to reject the evidence of your eyes and ears. ‘Power is in inflicting pain and humiliation’ is the belief of the party to convert the dissidents and rebels and bring them back for toeing the party line. China and North Korea have it in common of training young children for spying on their own parents and informing the discreet police to apprehend them if found doing anything against the party thus creating an extension of state apparatus to snoop around own family members replicating Stalin led communist totalitarian state of USSR of improvising similar strategy of involving Thought Police for Thought Crime.

Conclusion

On witnessing the brutal and lethal oppression of communist totalitarian regimes, George Orwell became a proponent of democratic socialism to envisage a just and encompassing polity by healing the scourge of perennial oligarchical Party rules of violence and terror around the globe under the rubric of communist totalitarianism. Totalitarian regimes have wreaked havoc in their respective states even endangering the world order of tranquility and sustainability to a great extent. Suffocation of free speech and independent thinking is a requisite precondition for totalitarianism which advocates the spread of power and dominance of political hegemony within and without the state. The propaganda machinery of totalitarian state develops the improvised factories of peddling lies through its pervasive and targeted dissemination to the populace by obliterating the records of history and controlling the present by virtue of overwhelming and disproportionate power and torture. It thus tramples the truth and ravages its essence through a post truth phenomenon. Totalitarianism was the aftermath of growth of socialism rising against the industrialization and capitalism seeking to create equitable societies and equal distribution of wealth by taking over the private properties of its citizenry where everything belonged to state and nothing remained private any longer as it is in case of erstwhile USSR and North Korea in present times. In China, the party is power and government both, nevertheless the communist party of China (CCP) literally controls everything through incessant surveillance, propaganda, power and torture. In Xinjiang Province of China, unparalleled repression of Uighurs has been routinized where millions of Muslim population have been arbitrarily detained in concentration

camps, records of millions have been obliterated from the memories, ubiquitous surveillance and forced assimilation of the populace unilaterally through torture and conversion is a new normal. China and North Korea are the new Oceanic states of Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four representing the ideal totalitarian communist state where providing democratic and fundamental rights to citizens remains a taboo and a far-fetched utopian dream. Chinese communist government is adopting controlocracy in addition to totalitarianism and oligarchy. Controlocracy, where everything is Party controlled, anything and everything that reaches to the citizenry is controlled, anything and everything that goes out is controlled, a mutational form of state propaganda.

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Studying representations of gender in literature: whether 'lost' or 'found' during creation, transcreation, adaptation & digression.

-Runoo Ravi

Gender representations in literature have never had the privilege of being accurate, precise and most importantly, valuable. The feminist voice was either diluted, or suppressed, or distorted and generally, silenced. There have not been enough women writers and denial to education has made writing a distinct impossibility. Whatever was written, generally under extremely stressful conditions, was dismissed as it was supposed to be concerned with the world of limited experience; the unimportant domestic world. It was easy and convenient to either ignore or submerge this 'historical' contribution. "Women's writing has also been dismissed as hardly of any consequence because religious and political thought had assigned them a place of subordination and labelled them as beings less rational and intellectual than the male of the species." (Jain Women's Writing 2) Women's writing can thus also be considered as the literature of silence. This is because it seeks to express that which has been submerged and suppressed so far. But women's writing can also be defined as an act of courage because women writers use a lot of unusual strategies to convey what they want. There is a submerged layer which remains waiting to be unearthed by the observant reader. In many novels written by women, illness and walking become narrative strategy and dreams and hallucinations reveal hidden desires.

Therefore the marked difference between 'readerly' text and 'writerly' text, a concept given by critic Roland Barthes, in his greatly acclaimed essay "Death of the Author", published in 1980, becomes very distinct when actual feminist representations have to be culled out. While most texts have fixed and pre-determined meaning, allowing the reader to remain a mere recipient of information, falling into the 'readerly' text category, the 'writerly' text allow the reader to uncover a large number of ideological indicators or codes. This theory has important repercussions on feminist writing too. Feminist critic Toril Moi says "[I]n the 1980s such

theories started to conflict seriously with the interest in women's writing. Feminists who wanted to work on women writers at the same time as they were convinced that Barthes, Derrida and Foucault were right, began to wonder whether it really mattered whether the author was a woman." (Moi 261) In the present times, the two ancient Indian epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata have become important writerly texts from which several other texts are being read critically, in the context of its production and reception, enabling the reader to become the writer. The digressions allowed to the representations of Sita and Draupadi, chiefly by female writers, thus become significant in the context of feminist reading and re-telling. Furthermore, the work of the women writers is reflective of the deep connection between social and political issues, and the intense desire to move beyond the cultural and discipline boundaries. Therefore, although the feminist representations through creation, transcreation and adaptation have been included in the study; the paper focuses largely on digressions from texts within the oeuvre of Indian English Literature, the epics in particular, in order to analyze the different perspectives related to feminist ideology that emerge out of the re-tellings and express the 'silences' and activate the 'passivity'. Jasbir Jain opines:

"The act of writing has enabled them [women writers] to move outside the narrow role of man's helpmeet, outside the role of the seductress, the angel or the witch. It helps problematize the areas of conflicts and facilitates a search for alternative models. Women as they deconstruct literary form and socio-political constructs continue to struggle with the ghosts of their fathers and the inheritance of their mothers. And they invite the reader to do the same." (Jain WW 9)

It is important however to realize that male writers of the twentieth century, Henrik Ibsen and George Bernard Shaw in particular, adopted strong pro-feminist stance. Although their attacks on the inequality that existed in the society and the exposure of the double standards of the society were commendable, their silence over the existing concept of femininity was questionable. Nevertheless, Ibsen's Nora in *The Doll's House* and Shaw's Eliza in *Pygmalion* remain two of the most iconic female characters created by male writers. Nathaniel Hawthorne's Scarlet, the eponymous female protagonist of *The Scarlet Letter* also deserves a special mention. Once again, these three female protagonists denote two important facts. Firstly, what exactly is women's writing? Is it merely a woman writing about the experiences of the women; as formulated in Showalter's theory of gynocritics, or it can also be a man trying to express womanly emotions

and doing is successfully if he truly desires, as seen in the extremely effective portrayals of Scarlet, Dora and Eliza.

Critically acclaimed as the first feminist voice of India, and the contemporary of Virginia Woolf, Ashapoorna Debi's *The First Promise*, Subarnlata and Bakulkatha are iconic Bengali texts whose deft transcreations have given us the fearless and truthful feminist voice of Satyawati, the first to question the very concept of Gauri-daan, the ritual of getting the daughter married before puberty. The social custom ensures fame and salvation to the father but what about the daughter: this is the pertinent question she asks. Satyawati's daughter Swarn is the protagonist of Subarnlata whose courage, defiance and extreme patriotism, practised in the most adverse conditions make her one of the strongest exponents of substantive cultural feminism. Bakul is Swarn's daughter who ensures hope and positivity in free India. Pratibha Roy's *Yajnaseni*, translated from Oriya and Nabaneeta Deb Sen's *Seeta se Shuru*, translated from Bangla provide thought provoking post-modern take on Mahabharata and Ramayana.

Hindi film *Saudagar* (Sudhendu Roy 1973) was the perfect adaptation of the Bengali short story *Ras* by Narendranath Mitra. The marriage of Moti and Mahzubeen is annulled once Moti is enamoured the exotic Phoolbanu. The intrinsic strength of the marginalised female, a definite digression from the representations of the subaltern voice, trapped and crushed within the patriarchal structure was observed: Mahjubeen's dignified reaction to the talaq was exemplary. For once the original story was not compromised and female character was etched out more strongly. The same fact was observed in film *Begum Jaan* (Srijit Mukherjee 2017), based on a story by Sumair Malik and the remake of the Bangla film, *Rajkahini* by the same director. The film centres on the eponymous character running a brothel which needs to be demolished for the Radcliffe line, drawn during the partition of India. The resistance and strength of this marginalised female is applauded by the audience and the antagonists as well.

On the other hand, adaptations of classics like *Wuthering Heights* and *Devdas* for feminist portrayals were complete failures, commercially and critically in India. Catherine's famous cry, "[M]y love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath: a source of little visible delight, but necessary. Nellie, I am Heathcliff", (Bronte 99-100) exhibiting her soul was ruined by the insipid Roopa in *Dil Diya Dard Liya* while the radical changes in *Paro*, exhibited by Aishwarya Rai (2002) and Mahie Gill (2007) were rejected by the purists.

In her article, “ How Did a Woman Get Hold of a Pen?”, writer-activist Jeelani Banu writes about how every religion in the world has made rules about what the woman should do and not do in order to survive; and how gold, woman and land, all belong to man. She asserts

“ A woman was given the status of a pure virgin, Sati Savitri, and imprisoned within the confines of male dominance and when she broke free of the confinement, and stepped out, it startled everyone---

‘She is observing.’

‘She is thinking.’

‘She is speaking.’

Now, how does she view this world, and how does she comprehend it...? What does she say...? Are these the questions that I have to give answers to today...?” (Jain Growing Up As A Woman Writer 58-59,emphasis mine)

It is here that the importance of re-telling of the phallogentric texts emerges: texts that vary in range; from epics to novels to nursery rhymes, and from children literature to short stories/poems. The retellings become the alternate approach; to provide an answer to the questions asked. And the context against which the retelling is done then determines what has to be retold, to whom and how much. It also decides the manner in which it will be done, that is, the best mode or form of the retelling. The moment this digression takes place, the entire perspective and the meaning of the text automatically changes. Thus the chief necessity of this retelling is to implore a radical introspection of the past, which often results on a shift of focus and emerges as a de-centring process where hitherto marginalised sections and interests are foregrounded. This kind of retelling, especially of the epics, is very interesting to the reader since the original story is already known and this is just a new way of looking at the story. But these digressions also render sensitivity, a questioning mind and most significantly, a gender sensitive approach which goes a long way in consolidating the concept of gender equity. And that is why it is important to take a look at the revising, rewriting and reframing of texts, long considered classics and as part of the canon, as a channel to provide a counterpoint to the prevailing male voice. Offering a different view of the same story is actually an attempt to explore and highlight the spaces and silences in a text, hitherto ignored, the ‘feminine space’ and the ‘feminine silence’ in particular,

and offering a new dimension to the female character who had been either neglected or portrayed as inferior, thereby challenging the authority of the text in question. It is important to remember that revision and revisit of such canonical texts have been done by both men and women and have not been the sole prerogative of women alone. It is more important however, to remember that the revision and rewriting of texts that highlighted patriarchal male superiority can also be viewed as an act of liberation for the ones who had been depicted as subordinate or inferior. George Egerton says that “I realised that in literature, everything had been better done by man than woman could hope to emulate. There was only one small plot left for her to tell; the terra incognita of herself, as she knew herself to be, not as man liked to imagine her-in a word to give herself away, as man had given himself in his writing.” (Gawsworth 58)

Sita's story is thus given a new dimension, through retelling, by noted Tamil writer, Pudhumaipittan; significantly, a male, whose short stories generally provoked controversy. In his short story *Saapa Vimochanam* (1943) (Redemption) through the character of Agaligai (Ahilya), he reinterprets the story of the cursed wife of Rishi Gautam, a branch-story from the Ramayana and uses this context to usurp the elevated position of Lord Rama; and the patriarchal powers that he enjoys. (URL:<https://books.google.co.in>books.Tamil> Characters. access 14.02.2020) Ahilya had been turned into stone for her supposed ‘infidelity’ by her husband. Through his powers, Gautama could realize that it was Indra's lust that made him ravage Ahilya, disguised as her husband. The fault lay with Indra, not Ahilya. But because he could not punish the Lord, he found it easier and more convenient to curse his own wife. Lord Rama had freed Ahilya of this curse and the couple were now trying to get back to their normal routine. However, when Rama and Sita return victorious from Lanka and visit them, Sita describes her ordeal, her agni-pariksha in a very matter of fact manner. While Sita is presented as acquiescent and conforming to patriarchal notions of purity and docility, it is Ahilya, in *Saapa Vimochanam* who takes a comparatively stronger stand. “[A]n outraged Agaligai asks (Sita) ‘Even if he asked you how could you undergo it?’ Here she (Agaligai) slips from the respectful honorific plural to refer to Rama and addresses him instead in the ordinary singular honorific. Thus by changing just the pronoun, the writer conveys how Ahilya's respect, bordering on worship for Rama, comes crashing down. ‘One law for Agaligai, another one for Rama/’ asks Pudumaippithan. With her last hope shattered her heart hardens into stone. And she turns into stone again, voluntarily as a protest against the victimisation and humiliation of women in the patriarchal society. This is a

provocative interpretation of the Ramayana branch story. Pudumaippithan himself, conscious of this, states teasingly at the outset; those who are familiar with the Ramayana may not grasp-----nor even like----this story. I remain unconcerned about that.'(ibid)

Once again, the supreme position of the 'Lord' is challenged. It is not Sita who absolves herself; it is Ahilya who takes this decision. Her gesture is meant to clearly indicate that she prefers to be an inanimate object than a woman inhabiting such a cruel society. The story highlights the perspective of woman; it brings her to the forefront and also exhibits the solidarity of a shared womanspace. The story challenges the very concept of the saviour who is a male most of the time, as well as age old patriarchal concept chastity and purity. Most importantly, Saapa Vimochanam compels the reader to review the age old myths that have been acceptable, unquestioned. Quite interestingly, the story of Ahilya does not exist in the Buddhist texts.

The poem "Do you accept my truth my lord? Sita's powers" by Leela Prasad, composed towards the end of the twentieth century demonstrates similar power reversal. The poem shows Sita going through a series of incongruous trials before the final agni-pariksha, instigated by her 'lord's' searing words.

"Go to the river bank and make a ball of sand./ Make a vessel and fetch water in it, Sita./Then I will accept your truth.

Making a vessel of sand, taking water in it,/ she placed it in front of Rama-did Sita./Do you accept my truth, My Lord?

Using a serpent's coil for a pot-rest on your head, Sita,/if you fetch me water in a sheaf of paddy,/then I will accept your truth./Going to the ant hill, standing there,/reaching into the snake hole-what did she say?

You who reside in this anthill, O Serpent,/Sovereign of the Earth,/won't you at least bite me to death?/Bringing out the hissing one, coiling it around her arm,/slipping it off to make a pot-rest, she places it on her head.

With the serpent coiled in a pot-rest, Sita, /carrying water in a sheaf of paddy, Sita/placing it near Rama-what did she say?/Do you accept my truth, My Great Lord?/As jasmine in the hair does not fade,/as draped silk does not get soiled,/as vermillion does not get weighed down by a tender leaf,/like that, you must stand in the fire,/that I will make in front of the palace. (emphasis mine)

She has combed her hair, she has decorated it with jasmine./She has donned a silk sari-has Sita./She has adorned herself with turmeric and vermillion-has Sita./She holds a tender leaf in her hand.

A fire has been made in front of the palace./She has gone around the fire three times./Going around the fire three times she says-What does she say?/Dasharatha, father-in-law, you who have passed on,/won't you at least come to my rescue?

He came, did King Dasharatha, and said-What did he say?/I am your father, Ramachandra/Don't bring ill-repute to Mother Sita./Just because of somebody's idle talk, don't make Sita a laughing stock./Accept my word as truth, Son and /make your devoted and pure wife Sita happy.

The water-fed furrow in which Sita was born/ is the nether world of Sitala. Sita, who sank into a furrow twelve man-lengths, that Sita's virtue is true virtue."

The poem becomes important on three accounts. Firstly, it presents Sita's unquestionable quintessential purity that compels a dead soul to appear and vouchsafe for his daughter-in-law. That Rama is still not appeased and not ready to accept Sita's "truth" highlights the purity of Sita, who represents the women of the society, because she prefers to return to Mother Earth after having had established her purity than to stay with a man who compels her to take such tests while having been all alone too and still spared the perils of such an agni-pariksha. Sita prefers to preserve her self-respect rather than conjugal bliss. Thirdly, and most importantly, it succeeds in dethroning 'Lord' Rama from his supreme position by using the ironic refrain of "do you accept my truth?" because here is a 'lord' who needs proof. How is he a lord if he does not know the truth? And what or who makes him the 'Lord', a mere human, over other human?

Interestingly, the Ramayana songs, sung in South India are also a clear revolt against the glorification of the male dominated world. The songs present the minor characters as the winners: Urmila, Lskshmana, Luv, Kush and even Suparnakha are allowed to take their revenge. Sita, in the songs does not fight her battles, others fight for her. In fact, she enjoys the freedom acquired by the news of her own death because now she can live her life on her own terms without having to exist for Rama. The existence of this 'new and different' Sita is in complete contrast to the quintessential devoted, pativrata image that has been constructed carefully down the years, as a superb role model for the Indian women. "The Indian epics have become the

vehicle through which pativrata dharma becomes the duty to be performed by the wife.”(Shah 80) And when this ideology is implemented at the socio-structural and psychological levels, it automatically ensures total compliance with patriarchal norms. Uma Chakravarti writes that “in the Valmiki Ramayana, it is stated that “Sita was duly handed over to Rama in marriage according to the Brahma form” which is the highest form of marriage types. (32-33 emphasis mine) And Sita had to give the agni-pariksha without being at fault. Thus she is established as a mere commodity in the patriarchal rule. Navaneeta Deb Sen’s Sita does not adhere to the conventions of the original epic. She is feisty, bold, courageous, outspoken and knows how to defend herself and protect her rights. Trapped in Ashok Vatika, when she is convinced of Hanuman’s authenticity (assisted by Rama’s ring), she instantly rides on his back and escapes than to await Rama. The royal couple are united and Sita luxuriates in the love and respect offered by Rama and his followers. Rishi Valmiki is enraged because this ‘Sita’ has foiled all his plans of a grand epic. She was not supposed to be so enterprising. His harsh words chastises Rama, but fail to terrify Sita who retorts with greater fury, defending her rescue by tartly reminding him of his erstwhile lifestyle, of a dacoit and reprimanding that his soul still remains impure. Sen writes “Sita’s scholarly admonishment turned Valmiki speechless. He could not speak in anger. He began to stammer. Lord Rama sensed disaster. If the writer himself has turned weak, then the creation of an epic seemed impossible.” (Sen 19) It is interesting to observe the concern of the two males. Rama is worried about being deprived of ‘heroism’ and Valmiki about becoming the ‘unforgettable creator’ of this heroism.

However, the Sita, of Southern India, in addition to the enjoyment of her newly found freedom, is also vindictive. While Rama lives with the guilt of having killed her unjustly, Sita spends her days in a relaxed manner and gives birth to her sons who will avenge her injustice and bring the final victory by defeating Rama. Thus it becomes Sita’s Ramayana, a real ‘Sitayan’.(URL: <https://www.scribd.com/doc/312878528/Paula-Richman-Ramayana-Stories-in-Modern-South-India-An-Anthology-pdf>. access 14.02.2020)This ‘Sitayan’ is inclusive of Suparnakha who is awarded a totally new and surprising angle by Sudha Murthy in her short story The Perfect Revenge. While the Suparnakha in the original epic is a lustful predator, Murthy presents her as a sensitive and intelligent female, who achieves ultimate victory over the internal as well as the external realms of the patriarchal structure, represented by Ravana and Rama respectively. Suparnakha loved Vidyujihva, the prince of a different clan of asuras. This difference became an

obstacle in their alliance and so the marriage was secretly solemnised. Ravana's fury was appeased by his wife and a reluctant acceptance was ensured. However, Vidyujjihva's reasons for this alliance were centred upon killing Ravana. He found this opportunity when Ravana came to visit them. Suparnakha was not present and Vidyujjihva seized this opportunity to kill Ravana but was no match for him. It was Suparnakha who was left alone, a young and devastated widow. The desire for revenge burnt deep inside her. Her ardent marriage proposal turned down by both Rama and Lakshmana, and her nose cut off, she found Sita the perfect bait to fuel her plan. The description of Sita's beauty was enough to make Ravana fall into 'her' trap and eventually abduct Sita. "The kidnapping made it certain that Rama would neither forgive Ravana nor let him off the hook. He was sure to kill Ravana, and he did. It was the perfect revenge." (Murthy 63) Murthy's Suparnakha kills two birds with one stone. Ravana's death is certain but Rama's long separation from his wife and the ultimate parting is ensured as well. She avenges herself on all grounds. Navaneeta Deb Sen's Suparnakha is also seen to be sowing seeds of doubt in Sita's mind. The asura princess warns Sita about Ram. She advises her to abandon Rama because he is unreliable. She cites examples of the two brothers' attraction and lust for her in Sita's absence. The immense woman bonding is expressed by her "... [I] am giving you sound advice. This is the responsibility of one woman towards other..." (33) Sita dismisses her words but is forced to rethink as she contemplates over the lewd remarks and sexist jokes shared between the two brothers, about Suparnakha's beauty and her proposal, she inadvertently eavesdropped upon. Furthermore, Kaikeyi, the 'renowned' villain of the Ramayana is equated to Lord Shiva by Sharma in his novel *Sita Ke Jaane Ke Baad Ram*. It is she who consumes the 'vish', takes all the blame but becomes instrumental for the general good. (149) More importantly, this fact is explained and highlighted by none other than Kaushalya, and ensures total forgiveness from Bharat. Interestingly, the concept of 'betterment' is reiterated in the novel's prequel, *Sita Sochti Thi*, where Ram is ready to give up everything and follow Sita, but it is she who stops him: his duty should precede his desires. Thus it is Sita who presents Ram as not a cruel husband but as a grieving but responsible ruler; her own strength intact. Her perspective provides a new narrative to the epic.

It is Maithali Sharan Gupta who raises the question of Urmila, the wife of Laksmana, and her sacrifice, perhaps nobler than Sita's but so grossly undermined in the Ramayana, in his poem *Saket*. While Laksmana is eulogised for being an ideal brother and Sita the noble wife; where the

paeans that ought to have been sung for Urmila too? Why is she not celebrated as the ideal wife? Gupta's verse presents Urmila's perspective and as he pulls her into our field of awareness, he gives voice to a character which has been overlooked and perhaps forgotten in our collective consciousness.

The same poet foregrounds the plaintive cry of Yashodhara, the wife of Prince Siddhartha who later became the renowned Lord Buddha in his celebrated poem, *Sakhi Ve Mujhse Keh Kar to Jaate*. Gautama Buddha, with all his wisdom and nobility and enlightenment, remains, a man who stealthily left his young wife and child alone and left the house at night; if seen from Yashodhara's perspective. Yashodhara's anguish is not so much of desertion but of her own lowered worth: had she stopped him from going if he would have told her. She asserts that even though her entire life was dependent on her husband, she would not have been a hindrance because she saw journey as of a soldier going for a war. Maithali Sharan Gupta creates a strong woman who expresses her pain and demands that as a partner in a relationship, she should have at least been informed, if not consulted about the decision.

"History has always been important to feminism, because it is history which provides us with evidence that things have changed." (Besley & Moore 2) Thus the British imperialist ban over the collection of poems *Radhika Santwanam*, by Muddupalani, weakly justified by the argument that it would endanger the moral health of their Indian subjects, only tends to highlight how Britishers continuously tried to reconstruct Indian woman and her subjectivities: the poem had foregrounded a woman's sexual desire and pleasures. It celebrated Radha's sexuality in a clever subversion of the classical form: now Krishna was the passive beloved and Radha was the dominant lover. Krishna, also the sakha of Draupadi, is known for his platonic and highly spiritual relationship with Radha. By subverting the binary position, and including sexual connotations, Muddupalani had brought about a religious and social furore that had to be abolished; more so since the poet was a courtesan besides being a well regarded Telegu poet in the mid eighteenth century Thanjavur period. It was only the intervention of Nagratnamma, a courtesan and patron of arts herself that the poem could be published with great difficulty in 1910, only to be banned by the British government for its explicitness. The ban was lifted in 1947 but charges of obscenity resulted in severe criticism, ostracism and ultimate misplacement of the text, offering it little literary merit. But *Radhika Santwanam* remains a strong transgressive

text since it focused on the sexual assertions of a woman, not a man. The intellectually evolved Thanjavur court could accord full appreciation but the Victorian morality of the British rule could not. And when the nation itself was being deified, as a woman, writings of this manner would pose danger and suspect to the social construct. The notions of nationhood and social progress work against women's writing: tradition and ignorance have always done so. Thus Sarla Palkar rightly opines that "[T]he feminist critics [and writers] in postcolonial India have to contend not only against the constrictions put upon the "Indian woman" by the colonial discourse or the Western feminist criticism but also have to wage an even more arduous struggle against the entrenched patriarchal structures in the country which still continue to control and restrict the lives of women in one form or the other." (Jain WW 23)

And since the notions of wifhood and motherhood, inevitable strictures of patriarchy, continued to restrict and control the female, the very concept of motherhood itself was also challenged by the female writers by freeing it from the legitimacy of marriage. Patriarchal society has always celebrated motherhood not as the celebration of the mother but as the mother's capacity to confer fatherhood on a socially recognizable man. The reason to condemn motherhood before marriage was deep rooted in the social system rather than the character assassination of the female. The female was deprived of her ability of procreation by denying her the value of this very power which makes her superior to the man. Kunti, the wife of Pandu, the mother of the mighty Pandavas bears testimony to this fact notwithstanding her royal and powerful ancestry. She is forced to abandon her first born child Karna, because he is illegitimate but is allowed "birth of five sons, with the help of 'others', while continuing in sanctified wedlock, receiv(ing) full approbation." (Jain GUAWW 365) Nothing could be more ironical than this. "Motherhood was commendable only as long as the progeny had a legitimate father, even if it meant, clothing the biological act with hypocrisy and pretence." (ibid)

In the context of Draupadi created by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni in her novel, *The Palace of Illusions*, wifhood is presented as an abysmally dark contour, motherhood merely a natural consequence. Divakaruni's Draupadi is never a happy woman: nevertheless she scripts a much shifted perspective of Draupadi. While marriage to five of the best men in the world may make her married life appear as exotic, alluring and coveted, the reality is far from different. The freedom to have more than one spouse had been limited only to the male. Now that Draupadi has

it, is she happy? The perspective that Divakaruni's Draupadi puts is very different, and has not been mentioned in the original epic.

"Though Dhairya tried to console me by saying that finally I had the freedom men had had for centuries, my situation was very different from that of a man with several wives. Unlike him I had no choice as to whom I slept with, and when. Like a communal drinking cup I would be passed from hand to hand whether I wanted it or not.(Divakaruni 120)

It might appear disgusting but this Draupadi sounds more like a glorified sex slave rather than a royal wife, queen of queens, lucky enough to have not one but five of the greatest men as her husbands. Her extreme weariness and resignation is expressed in the following lines.

"Nor was I particularly delighted by the virginity boon, which seemed designed more for my husbands' benefit than mine. That seemed to be the nature of boons given to women---they were handed to us like presents we hadn't quite wanted. (Had Kunti felt the same way when she was told that the gods would be happy to impregnate her?)"(ibid)

Divakaruni further explores what it is that Draupadi really wanted when sage Vyasa was 'bestowing' the boon on her.

"If the sage had cared to enquire, I'd have requested the gift of forgetting, so that when I went to each brother I'd be free of the memory of the previous one. And along with that I'd have requested that Arjuna be my first husband. He was the only one of the Pandavas I felt I could have fallen in love with." (ibid emphasis mine)

The phrase 'could have fallen' is again significant since it connotes Draupadi's not so strong feelings for Arjuna, as supported in the original text. On the contrary, it brings back Draupadi's fascination and attraction towards Karna ; the warrior prince she could not marry, again due to reasons totally different from the original epic, and gives a realistic, more humane, a more understandable perspective offered by Divakaruni. During the swayamvar, as Karna is posed to shoot the mark, Draupadi's brother Dhristadyumna steps and says his sister cannot have a man of low caste as her suitor. A fight is about to begin when Draupadi's sweet voice rings out, "[B]efore you attempt to win my hand, King of Anga, it is said, tell me your father's name..." (Divakaruni 94) Divakaruni makes Draupadi move forward to save her brother from being killed; he was no match for Karna, and had been warned by Rishi Vyasa that she would be the

cause of her brother's death. This viewpoint is important because in Divakaruni's version, Draupadi rejects Karna not for his caste or lineage, but because she wants to save her brother. The difference in projection and purpose becomes significant because Draupadi admits being drawn to Karna, having heard his story and admits " [E]ach painful detail of Karna's story became a hook in my flesh, binding me to him, making me wish a happier life for him". (ibid 87)

Pratibha Ray's *Yajnaseni*, on the other hand, breaks the myth and hypocrisy of the *swayamvara*. When Kunti asks the brothers to 'share', Draupadi muses as to "[D]o I have no say? ...I had placed the garland of bridegroom choice around the neck of one already. By law, and according to dharma, it was he alone who was my husband. Why should I accept the other husbands as husbands? Would that not destroy my dharma? (Ray 56) At this point she also questions why Sita in *Ramayana* never faced this dilemma, and Lakshmana, Bharat and Shatrughan could remain loyal to Rama without sharing Sita. She abhors Arjuna's vow of abstaining from wine, meat and Draupadi until he has killed Karna. She wonders whether this a sign of weakness or firmness. She asks herself, in first person narrative, "Why do they take vows to remain far from women until they achieve their desired goals? Does the company of a woman suck out the strength of a man? Is this lack of confidence in the strength of his character or is it due to the fear of a woman's charismatic attraction? (ibid 305) Pratibha Ray declares in the Afterword to *Yajnaseni*, "Draupadi is a challenge of womanhood...Such a woman who has faced torment, insult, mental and emotional dilemma like *Yajnaseni* Draupadi ---has not yet been born on this earth..."(ibid 400-401) But Draupadi needed facilitators and remained victimised through all channels of patriarchy.

Celebrated writer and activist Mahashweta Devi's short story *Dopdi* is a subaltern take where the protagonist does not break, surrender or seek help. Devi's Draupadi, *Dopdi Mejhen*, a tribal revolutionary, is a feisty female who is an active participant of the Bengal Naxalbari movement. When she is caught and taken into custody, she is subjected to continuous gang-rape by soldiers in an attempt to break the ongoing insurgency. But her indomitable spirit is both threatening and frightening and she becomes a metaphor of resistance, remaining unbroken even after the trauma. Moreover, she avenges by her strength and is a facilitator for herself who doesn't need a Krishna, unlike the mythical Draupadi. Thus Devi attempts a deliberate and radical re-

interpretation of the past. She puts up work that has relevance in the area of culture studies because it relates to the suppressed or marginalised section of the society, such as 'women', lower races, castes, tribals, disabled and the like. The parallels drawn between the Draupadi from Mahabharata and THE Dopdi in the story clearly demonstrate that not much has changed for the women.

The three retellings of the famous fairy tale Little Red Riding Hood deserve a special mention because it denotes successive and progressive growth and development in the little girl depicted in the story. Secondly, being a popular fairy tale, it has a deep effect on impressionable minds with regards to gender construct. The first version by Charles Perrault in 17th century presents the little girl who talks to the wolf, provides all information, appears stupid as to unable to differentiate between a wolf and her grandmother, and thus deserves to be eaten up by the wolf. The moral was: Children (read girls) should never talk to strangers, for if they do so, they may well provide dinner for a wolf. This becomes so predictive with regards to the defensive approach taken towards woman safety. The second version by Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm titled Little Red Cap was published in the 19th century and the addition to the story was a huntsman who, intrigued by the unusually loud snores of the 'grandmother' stops to investigate. He rescues the girl as well as the grandmother and is thanked profusely for his benevolence. The Little Red Cap seemed to have learnt a lesson and says to herself that as long as she lives she will never leave the path and run off into the woods if mother tells me not to. The heavily loaded metaphor, related to gender construct could not be missed and wasn't supposed to. The Little Girl and The Wolf by James Thurber was published in the 20th century. The radical transformation in the girl was clearly witnessed. The girl meets a wolf, talks to him and does find him in her grandmother's bed. She could recognize him twenty-five feet away and shoots him with an automatic kept in her basket. The moral was: It is not so easy to fool little girls nowadays as it used to be. Girls today are capable of taking independent decisions and can face the challenges and difficulties of life, and move on.

The retellings are made not by choice but rather by necessity; and that is what makes all the difference.

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Decoding the Myth of Law and Conflict in the Anthropomorphic Approach to the Animal Fables of Orwell's Animal Farm and Kipling's Jungle Book

-Richa Bohra

“Man is the only real enemy we have. Remove Man from the scene, and the root cause of hunger and overwork is abolished forever” [Orwell 4].

Penetrating with this outrageous cry towards the indifferent and imperial human society, the study seeks to foster, restore and explore the binding forces of Animality and Humanity in the kaleidoscopic frame of finite dexterity. For the vision fabricates that humanity evolves out of animality. Though superficially Animality corresponds to the idea of wilderness of the life on earth but the curtain rises and duly advances with a view that the heights of complexity and barbarous bestiality finally subsides in the golden realm of divine harmony and ultimately reaches to the state of calmness and much needed solidarity. The study advances with the faith of Pythagoras; who conjectured that:

“So long as men will slaughter animals, they will kill one another. He who seeds murder and pain cannot harvest joy and love” [Gauillaume 23].

Further pertaining to the better understanding of this critical acumen, the study alludes the thoughtful vision of Cary Wolfe who prolifically asserts that:

“ It is crucial to pay critical attention to the discourse of animality quite irrespective of the issue of how non human animals are treated....because the discourse of animality has historically served as a crucial strategy in the oppression of humans by other humans – a strategy whose legitimacy and force depend, however, on the prior taking for granted of the traditional, ontological distinction, and consequent ethical divide, between human and non-human animals...Even though the discourse of animality and species difference may theoretically be applied to an other of whatever type, the consequences of that discourse, in institutional terms, fall overwhelmingly on nonhuman animals” [Nath: Zoontologies, 2003:xx].

Therefore the plausibility of this crucial definition of man and his surrounding environs meditates on the apprehensive realities of human bestiality and animal suffering; which could be foreseen in the narratives of Orwell's *Animal Farm* dictating:

“our lives are miserable, laborious, and short. We are born, we are given just so much food as will keep the breath in our bodies, and those of us who are capable of it are forced to work to the last atom of our strength; and the very instant that our usefulness has come to an end we are slaughtered with hideous cruelty..... The life of an animal is misery and slavery: that is the plain truth” [3].

Similar reflections are perceived in the narratives of *Jungle Book* where in Kipling expounds the hidden anguish of Bagheera – the black Panther from the fable with the words which communicates the pathos as follows:

“There is no one in the Jungle that knows that I, Bagheera, carry that mark – the mark of the collar; and yet, Little Brother (Mowgli), I was born among men, and it was among men that my mother died – in the cages of the King's palace at Oodeypore” [26].

In this nostalgia of his thoughtfulness, the repercussions of black panther's stay in human society were pictured forth with mixed emotions whereby the pathos predominated:

“....Yes, I, too, was born among men. I had never seen the Jungle. They fed me behind bars from an iron pan till one night I felt that I was Bagheera – the Panther – and no man's plaything....” [JB 26] .

Reckoning to the need of rectifying and resurrecting the pathos of the voiceless life on earth, the study further approaches to the Aristotelian trinity (the animal, the human, and the deific) [Fuentes 124] – with a firm and consolidated vision to understand and comprehend a significant rapport between these three channels of life.

Philosophically this dichotomy of life and physical existence on earth has been persuasively recorded in the cohesive mind set of Jean Prieur; who outpoured his wisdom as follows:

If by soul one means the non corporeal part of a being, the seat of sensibility, of understanding and of will, the source of thoughts, of emotional ties and passions, the common subject of all the affective and intelligent modifications in one's consciousness, yes animals do have a soul. If by soul one means courage, noble sentiments, the generous instincts of an

individuality considered from a moral point of view, yes animals do have a soul. If by soul we mean, an immaterial principle, but yet subtle and substantial, which leaves the body at the time of death, if by soul we mean a double of the being resembling what he was and allowing him to continue to live in the other world, yes, animals do have a soul. I shall say no more, the animal is a soul: animal est anima” [Gauillaume: L’ame des animaux].

Though Aristotle has been one of the prominent thinkers to meditate on *De Anima* (On the Soul) and to commemorate that “the soul is the first grade of actuality of a natural body having life potentially in it” [Guillaume 20], but still he didn’t agree to this persuasive measure and henceforth he maintained that “ the animal does not possess an intellective soul, exclusively reserved for beings like ‘man and possibly another order like man or superior to him” [20].

Never the less this conversation furthers the hope to envision the harmonious balance between the two distinct contrary worlds of life on earth. Meanwhile the study revisits the concept of Aristotelian trinity in the light of the comprehensive perception of the enigmatic Power Relations.

From the sociological perspectives woven with the intricate web of the historicity of Ideas, the study envisages the frame of Power Relations embedded “hierarchically in Western thought – with God(s) having power over humans who, in turn, hold sway over animals - ” [Fuentes].

While penetrating into this sensitive sketch of the division of power – which is coherently configured with the anthropological stratification; the thought process alludes the narratives of the *Jungle Book*. Wherein, Bagheera explicitly announces with a raw faith in the feral child Mowgli- calculating:

“Not even I can look thee between the eyes, and I was born among men, and I love thee, Little Brother. The others, they hate thee, because their eyes cannot meet thine; because thou art wise; because thou hast pulled out thorns from their feet – because thou art a man” [Kipling 27].

The wisdom and intellectual repose of a man is cohesively reflected with an air of imperial shade – duly dictated with human dominance in the society of animal province. In lieu of which the study develops with an allusion to the words of the eminent Thomas de Quincey – who is known to have drawn a prolific distinction between the two channels of Knowledge and Power as:

There is, first, the literature of Knowledge; and secondly, the literature of power. The function of the first is – to teach; the second is – to move: the first is a rudder, the second an oar or a sail. The first speaks to the mere discursive understanding; the second speaks ultimately, it may happen, to the higher understanding or reason, but always through affections of pleasure and sympathy [Cuddon 557].

Hence, Mowgli – the man cub in the narrative cited above epitomises the embed of both knowledge and power and thereby occupies a space of potent existence in the world of green wilderness. Nevertheless, it is also observed that even though invested with the colours of imperial dominance – Mowgli devotedly subsided to the Laws of Jungle and truly endeavoured to follow them in spirit; under the guidance and canopy of Baloo, the fluffy Bear who stood as a teacher and guardian to the Man cub in the forest of the ferocious Shere Khan; where:

..Chil the Kite brings home the night

That Mang the Bat sets free –

The herds are shut in byre and hut,

For loosed till dawn are we.

This is the hour of pride and power,

Talon and tush and claw.

Oh, hear the call! – Good hunting all

That keep the Jungle Law!

[JB 7]

Pertaining to the frame of this Jungle Law, Shere Khan the voice of tyranny seeks to kill Mowgli there and then – the reason being:

“He is a man, a man’s child, and from the marrow of my bones I (Shere Khan) hate him!” [32]

To this expression of hatred and lawlessness, Akela – the lone wolf reciprocates with a strong assertion :

“He has eaten our food. He has slept with us. He has driven game for us. He has broken no word of the Law of the Jungle.’ Hence ‘He is our brother in all..... – a brother spoken for and bought into the Pack, according to the Law of the Jungle” [33-34].

So this was how the presence and companionship of Mowgli was justified with the pack of wolves on the grounds of Law - eventually ensued with conflict also running within the inner recesses of the Jungle People. But ultimately and profusely Mowgli was identified and reckoned as

“The best and wisest and boldest of man-cubs – my own pupil, who shall make the name of Baloo famous through all the jungles; and besides, I – we – love him, Kaa” [59].

Owing to the reflections cited above, the study manifests the colours of Anthropomorphism – which dictates the idea of assigning the human attributes to non human entities with the ‘Prominent examples to be found in the fable tradition of literature and art where animals are made anthropomorphic in order to illustrate moral lessons or other maxims’ [Cuddon 40].

Hence in the purview of travelling through the world of Animal Studies, the study further meets with the readings of Oxford Advanced American Dictionary; which implies that the channel of Anthropomorphism refers to “certain beliefs or ideas in which gods, animals or objects are treated as if they possess human qualities, traits, emotions or intentions” [2011]. In lieu of this thought process the discussion imbibes a note of cognitive relevance in the world of Kipling’s *The Jungle Book* with its animal society who are verily endowed with the ethics of human attributes – felt and enlivened in spirit. Besides, the society of Orwell’s *Animal Farm* is celebrated with this charismatic idea in a way where the pigs play a significant role in representing the society of human beings at large. Of this community of Pigs, Old Major is reckoned as the founder of Animalism and he stands as a spokesperson of Karl Marx; where he tries to sue a conflict against the human beings and urges his companions to grow and advance with a spirit of rebellion. This is reflected when it articulates the following dialogue:

“Only get rid of Man, and the produce of our labour would be our own.....Rebellion! I do not know when that Rebellion will come, it might be in a week or in a hundred years, but I know, as surely as I see this straw beneath my feet, that sooner or later justice will be done”[AF 5].

While perusing to the intricate web of these two inferences the thought process also encounters with the concept of the humanity of animals and the animality of humans. In lieu of which the idea crystallises with the image of Mowgli – the feral child of Jungle Book – who “grew up with the cubs, though they, of course, were grown wolves almost before he was a child; and Father Wolf taught him his business, and the meaning of things in the Jungle, till every rustle in the grass, every breath of the warm night air, every note of the owls above his head, every scratch of a bat’s claws as it roosted for a while in a tree, and every splash of every little fish jumping in a pool meant just as much to him as the work of his office means to a business man” [JB 21].

Hence Kipling’s Mowgli verily reflects and imbibes the virtues of the Jungle people with his profuse readings about the reverberating rhythm of the forest and thereby lives as a companion to the family of this land of wilderness.

Therewithal owing to the intonations of the episodic revelations and realisations woven in the endeavour to understand the cohesive threads of Animality and Humanity all throughout, the study conclusively ends with a coherent note – dictating:

“It’s just that everything is connected, from the bird whose nest one crushes to the human nests decimated by war. The beast dies of hunger in its hole, man dies of it far from the bounds. And the animal’s heart is just like the human heart, its brain like a man’s brain, capable of feeling and understanding. No matter how much one will step upon it, the heat and the spark will always return” [Guillaume: Louise Michel].

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Moll Flanders: Carving her own path in the Patriarchal Society

-Vivek

The novel, *Moll Flanders* is written by a man but it presents the view of women as woman is the protagonist in the novel. The protagonist of the novel *Moll Flanders* is born to a mother who has been convicted for robbery. Soon after her birth, her mother was transported to America. So as an infant, she is forced to live on the charity of the public. Fortunately she comes under the care of a loving widow who teaches her manners and other domestic skills which was supposed to be learnt by a girl of her times. With the age, she grows into a beautiful teenager. At this early age she is seduced by a man who later on abandons her. Thus, she is forced to marry the younger brother of the man who is deeply in love with her. Unfortunately her husband dies after few joyous years.

In the search of settled life she again marries a draper who soon flees from the country as a fugitive from law.

She marries third time and moves to America. But in the meantime she comes to know that her mother-in-law is actually her mother who was transported to America right after the birth of *Moll Flanders* and her husband is actually her half- brother. Misery comes upon them. She eventually leaves him in disgust and returns to England; she is in the dire need of money so she chooses to be the mistress of a man whose wife has gone insane. He too renounces his relations with moll after a religious experience. Moll's next and fifth marriage offer is from a banker whose wife is having affair with another man. Moll puts the condition; of obtaining divorce from his wife in order to get married to her, before him. In the meantime she travels to the country and agrees to marry apparently rich man in Lancashire. But this man turns out to a fraud because he is as poor as she is. So when they come to know about the reality they part their way to seek fortunes separately. Moll returns to marry the bank, who in the meanwhile has obtained divorce from his wife. But this man dies soon after.

Moll is again forced to live upon her own resources which are meagre. Initially she lives in poverty for several years but finally she resorts to stealing. She acquires expertise in this 'trade' and becomes popular legend. Finally she is caught red handed. She is soon imprisoned and sentenced to death. In the prison, she reunites with her Lancashire husband, who has also been arrested. With their good conduct, they become successful in reducing their sentences. Instead of giving death, they were transported to the colonies where they become plantation owners. In America, where they were transported, she again meets with her brother and her son. She also claims the inheritance that was left behind by her mother near her. Finally, she becomes prosperous and were settled the way she always wanted from the beginning. She returns with her husband at the age of seventy and lives a peaceful life.

Novel is a good example of study women and gender relations from the women perspective of women, though it is written by a male, Daniel Defoe. Defoe has tried to speak through woman as the novel has been written in the first person narrative style which means here Moll Flanders is supposed to be the writing account of her life. As we have seen through summary that her life has faced many ups and downs primarily due to patriarchal norms prevalent in the society.

But this female protagonist refuses to surrender before her wretched circumstances that came in the guise of poverty, unfortunate marriages, and class distinction. She strives to make her life better at any cost, though, within her limited resources. Despite her long struggles to make life better, she keeps her consciousness alive. All these qualities of her character makes her a formidable feminist who instead of becoming the slave of her circumstances, choose to challenge the existing social norms, thus hereby, makes memorable place in the heart of the reader. When Flanders states that 'first thing she ought to do was a piece of justice to herself'. She immediately comes in the category of empowered women. What Moll did was just against the 18th century English society where women had lesser rights than men. "Divorce was carried out through parliament and was a lengthy and extremely expensive process reserved mainly for the bourgeoisie. Between 1700 and 1749, only 13 cases of divorce were reported. A women could not independently file for divorce and a husband's unfaithfulness was not grounds for one either. These separations could be made in private agreement or in public, ecclesiastical court."

Similarly this novel depicts women power to rebel in their own by thoroughly telling their mind and accepting hand of any man who is ready to bring better prospects in their life.

Last but not the least, the purpose of Defoe was perhaps not to present a woman with all her agencies but to warn honest people to beware of such women who can exploit them with their apparently innocent methods. But by taking female protagonist he has unintentionally brought a strong, rebellious woman to life through his novel. There are many short coming in his depiction of women in his novel such as they were shown submissive to men in relation to marriage and many others. Despite that to portray a woman character like Moll Flanders in the 18th century patriarchal England was itself seems to be challenging. For this Daniel Defoe should be applauded for.

The original title of the book is ‘the fortunes and misfortunes of the famous Moll Flanders, & c.’: who was born in Newgate and during a life of continued variety for three years, besides her childhood, was twelve year a whore, five times a wife (where of once to her own brother) twelve year a thief, eight year a transported felon in Virginia, at last grew rich, lived honest, and dies a penitent. Written from her own memorandums.

This is the long title of the book, which in the actual sense gives perfect outline of the novel to attract the audience to read it. As we have seen in the summary. The whole novel depicts the struggles of Moll Flanders from childhood to death. The entire novel is narrated on the adventures of her life through her words. In addition to this, we know that from the starting of her life, she wanted to be gentle homely woman and for the fulfilment of this desire she continuously make efforts. Sometimes luck was on her side that she comes to the position of an employer and sometimes her economic position becomes this much weak that she has to resort to the profession of prostitute or thief which were considered crime for a gentle woman. Thus, throughout the novel, her desire to have a prosperous life leads her to a fortune and misfortunes of life.

Moreover, the subtitle which outlines the story of the novel depicts woman in the negative shade by using word like whore. The subtitle depicts her in the relational terms along with emphasising her supposedly promiscuity and her promiscuous nature by choosing words like whore, wife, woman in incest relation, in the subtitle. Purpose of choosing such words in the subtitle was definitely to attract readers to explore the promiscuity of Moll Flanders and to provide pleasure in the senses. This kind of description in the title indeed suited well with the patriarchal demands of the eighteenth century England. The twists and turns in the life journey of Moll Flanders

surely invoked the curiosity in the heart of the reader. People love to see the person who is different from them in every aspect, especially if this person is woman who chooses to speak up her thoughts and challenges their innermost thoughts, generally generate lots of curiosity among readers.

In addition to this, the subtitle suggests that it is not only about Moll Flanders. It is not only about Moll Flanders. It is also more about Moll Flanders in relation to men. Had this been the story of a man, it is safe to say, such emphasis on relationships would have not been laid contrary to happened in the case of Moll Flanders. Man would have been depicted more as independent and self sufficient person. People want to see women more in relation to men but they love to see men more powerful, self controlling, full of energy and adventurous in their pursuits.

It is suffice to say that by giving this title and subtitle of novel, Daniel Defoe perhaps was appeasing the demands and curiosity of the contemporary reader audience who were habitual in visualizing and see women at the mercy of patriarchal society.

The novel 'the fortunes and misfortunes of the famous Moll Flanders is the story of a woman who is born poor to a poor woman who was convict in the crime in the later phase. She too is sent to Virginia to the plantation as a convicted thief just like her mother.

In Moll Flanders's time that is seventeenth century England. It was hard to survive for women like her. In patriarchal values dominating the society, men were considered superior to women in almost every kind of things. Women could be respected only if they were married to a man from upper class, then only she would be called gentle woman. But if woman did not find such suitable conditions, she was sure to have miserable life. Therefore, money was the thing which could give her strength, security and assurance of better life prospects. This can be the story of any women with meagre resources be it in the seventeenth century England or twentieth century India.

We have to take into account that Moll is from a humble background. She has no family. She is supposed to work for survival but she wants to transform her conditions by getting married in the rich family. Her quest for luxurious life brings her in relationship with the elder son of the woman with whom she is living but he too rejects her and gives her some money in exchange of live before leaving her, which she accepts. And she agrees to get married to younger brother who

is deeply in love with der. Because she comes to the conclusion that through marriage only she can ensure her financial security. Therefore, she goes on to marry many times but all these marriages fails due to some or other reason but eventually she know that marriage can only give her financial security not independence which she always craved for.

She knows about her self worth. So as a woman who is looking for financial security and independence through money. She becomes prostitute and starts selling her body as nothing more but as a commodity; to be exchanged for financial security and independence. This is how she manages to break free from the rigid tradition of marriage. In the later phases of life she, without being dependent on any men, turns to thievery and in the end she turns to agriculture to secure her financial needs and independence.

In addition to this, we see that Moll is not emotional fool unlike the picture of seventeenth-eighteenth century women. Her emotions do not weak her even for a time being. She keeps her goal of becoming financially successful; ahead of all other things, be it men or marriage.

She does not get afraid in helping other women. In the course of her life she helps a young, rich woman who is left by a sea captain because he got so angry at her for asking about him to other people. Moll helps this young lady and created such a situation that this man returns back to her, begging for forgiveness. So Moll's helping other women in need is certainly an act of feminist. Initially Moll seeks the support of men in making her life secure but its women who again and again reappear for her support to fight this patriarchal society such as her mother, nurse, and governess. These women have huge impact on her life. Interestingly these maternal figures existed in her life are free from any male dependence. They are living their life independently. Their influence on her certainly shaped the course of her life.

We know that in the later course of her life, she learns and expertise in the crime of robbery. She becomes an expert criminal who later on is imprisoned in the Newgate prison. But we need to acknowledge that her criminality is a kind of feminist thing in all respects. It seems to be a big step forward from meek and obedient position women to the risk-taking, independent, rational woman. We know that these characteristics are primarily associated with men but by the act of thievery, she inculcates such qualities in herself, which are generally denied to women in the patriarchal society that loves to see them in the helpless, irrational light. Interestingly, she initially relies on men to bring comfort and security in her life but these men miserably fare to

provide her anything rather some of them deprives her even from her meagre financial resources. Eventually she becomes rescuer of her Lancashire husband from gallows and brings him better life as plantation owners.

Thus her situation suggests that not only a woman can have the ability to make her way in the highly patriarchal society but also she can have power to bring situation in her favour, if she is willing to do so.

In the conclusion, it can be said that this novel provide an ample scope to learn about the condition of women in the seventeenth-eighteenth century women's life. It also reflects on the situations; women with meagre resource used to face for being a woman. The protagonist of the novel ultimately finds her way through her marriages, thievery and ups and downs and becomes successful in conquering the odds in the typical patriarchal male dominated world. That's how she finds her liberation in anti-women society.

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Omprakesh Valmiki's Joothan and Mulk Raj Anand's Untouchable: A Comparative Study

-Swati Kush

Omprakash Valmiki's *Joothan* –A Dalit's life and Mulk Raj Anand's 'Untouchable' are two different pictures of a single problem framed in two different frameworks of time and space. The phenomenon called untouchability has some mandatory scientiality at its roots. The modern world of germs and viruses has opened our eyes and our experience has taught us that these germs and virus and persons infected with them cannot and should not be touched without proper security and safety measures and equipments. The modern lock down by different nations to break the chain of Corona virus and the way the patient infected with Covid 19 are treated is a burning example of understanding what really is untouchable for us . Untouchability applies to the virus and the disease and not to the warriors who stake their life in fighting against the virus and the disease . The socio cultural curse that untouchability has stood in Indian society in our not too distant a past is the consequence of so many selfish forces that mixed with the general human ignorance of common men and women. As saviours of mankind men like Mahatma Gandhi and Dr Ambedkar taught us how to fight against the selfish forces exploiting the ignorance of common man effecting the socio cultural stigma of untouchability of India.

The progress and development of the untouchables begin in India with Mahatma Gandhi's efforts in favour of human rights of and humanitarian expectation for and of the untouchables. The voyage of the progress and development of untouchables reaches an effective turning point when they organised themselves as 'Dalits' under the leadership of Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar .The efforts of Dr. Ambedkar paved a socio-political way for 'Dalits' in the post independent India.The 'Untouchable' depicts the life of Bakha –an untouchable in pre independent India while the 'Joothan-A Dalit's Life' depicts the life and struggle of Dalits in post independent India of early 50es . Arun Prabha Mukherjee rightly observes

...Joothan is also a report card on the condition of the people who are now routinely called 'erest while untouchables' or 'ex-untouchables' (*Joothan* XI)

Both Mulk Raj Anand and Omprakash Valmiki follow the same artistic methods of beginning with the presentation of Dalit dwellings to serve their idea of Dalit life. In the 'Untouchable' we find the following description of Dalit dwellings.

The outcastes' colony was a group of mud walled houses that clustred together under the shadow both of town and cantonment, but outside their boundries and seprate from them...A brook ran near the lane ,once with crystal-clear water, now soiled by the dirt and filth of public laterines situated about it (Untouchable 1)

and in the Joothan we find the following picture of Dalit life:

Our house was adjacent to Chandrabhan Taga's gher or cowshed. Next to it lived the families of Muslim weavers. Right in front of Chandrabhan Taga's gher was a little johri, a pond which had created a sort of partition between the chuhras' dwellings and the village.(Joothan 1)

Both Mulk Raj Anand and Omprakesh Valmiki describe rainy season in the outcast colony in a similar way. Mulk Raj Anand records.

The absence of drainage system had, through the rains of various seasons, made of the quarter a marsh which gave out the most offensive stink. And altogether the ramparts of human and animal refuse that lay on the outskirts of this little colony, and the ugliness, the squalor and the misery which lay within it made it an 'uncongenial' place to live in (Untouchable 1)

and Omprakesh Valmiki says:

THE DAYS OF rainy season were hellish . The lanes filled up with mud , making walking very difficult . The mud was full of pigs' excrement, which would begin to stink after rain stopped. Flies and mosquitoes thrived like clouds of locusts. It became extremely difficult to go outside .Our arms and legs would get smeared with dirt. The feet became mangy. The space between the toes filled up with reddish sores. Once these sores started to itch, they would itch non-stop. (Joothan 19)

The description of outcast colony by Mulk Raj Anand seems to be the description of one who is sitting on a safe shore and seeing the scenario from a distance and finds it "an uncongenial place to live in". On the other hand, Omprakash Valmiki's description seems to have the authenticity of the first hand experience of life .He seems to understand the physical pain produced by such a

dwelling. Omprakash Valmiki himself confesses “only he or she who has suffered this anguish knows its sting” (JoothanVIII)

While making a comparison between the Untouchable and the Joothan we must not forget that both the literary works have generic differences. ‘Joothan’ is an autobiography. An autobiography is an honest record of the personal facts and experiences of the author. In this way an autobiography comes close to history. The ‘Untouchable’, on the other hand, is a novel- a piece of fiction , in which the writer uses his imagination and aesthetics to shape and mould the reality. The similarities and dissimilarities of the treatment of the same picture of life seem to have their roots in generic differences.

Bakha is the protagonist of the novel the ‘Untouchable’ He is an untouchable boy who suffers from all the harassment and deprivation which was the destiny of an untouchable at that time. Bakha wants to be educated but the gates of the school are closed to him because of his being untouchable:

Later still he realised that there was no school which would admit him because the parents of the other children would not allow their sons to be contaminated by the touch of the low caste man’s son (Untouchable 30)

and,

But the masters would not teach the outcastes, least their fingers which guided the students across the text should touch the leaves of the outcastes’ books and they be polluted. (Untouchable 31)

In comparison to Bakha Omprakash Valmiki, the protagonist of the ‘Joothan’ is better situated .He gets admission in a school. But his school life is not easy. His caste becomes the reason for his harassment at school :

Although the doors of the government schools had begun to open for untouchables, the mentality of the ordinary people had not changed much I had to sit away from the others in the class, that too on the floor . The mat ran out before reaching the spot I sat on. Sometimes I would have to sit way behind everybody, right near the door. And the letters on the board from there seemed faded.

He is bullied by the upper caste students “the children of the Tyagis would tease me by calling me ‘Chuhre ka’. Sometimes they would beat me without any reason.” (Joothan 3) He is harassed not only by the fellow students but also by his teachers. His teachers beat him, call him names, give him corporal punishment because of his being Dalit. One of his teachers asks him to clean the school floor because it is his family occupation

Go climb that tree. Break some twigs and make a broom. And sweep the whole school clean as mirror. It is after all your family occupation. (Joothan 4)

Man is like diamond. The more it is cut, the more it is chiselled, the more shining it becomes. Similarly, the more a man is tested and the more he is pushed to face trials, the more shining his personality becomes. Out of these test, and trials Omprakash Valmiki emerges as an assertive protagonist. He asserts himself with his caste against other castes and within his caste to encourage them to do so. When questioned about his caste Omprakash Valmiki firmly asserts that he is a ‘Bhangi’(Joothan 133) He does not change his surname .His assertion makes him stand alienated and isolated among his own friends. The invitation card of the marriage ceremony of his very near family friend does not contain his name.

Babhi no one here knows that we are Valmiki. They all think we are Khare. Printing Bhaiya’s name would have let the secret out..(Joothan129)

He takes a stand against not only the superiority of the high caste but also the inferiority complex of his own caste .A teenager, a student, Omprakash Valmiki raises the question “Is it right to go for salaam ?”(Joothan 32) He asserts against the custom of ‘Salami’ prevailing in his own caste because it creates an inferiority complex in the members of the caste.

It may seem like a simple matter but whether it is the bride or the bridegroom, this custom creates an inferiority complex in them on the very first day of their marriage (Joothan33)

Unlike Valmiki Bakha is shy and modest. His caste consciousness makes him to hide himself as if in a hole:

He recalled that he had forgotten to buy a box of matches .He was too modest to go back, as though some deep instinct told him that as a sweeper lad he should show himself in people’s presence as little as possible. (Untouchable34)

Bakha lacks the guts to raise his voice against the injustice done to him. He is cheated by the shopkeeper. His meek surrender to the shopkeeper seems to make him stand as a pathetic character in the eyes of the readers.

It was baffling to poor Bakha who knew he had been cheated, but dared not complain (Untouchable 37)

Such descriptions sometimes seem to invite criticism from some critics that Dalit characters are presented as mute and pathetic character in the literature produced by non Dalit writers. Such critics also hold that such Dalit literature neither contains nor expresses the true Dalit sensibility. As Arun Prabha Mukherjee also observes

...portrayals of Dalits as mute and pathetic characters, unable to act or speak about their oppression are characteristic of high caste Indian writers. Dalits in their writings are portrayed as tragic figures and objects of pity, incapable of talking back or feeling enraged...a voice that contains rather than expresses, Dalit experience (Joothan IX)

But this is by no means the whole story. Bakha is more than a prototype of contemporary Dalit psyche. He is more of an individual than of a representative. His meekness and his tendency to suppress his aggression is an outcome of the age long atrocities faced by his caste. He has a personality that one develops consciously or unconsciously according to the expectation of the surrounding society. His mind makes him think "Why was all this fuss? Why was I so humble? I could have struck him?" (Untouchable 43) Bakha thinks about his social condition. He thinks about the social position of his own self and the other members of his community. He does not indulge in self-pity, on the other hand he asks a question-the question that gapes wide for an answer:

Why are we always abused? The sentry inspector and the Sahib that day abused my father. They always abuse us. Because we are sweepers. Because we touch dung. (Untouchable 43)

The question raised by Mulk Raj Anand through Bakha is similar to the question raised by Omprakash Valmiki in the 'Joothan'

Why does caste superiority and caste pride attack only the weak? Why are Hindus so cruel, so heartless against Dalits? (Joothan 41)

When Sohni tells Bakha about Kashinath's attempt to molest her he is full of anger and revenge. He wants to tell a lesson to Pandit Kashinath but "he became the humble oppressed under- dog that he was by birth, afraid of everything, creeping slowly up, in a curiously hesitant, cringing movement" (Untouchable50) Bakha does not display any action of physical assertion anywhere in the novel. He does not assert even verbally. But the spirit of assertion remains smouldering in his mind and soul. However it cannot find any outlet.

But there was a smouldering rage in his soul. His feelings would rise like spurts of smoke from a half – smothered fire, in fitful, unbalanced jerks when the recollection of some abuse or rebuke he had suffered kindled a spark in the ashes of remorse inside him.(Untouchable42)

Bakha is true to his life and his circumstances. In Bakha's character Mulk Raj Anand is successful in providing his imagination the flesh and blood of reality. Bakha is created well from inside and outside. Bakha is well judged by E.M.Foster in the 'Preface' of the 'Untouchable'

...his hero is no suffering abstraction... Bakha is real individual, lovable, thwarted, sometimes grand, sometimes weak and thoroughly Indian(Untouchable VII)

Both Bakha and Omprakash Valmiki enjoy the blessings of their own fathers. But the nature of relationship that exist between Omprakash Valmiki and his father is different from that of Bakha and his father Lakha. Omprakash Valmiki's father protects him. He shares his feelings with him and finds solace in his protection. Bakha, on the other hand, has a complaint against his father "Father always takes side with others. Never with his own family".(Untouchable66)When Bakha tells his father about the insult and injustice he has suffered from, his father asks "Didn't you give a warning of your approach?" (Untouchable 70) When Omprakash Valmiki tells his father about the insults and bullies he suffered from his father asserts "Abey Sohro if my children learn a few letters, how does it bother you" (Joothan 29) Bakha's father tries to suppress the smouldering rage of his son by rationalising the thing and so he tolerates, adjusts and survives in the existing social order.

'No no my son no', said Lakha 'we cannot do that. They are our superiors. One word of theirs is sufficient to overbalance all that we might say before the police. They are our masters .We must respect them and do as they tell us. Some of them are kind.(Untouchable 71)

Omprakash Valmik's father on the other hand has the guts to challenge and threat the existing social system:

You are a teacher...So I am leaving now. But remember this much, Master...This Chuhre ka will study right here... In this school. And not just him but there will be more coming after him. (Joothan6)

The submission of Bakha's father and the assertion of Oprakash Valmiki's father have their roots in the framework of the time in which both of them live. Lakha is a member of the untouchable community in pre independence India . His advice to his son has the grains of practical wisdom necessitated by circumstances. He knows very well that the upper caste people can influence the police. In independent India the community is comparatively better organised as 'Dalits' and is better supported by law making them assertive.

No doubt untouchability and the caste system is a curse to the full growth of a society since It keeps one community backward which otherwise, could have contributed to the growth of the society. Further, such a neglect and a suppression of a sizable population raised serious issues of fundamental human rights . The marginalized so depressed and trodden down are, first of all human beings who if given proper opportunities may rise to a level from which they may become useful and valuable for mankind. It is a challenging task to find a solution of the age long deep rooted problem covered under the umbrella of untouchability. Mulk Raj Anand says:

...but the legal and sociological basis of caste having been broken down by the British-Indian penal code, which recognises the rights of every man before a court, caste is now mainly governed by profession . When the sweepers change their profession, they will no longer remain Untouchables(146)

Omprakash Valmiki's father also wants "to improve the caste by studing" (Joothan 29) Such ideas and ideologies come in clash with the orthodox mentality of the people. They determine caste by birth and not by the education and profession of the person

Howsoever much you study...you will still remain a Chura (Joothan32)

and

Whatever you say, a Cuhra will remain a Chuhra .Howsoever high an officer he may become, he cannot change his caste. (Joothan131-132)

It is interesting that the solution suggested by a Dalit and non-Dalit writer differ in their basic spirit reflecting their own perception of the ground realities. In fact the effective solution of the problem does not lie in and within the folds of the present socio-moral and socio-legal system. We find a break through when Omprakash Valmiki asks “Why is my caste my only identity?” (Joothan 134)

Thus the ideas and art of a Dalit and a non-Dalit writer despite all their dissimilarities are not contrary but supplementary. They together move towards the same purpose and the difference of their perception is the difference of ‘feeling it ourselves’ and ‘feeling it for yourselves’.

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POEMS

Alibaug

-Kavita Ezekiel Mendonca

There are places I'll remember
All my life though some have changed
Some forever not for better
Some have gone and some remain
(All My Life... The Beatles)

It was a village then
A ferry the only means to get across,
I went there often, even defiant of the Indian monsoons.

My uncle owned a grain mill
He was a jovial man with a rich laugh
The grain poured out of the ancient machines
Like his patient and unselfish love for us.
My aunt was kind, like all my other aunts
She raised chickens, and cooked spicy food
Put ten chillies in the curry when I visited
Her usual was twenty,
She was an older sister to my mother.

She knew we liked the food less spicy
Father had lived in England
And we were accustomed to blander fare.

At evenfall we talked in soft voices
The hens were asleep.
Disturbing them meant risking
Breakfast without eggs
Once I watched a cackling hen lay an egg,
In the fields were cows and barking dogs
My cousin wove in and out of them
With me and my screams, on the bicycle,
He teased me because I was afraid.

The ocean lapped at the gates of the cottage
We walked barefoot on the sand
I skipped, he held my hand tightly
So I wouldn't skip away.
My cousin caught the Puffer fish
That looked like pregnant women,
We must cook before nightfall
The lantern light was the only electricity then
A rat bit my cousin's toe once
Paraffin was the cure, as I remember it.

But we got there defiant of the rains

It was home and very sweet.

Holding umbrellas over our heads

Willing the rocking boat

To land us safely ashore.

I had heard of Jesus in school

Of how He walked on water

And His command to still the storm,

I remember praying to have that kind of faith

The kind that stills the storm

I cannot swim, though,

I want to walk the earth with grace.

Alibaug is a village no more

My uncle has passed and the grain mill

Has passed on to new owners

I guess technology has replaced

Those ancient machines.

I read of the great developments there

Of hotels, rich residences, and tall buildings

You can get there by car or luxury bus.

I miss Alibaug
 The flickering lanterns, sleeping on mats, eating from *thalis
 I miss Alibaug
 The hushed whispers between cousins
 I don't know when I can return
 To the land of my ancestors
 The land of the Shanwartelis, the Oil pressers,
 I yearn for the unsullied rustic scenes,
 The dotted fields of cows and the music of their bells
 The hush of the chickens settling down for the night,
 And I don't know where the fish sleep
 In the folds of the waves
 Or in the folds of my memory.

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Note: Alibaug, also spelled Alibag, is a coastal town and municipal council in Raigad district of Maharashtra, India. It is the headquarters of the Raigad district. Alibaug and its surrounding villages are the historic hinterland of Bene Israeli Jews. There is a synagogue in the "Israel Ali" (Marathi **इस्राएल आळी** meaning Israel lane) area of the town.[1] A Bene Israelite named Ali used to live there at that time. He was a rich man and owned many plantations of mangoes and coconuts in his gardens. Hence the locals used to call the place "Alichi Bagh"(Marathi for "Ali's Garden"), or simply "Alibag", and the name stuck.[1] Wikipaedia *Thalis – stainless steel plates in which meals are served in Indian homes

I am a woman!

-Molly Joseph

I am a woman!

.....

Proud and happy am I

being a woman...

I can spring out

the Spring

at my finger's touch..

Nature! together,

we dance

making the barren bloom

and the arid green..

how together we

suffer molestations

encroachments,

still we survive the adverse

resilient, recuperating fast ...

when the world needs
the elixir of life
only we can provide
with our magic mantra
of kindness, care and forbearance divine ...

how much have we seen,
seen through...

in us lie the power to pull down yokes
stamp the feet of our own
to save and sustain
a world in tatters

the air pure that rejuvenates
the river cool flowing,
quenching the thirst
of sweltering plains
the moon that spreads
sweet, silent
happy am I, being
a woman..

Memories

memories
that rode
on a
morning breeze..

.....

they draw dancing
pictures on
ground...
shifting shades
and shapes..

in this very yard
so many
tiny feet
toddled once,
played hide
and seek
and later
on strong feet
they set out
to explore
the world..

the wide
valleys
they
traversed
threw back
in echo
their firm
footsteps..

now,
the green
lawn stretches
lying in wait..

the sprawling
Champa tree
spreads
red carpet...

its all
a repeat
the cycle
of life..

memory

trembles

a naked branch

before

the winter

wind....

Book Review

-Rashmi Jain,

Meera vs Meera is a book of criticism that has been skilfully translated by Pradeep Trikha. The book was initially written by Madhav Hada which was titled Pachrang Chola Pahar Sakhi Ri. The English title is fascinating and apt as it presents the essence of this book. It sheds light on various facets of Meera that has been explored through history, folklore, myths, narratives or comics. The struggles, conflicts, devotion, emotions, courage, self-determination and poetry of Meera that has been derived through various sources have been brilliantly portrayed in this book. Whether Meera was a 'devoted saint-poet' or a 'determined queen' has been competently answered. The writer/translator has tried to glorify the real self of Meera amidst the multiple interpretations available through the centuries, and this is what Meera vs Meera is all about. Pradeep Trikha has said in the translators note "the present attempt to translate Pachrang Chola is an attempt to reach out the larger audience and readers of English Language. It will bring forth the rich cultural heritage of the vernacular sources of Madhav Hada to highlight their human vision and lofty ideals and also bring forth Meera's quest for truth, beauty, liberty, justice and happiness translation involves trans-creation, it is always the rewriting of the original text, 'a meta-text'; it reproduces not only what the author in the original language says but what he means..." (220-221)

The book has six sections namely 'Life', 'Society', 'Religious Narratives', 'Poetry', 'Canonization', 'Image Construction' along with a Translator's Note. All those desirous of knowing about Meera can read this book to quench their thirst for knowledge.

Meera vs Meera explores the mystic journey of Meera through folklores, myths, history and prejudices. Writer/Translator has taken references about Meera's life from Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan by Lieutenant Colonel James Tod and historians like Shamaldas, Munshi Devi Prasad, Harinarayan Purohit, Thakur Chatur Singh, Gauri Shankar, Hirachand Ojha and many others. Tod created and shaped Meera's image as a holy saint and mystic poet, and his portrayal influenced the post colonial writers. The mythical study promoted Meera's saffron ascetic attire. However, historian Thakur Chatur Singh, the paternal descendant of Meera reveals

that she belonged to an affluent family and never gave up her royal robes. Medieval scholars constructed Meera's image as a devotee of Krishna holding veena in hand and singing songs moving from one place to another. However, whenever Meera went on pilgrimage, she was accompanied by many people, including royal servants, caretakers, devotees, horse chariots, and similar retinue.

The society of Meera appeared quite different through the feminist and post-colonial lens, but it was neither stagnant nor too progressive or liberal. In Rajput clans ideals like loyalty, honour, pride, women's honour and dignity are of paramount importance. Yet women were shackled by certain restrictions on autonomy, mobility and economic independence. However, Meera's courage, determination to be vocal against social superiority, elites' moral authority, and prejudices of the times provided her opportunities to live on her terms and conditions.

Meera was admired for her poetry and for being a saint devotee by other peer saints. Meera's love for Lord Krishna and other miracles found in Nabhadas's Bhaktamal or Priyadas's Bhaktirasabodhini's religious narratives Mahipati's Bhaktlila-Mitra or Raghavdas's Dadupanthi Bhaktamal are full of miraculous incident and stories of Meera. The story of getting the Krishna idol at childhood in a peculiar manner, drinking poison considering it as an elixir or merging in lord's idol, all brought unflinching support and fame for Meera.

Meera, in her poetry, combines transient and the eternal. Her poems were reformatory and used the region's familiar language, which conveys devotional integrity and transparency. "The use of symbols and imagery associated with her material experiences, such as those related to the adornment of the feminine body. Words like *katakana*(bracelet), *moondro* (ring), *ghaagroo* (skirt, also known as *lehenga* in Hindi)...*choodo* (ivory bangles)..." (175) are used in her poetry. Meera's poetry shows longing to meet her Lord Krishna for instance '*Ubhi dhari arj karat hun, arj karat bhaie bhor*' and '*chaalo Agam ke desh Kaal dekhat darey/Vahan bhara prem ka hauj, Hans Kela karey*' (let's go to God's kingdom where death do not dare tread,/ Reservoir of His love is filled to the brim)(175). Her poems are transcendental in nature but 'challenges gender stereotypes and perils of woman saint's life'.

In twentieth-century Meera's image has been constructed and popularised through books published by publication houses like Gita Press, Diamond Books, Amar Chitra Katha and movies. Gita Press, Amar Chitra Katha and films wanted to cater to the middle-class audience,

therefore constructed Meera's image as an ideal Hindu wife and saint devotee. Diamond Books targeted the urban audience by showing Meera's fearless and rebellious nature. Meera had an enduring universal appeal, so various images have been created to heal, educate, and inspire future generations. It is said 'Jaki Rahi Bhavana jaisi, Prabhu Murat dekhi tin tesi' (Ramcharitmanas) Similarly, the readers would find various opportunity to introspect Meera's personality from a varied perspective.

The translation is a challenging and tedious task which has been proficiently done by Pradeep Trikha. Madhav Hada has paved the journey of Meera in a similar manner Pradeep Trikha has translated the mysterious journey of Meera through various twists and turns treading on the roads of myths, folklore, history and narratives. In the translator's note, he mentioned that he is "wandering in an exile in search of perfection if not Paradise. In Pachrang Chola Meera too had to wander from place to place translating her quest of spirit to merge into her Krishna so that the journey of her soul should transcend from 'a form' to 'the form' of the ultimate." (221). Similarly, the readers would go through meandering ways to reach their destination and would have an experience of enriching soulful journey to find out the real identity of Meera. Many tales about Meera are available in regional languages. However, this translation of Pachrang Chola into English would give an overall view regarding Meera's life and time which have global importance. Pradeep Trikha deserves applause for translating Pachrang Chola to Meera vs Meera. This work has emerged as an outstanding source of information for modern readers and researchers alike.

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