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KALPANA PUROHIT  
SATISH KUMAR HARIT

Guest Editor:

SHARAD K. RAJIMWALE



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Department of English  
Jai Narain Vyas University, Jodhpur  
Rajasthan (India)

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# *Jodhpur Studies in English*

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**Department of English**  
**Jai Narain Vyas University, Jodhpur**  
**Rajasthan (India)**

*In desperate hope I go and search for her  
in all the corners of my room;  
I find her not.*

*My house is small  
and what once has gone from it can never be regained.*

*But infinite is thy mansion, my lord,  
and seeking her I have to come to thy door.*

*I stand under the golden canopy of thine evening sky  
and I lift my eager eyes to thy face.*

*I have come to the brink of eternity from which nothing can vanish  
—no hope, no happiness, no vision of a face seen through tears.*

*Oh, dip my emptied life into that ocean,  
plunge it into the deepest fullness.  
Let me for once feel that lost sweet touch  
in the allness of the universe.*

***Brink of Eternity***  
**-Rabindranath Tagore**

**Jodhpur Studies in English  
Vol. XX, 2022**

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## Editorial

*There is a pleasure in the  
pathless woods,  
There is a rapture on the  
lonely shore,  
There is society, where  
none intrudes,  
by the deep sea, and music  
in its roar:  
I love not Man the less,  
but Nature more.*

- Lord Byron

A journal reflects the department's active academic kernel, the epicenter, one can say of its living soul which helps it reach out to different corners of the world of letters. It's a significant platform in the academic pilgrimage of young and established scholars alike, as it is the Centrifugal point for a university department's intellectual energies that mirrors the vision of growth of positive academic culture.

The need to inculcate that through relentless pursuit of disciplined endeavor of delving into serious academic Odyssey which leads to a wonderful experience. This helps in exploring oneself amidst the finest and inspiring works wherein the tremendous power of language, expression and ideas imbedded within, that leaves indelible mark and helps in shaping the intellectual sensibility.

We feel overwhelmed with the response and the serious arduous of research papers received by the renowned scholars and young researchers from all over, during these unprecedented times of pandemic. This kindled fire of curiosity and creativity fills us with hope.

This issue of the journal embodies all that we believe and aspire for; that of maintaining a high order of Excellence. Imbued with this belief, we embark on this literary Voyage and present a colossal amphora of variegated emotions, human experiences, panorama of reflective thoughts and moods by the Contributors.

We are sure that this issue of **Jodhpur Studies in English: Vol. : XX, 2022** will appeal the sensibility of the readers.

**Happy Reading !!**

**Editors**

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## TRANSLATION: DISRUPTION, MEDIATION OR CREATION?

-Vijay Sheshadri

“..... a verse translation into English must be considered, first of all, as an English poem. If the translation is not a poem, then it is a mistranslation”. ---Dante Gabriel Rosetti---

In this paper, we have made an attempt to make some observations on translation vis-à-vis the creative work and the translational process. Then we will muse over our experiences as an amateur translator and speculate on what transacts between the creative work and the translation of it in the translational process.

A creative writer juggles between perceived experience and intense expression while a translator transacts between one set of perceived and expressed experience and another. Since the translator translates what is there in the text he or she is translating and the point of view of the creative artist too, the translator also becomes an interpreter in the process and hence translation emanates as a site of contestation.

According to Roman Jakobson, translation is of three kinds:

One, Intralingual translation or translation proper: this is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs in the same system.

Two, Interlingual translation or translation proper: this is an interpretation of verbal sign by means of verbal sign in some other linguistic system.

Three, Inter Semiotic translation or transmutation: this is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of non-verbal sign systems.

The very process or act of writing since time immemorial has been a political act that has ushered in a certain erasure of oral tradition. French feminist theoreticians subverting the Freudian trait of women as Penis envy into Pen-is-envy has glaringly pointed out this aspect. Translation, which is normally viewed as a literary process even to this day has in fact emerged as a cultural process. Three hundred renderings of *The Ramayanas* stand as a testimony to this highlight the motivations and mood that he gone into the re-membering of the original work. This in fact is a fine instance of textual politics at work.

The universe come to us through *Vac* exhibiting the Heideggerian *Dasein*-being there. *Vac* thus is, “The queen, the confluence of riches, the skilful one who is first among those worthy of the sacrifice. The gods divided me up into various parts, For I dwell in many places and enter into many forms” (Rig Veda)

It apparent from the above quoted lines that the word or *Vac* dons the role of the author in the Vedas substantiating what Roland Barthes avers in his famous essay, “The Death of the Author” which reads “ as a matter of proposition the author is dead”. Incidentally, the translator mediating between two texts, the creative one and the one he is fecundating in the translational process, definitely should be better off reader being cautious and meticulous than Mr. Woolfgang Iser’s notion of reader as performer. Ironically, the Reader-Response Theory propounded by Hans Robert Juass in “Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory” does not talk much about the translator!

This then leads one to pose a question here. How can translation avoid getting enmeshed in the politics of writing since writing itself in majority of instances a representation of the copy, a photocopy of the copy, signifying a distant, lost or severed origin or to put it in simple terms every text has a pre-text. Viewed thus, a creative work and its translation exhibits how representation (Translation here) and writing are part of a discourse- that of a sign and signification echoing Derrida’s words: “ In this play representation, the point of origin becomes ungraspable....there is no longer a simple origin”. (Derrida: ) If one presumes that every text has a pre-text, then any representation of the ‘original’ text tantamount to reappropriation. The translation of such a text then would exhibit what Derrida calls “Dissemination”. (Derrida: )Hence, translation of regional languages into English in India exhibits Bhabha’s notion of Hybridity. In the words of Bhabha, “Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting focus and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (That is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the ‘pure’ and original identity of authority). Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and subordination” (Bhabha: )

Hence a translator should be aware of the plenitude of meaning inherent in the text or work of art. He can and should close in the gaps available in the text, which in fact is a edifice of indeterminate structure and should make sure to leave a mark on it.

These are some of the crucial problems we came across while translating some short stories from the Kannada Original into English:

One, to what degree or extent, can a translation be literal Two, if one is being literal, then to what extent one can be faithful to the original text? Does this mean that the writing/translating tends to get hackneyed in the translational process?

Three, what is the degree of freedom/liberty one can take with the original text? (Especially, for convenience in translation vis-à-vis culture specific words and issues )

Four, to what extent can one indulge in self effacement while translating a text?

The cardinal problem one confronts while translating a work of is the act of visualizing. What goes into the visualizing of the work of art that is to be translated in the mind? Coomaraswamy's comments are apt in this connection:

“ The maker of the icon.....self willing and self thinking, proceeds to visualize the form of the *devata*, angel or aspect of God, described in a given canonical prescriptions, *Sadhana*, *Mantram*, *Dhyana*. The mind ‘produces’ or ‘draws’ this form itself, as though from a great distance. Ultimately, that is from heaven, where the types of art exist in formal operation, immediately from ‘the immanent space in the heart’ the common focus of seer and seen, at which place the only possible experience of reality takes place....the form thus known is an act of non-differentiation, being held in view as long as may be necessary, is the model form which he proceeds to execution in stone, pigment or other material” (Coomaraswamy)

It is evident from the above quoted passage that the person chiseling the icon is transubstantiating words with concrete image that of a sculpture. This then leads one to this fact-that translation in a broader perspective is a part and parcel of the happenings of the universe. And also translation can take place from one language into another, from one form of art to another a cultural transaction.

The other aspect that a translator invariably notices or experiences is the fact that there is no marked demarcation between a creative work and its translation. As a poem or any work of art for that matter represents an art-experience, translation too, provides an art experience to the translator and the reader as well. This the translator does by transferring his experiences induced by the work he is translating through a different language. This then narrows or blurs the conditions that go into the genesis of the work and the translation of it. If at all one tries to ferret out the difference between a creative work and the translation of it, one can locate the essentials in the determinants and causes that go into the fecundation of a work. A creative work is the outcome of warring with one self while the translation of it is the resultant sign of the *rasanubhava* of the reader of the creative work/piece that eggs him or her to advertise such an experience by means of translation. In this sense, translation can be viewed as a healthy disruption paving way for a healthy creation, leading to a neo-cultural and linguistic configurations. Viewed thus, the translation of a work is mediation between two languages and hence two cultures.

As an exemplar, we present the modus operandi we took recourse to while translating a short story from Kannada into English which we titled it “Unveiling.....”. This short story demands from the translator problematizing the issue of representation, that of Secularism, the quality of education vis-à-vis a Lecturer in the crucial context of globalization in India. It appears more urgent than ever to be conscious of the notion of the authentic which can be carefully unearthed through the process of translation. The translator can do this by interrogating the creative work through his assertion of the ego and as a new historicist too. The drive to critique the secular outlook of India should not be viewed as a desire to resist the authentic other to the fictitious one represented in post independent, postindustrial India. It is here that the translational process can play a pivotal role in undertaking who “WE” are and the notions of our “SELF”. It also enables one to inscribe “culture of appreciation” and to alert us to an issue like what goes into the making of a Canon. Translation, from being a process of correspondence gets transformed into a form of disruption, mediation and creation. The sub-version provided by the translation opens up vistas to re-view notions of a nation, linguistic sophistication, notion of homogeneity and the interfacing of fictions of history and history of fiction.

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The story title “Unveiling...” in the Kannada original is titled “*Kannu Therasuvudendare*” which literally translated gives the meaning “making one open the eyes” which we translated as “Unveiling....” Because the story not only opens the eyes of the characters in the story but also that of the readers not to see something but to feel something in totality. Hence we thought it appropriate to give the title “Unveiling.,.,.,,”



## **Teaching Medical Humanities in a Humanities Classroom: Problems and Challenges**

-Gourhari Behera

The emergence and popularity of Medical Humanities and Health Humanities as interdisciplinary fields of enquiry is one of the major developments in the academic world in recent times. The Corona virus pandemic that has not only devastated lives world over but has forced us to rethink categories like disease, health, illness etc has given a fresh perspective to the study of medical and health humanities in various prestigious institutions across the world. Advocates of medical humanities have been arguing that the teaching of humanities to students of medicine shall not only instill “humanistic” values like empathy, compassion etc and improve the lives of both patients the medical practitioner but also the inclusion of humanities in medicine curriculum shall save it from becoming irrelevant. This is because medical humanities can reinforce the appeal of the humanities discipline like literature, philosophy, fine arts, history that are slowly losing out to STEM disciplines in the job market and are facing fund crunch all over the world. Medical humanities, it is claimed explores the human side of medicine and studies the interface between medicine and creative arts like literature, fine arts, cinema etc. Medical Humanities curriculum thus explores things like illness narratives, death, mental health etc that shall eventually produce more compassionate and communicative health personnel. Insights from philosophy, literature, sociology etc are borrowed by medical humanities experts for exploring medical issues associated with illness and disease.

But there has also been a rethinking about the concept of health in recent times. There is a growing understanding that health is not just limited to medicine and medical practice and is not a simple mechanical transaction between the physician and the patient but involves everyone including the friends, family and others who get affected by health issues in different measures. Thus, a need was felt to broaden the horizon of medical humanities so as to make it more inclusive. This has been achieved by a terminological shift from “medical humanities” to “health humanities”. Health humanities, its advocates argue, focuses on “health” which is a more expansive concept and involves the “human condition” of health, well-being, mortality, transience, suffering etc. Hence, instead of simply focusing on the patient-physician relationship health humanities attempts to study “health” within social,

cultural, economic contexts. The role of feelings, emotion of patients, health-care personnel, and relatives in studying and understanding health also becomes significant in health humanities. Health humanities, in the process, incorporates a variety of methodologies from various disciplines and a host of people including patients, doctors, nurses etc. This shift from “medical” to “health” has been considered a major break in the field of academic enquiry as it goes beyond the narrow concern of instilling humanistic values in the students of medicine and tries to study health more inclusively incorporating diverse people, disciplines and methodologies.

My concern in this paper emerges from my teaching a course on Medical Humanities to our PhD students who are supposed to opt for a few emerging elective courses as part of their Pre-PhD course work. While introducing the prospective research scholars to Medical Humanities and talking about their relevance a few simple, yet sharp questions posed by the students forced me to re-conceptualize these interdisciplinary fields. The students felt that Medical humanities as an academic programme/course caters primarily to students of medicine and was not very relevant to students of humanities. They wondered whether the inclusion of these inter-disciplines into the curriculum was a desperate attempt to make humanities more relevant. They argued that although the inclusion of humanities into medical curriculum may fortify the claim of humanities as “relevant” and “useful” yet assessing the disciplines of humanities only on the basis of usefulness and relevance to medical education or the STEM fields is damaging to the humanities in the long run. It dilutes the purpose of humanities education because humanities is primarily concerned with the comprehensive documenting and analyzing human experience that goes beyond the scope of medicine education. Although experience of illness, suffering, death etc are the subject matter of both medicine and humanities, looking at them from a narrow perspective based on relevance and utility weaken the larger claim of humanities education. Then how does one justify the inclusion of medical/ health humanities in the humanities curriculum? What do humanities students stand to gain from a course in these fields? How do they approach a text, for instance, that deal with medical issues like disease, pain, suffering etc without any formal training in medicine? What are the research areas in Medical humanities for a student of philosophy or literature? For students of medicine, these fields definitely sensitize them to issues that are hardly discussed in medicine and force them to go beyond the bio-medical approach to patient cure and care. The inclusion of humanities in the medical education curriculum also makes the prospective health care providers ‘understand’ health in a more

holistic manner so as to become better health care professionals. In the process they become 'better' human beings because of their ability to empathize with the patient's suffering and problem. But a student of philosophy, history, literature, fine arts pursuing a Master's or a Doctorate programme, having already acquired the skills of critical thinking, hermeneutic analysis, the capacity to empathize with sufferings of others, the values associated with justice, faith and human agency etc needs a better justification for opting a course in Medical Humanities. He/she would approach the phenomenon of sickness, disease, disability, madness etc from an altogether different perspective that is bound to vary from that of a student of medicine. Even the terminological shift from Medical humanities to Health Humanities, I feel, has not much altered the goal of this discipline. It more or less is targeted primarily at medical practitioners for a more sensitive approach to medical treatment and care. But my primary concern as a course instructor offering Medical humanities is how to justify the teaching of the field to students of Humanities. What would they likely to gain from the study of such a field? How would that differ from that of a student or practitioner of medicine? Prescribing a few poems, stories, autobiographies of doctors and patients, novels or plays about illness, pain or suffering may produce more compassionate and empathetic doctors but can these texts be just reduced to arousing such emotions and produce better health care providers? A student of humanities in general and literature in particular, I feel, shall have an altogether different experience of studying such texts. So the intersection between medicine and disciplines like literature, philosophy, sociology etc is bound to be a very complex affair for the students of humanities and literature. My objective in this paper is to explore how well can a student of humanities, especially literature comprehend medical issues through the lens of a work of art or what can the discipline of medicine contribute to the study of humanities? For example in what ways does a student pursuing a Postgraduate or a Doctorate program in humanities look at an ailment like cancer or AIDS or deformity like blindness or a Pandemic like the Covid-19 from the perspective of humanities? Can methods from humanities that the student or the teacher has acquired during the course of formal academic training help in understanding medical issues, problems and concepts? How is this understanding going to be different from that of a student of medicine? In other words how does the study of medical or health humanities benefit a student of humanities? What are the objectives of offering a course in medical/health humanities by a Literature or Philosophy department to its students?



These questions acquire greater significance at a time when health issues plague human beings across nations, societies and cultures. The Covid-19 Pandemic have had far reaching consequences and implications for not only the medical fraternity but also various individuals and, communities in terms of cultural, social and economic lives. Similarly mental health issues like neurosis, psychosis, schizophrenia, depression etc have become very common across the globe due to various social, cultural, economic and political reasons leading to path breaking research in the fields of psychoanalysis and other allied disciplines. Diseases like AIDS and cancer have affected a large population who try to cope with them in a variety of ways. These and a host of other ailments have been the subject of interest not only for the medical practitioner but also sociologists, philosophers, historians, creative writers, artists, film makers and cultural and literary critics. Writers and other creative have especially responded to these diseases in a variety of ways bringing out the complex associations that literary and cultural representations express.

One of the most popular texts that is usually prescribed in the Medical Humanities courses is Leo Tolstoy's "The Death of Ivan Illych"(1886) for sensitizing medical students to the end of life ethical issues. Tolstoy's novella narrates the story of an ordinary human being coming to terms with death. The Medical students are taught to explore themes like bioethics, significance of communication involving Ivan, the terminally ill character and others, sympathy and empathy for the sick. As literature is an outstanding source of reflection on life and death medical students find Tolstoy's novella very empowering for them. It also brings bioethical issues like euthanasia for students of medicine for greater reflection that would assist them in their profession. But for a student of literature the novella, apart from arousing emotions like sympathy and empathy, also opens up a vast arena of possibilities. Its text can be seen as a symbolic engagement with illness. Whereas a student of medicine is more concerned with finding out the exact illness that causes Ivan's death, for a student of literature the metaphorical and symbolic understanding or significance of Ivan's illness and death is more insightful and productive. Thus, while the story is used to assess how literary narratives provide ethical insights to students of medicine to deal with ethical issues associated with mortality and suffering, a student of literature tends to look beyond this narrow interpretation and invests Ivan's illness with figurative meaning that connotes the novella's social and ethical concerns. In other words, what distinguishes a "literary" reading of Tolstoy's text from a "medical" reading is the way it invests illness with a metaphorical or symbolic meaning to refer to certain "socio-cultural malaise" of nineteenth century Russia.

Another classic text that has acquired immense popularity after the Covid -19 Pandemic is Albert Camus's *The Plague*. Although the novel has traditionally been read as an allegory of the German occupation of France from 1940 to 1944 fresh scholarship on the novel explore issues related to health and disease like medical care, epidemics, bioethics and suffering. It offers very interesting reading from the perspectives of medical practitioners, patients, a healthcare professional etc. But to see Camus's text solely from the perspective of medical science and how it seeks affinity with patients resulting in the reader's arousal of empathy would rob the text from its complex engagement with moral, religious and political issues. Similarly to read the novel just as a political allegory also would alienate the medical and health issues represented in the novel. A more fruitful reading would be to look at Camus's metaphoric connotation of the "plague" within social, cultural and political contexts. Apart from empathizing with the victims of the deadly plague that has afflicted the people of Oran, Camus's novel makes illness the springboard for a humanities student to explore existential questions related to suffering, transience, absurdity, etc. Robert J Bonk says Camus "juxtaposes medicine against government and religion in his quest to find medical meaning in an absurd world...explores responses of bureaucratic government, dogmatic religion, and scientific medicine to a bubonic-like epidemic in Oran, a seaside Algerian town that soon becomes isolated from the world through a self-imposed quarantine. Within this microcosm, Camus dissects and diagnoses effects of disease: not so much the plague but more so his society. Isolated by sand and sea, inhabitants look in vain to societal institutions — government, religion, medicine— in their struggle to survive an epidemic relentlessly raising its death tolls daily. In this context, Camus' absurdism —human struggle when trapped between contradictory inevitabilities— coalesces within an estranged society impotent against an almost anthropomorphized infection fought by Dr. Bernard Rieux". (Bonk 1). A Humanities student tends to look at how Camus deals with the issue of medicine as a panacea for the people of Oran when both government and religion fail to offer solace to the plague ridden town. But for Camus medicine is not as simple a solution as it seems because by that time medical science has been dehumanized - "patients became data; treatments became algorithms; hospitals became institutions; and governments became financiers." (Bonk 1)

Thus, students of humanities go beyond the simplistic reading of literary and cultural texts by students of Medical Humanities. They tend to see the numerous categories associated with the study of medicine like illness, sick bodies, curing etc not only as medical categories and phenomena but as social and cultural texts and discourses generating a plethora of meanings.

So a cultural text when introduced in a Medical Humanities course meant for students of humanities is bound to go beyond arousing compassion and tends to engage with larger social, cultural, economic, political issues. The humanities pedagogical training that the students have imbibed with emphasis on interpretation, critical thinking, theoretical engagement etc shall assist them in reading texts and phenomenon related to sickness, body, health care in a manner that is not limited to producing good doctors and health care professionals. Usually while introducing a course in Medical Humanities to students of Humanities course instructors commit the mistake of impressing upon them the objective of Medical humanities as producing better health care professionals. This alienates the students, who hardly have any training in medicine or have any ambition to pursue the medical profession, from the course. Medical humanities courses in humanities departments rather should prescribe literary, cultural, philosophical texts that go beyond medicine and help the students in analyzing and documenting the human condition which is the goal of humanities.

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## **From Self Exploration to Self realization: Women Protagonists in Laurence's & White's Novels**

-Kalpana Purohit

Patrick White and Margaret Laurence are noted for their delineation of strong women characters. Despite being Australian and Canadian, man and woman, the female protagonists of the two writers are strikingly similar in many ways and yet so distinctly dissimilar in other ways.

Australian-Canadian studies both individual and comparative) have focused on Concepts such as the confrontations with alien landscapes "Colonial Cringe". This is taken as identity markers specific to nation or culture and to emphasize the regional affinities of the writers, therefore, Comparative studies of the writers within the common wealth context is significant.

Regarding cultural socio-political and literary developments of these two countries, Diana Brydon rightly remarks: "By defining them one against the other, we may examine, what they share and what they diverge." For instance, both the countries have been products of the colonial experiences; they have worked out different solutions, "Australians were conscious of themselves as Australians belonging to a distinctive society at a time when Canadians were only venturing to speculate about the emergence of a national feeling."

(A common ancestry: literature in Australia and Canada 138)

In spite of the shared colonial experience there are numerous, "variations between and within cultures."

**Patrick White** (1912-1990) had the European tradition open to him through his education in England and his travels to France, Germany, Greece and **Margaret Laurence** (1928-1987) had the advantage of staying in England and traveling to Somali land and Ghana. The African years gave her first hand experience of what it means to be a go-between in the colonial situation. Also educationally their common background is English and European literature.

In their fiction, both writers are engaged in the creation of a new reality which is in complementary-which is beyond the basic binaries-self/ other, black/ white/ center/ periphery etc.

The reality underlying the novels and the vision embraced by these authors is a co-existence of the past, present, history and fiction; such an approach enables these both to move beyond the constraints of national, cultural and sexual identities. When we focus on the women, Margaret Atwood says: “As for Woman, Capital W, we got stuck with that for centuries, Eternal woman. But really, woman is the sum total of Women. It doesn't exist apart from that except as an abstracted idea.”

Both White and Laurence seem to emphasize the idea which is described by Robin Mathews in *Canadian Literature: Surrender or Revolution*, 139] as “the liberation of women is not liberation into 'free' rejection of men, community and nation but into a state of increased equality and harmony with men and a humanized and liberated participation in community and nation.”

In his autobiography **Flaws in the Glass** White says : “In life I have known far more admirable women than admirable men...” he further says that of course my women are flawed human beings... ' (252). The metaphysical and Spiritual aspects of the quests do not involve the battle of Sexes, in fact in the moment of Self-realization, gender and sex differences cease to exist.

White and Laurence may be termed feminists in the creation of women who are not stereo typed images like Angel in the house, She-Devil or devoted spouse; instead, we come across portrayals of women who are spinsters, intellectuals and artists. Both White and Laurence dramatize “how a woman finds the fullest possible expression of her personality by transcending the conventional barriers of sex”. Their fiction explicates, “The distinction between what women are and what they are made to look like.” (P.P. Sharma, “From Stereotype to Authentic self-hood changing images of women”<sup>3</sup>)

There are certain preoccupations which contribute to the quest for self-exploration that leads to Self-realization. Almost all the protagonists are portrayed as “ordinary” women with a potential to assert their individuality. This idea subscribes to White's statement in “**The Prodigal Son**” about his attempts, “to discover the extra-ordinary behind the ordinary.” Echoing the same for Laurence's characterization Clara Thomas says, “An ordinary person is revealed as extra ordinary by the power and imaginative range of inner life.” (In George Woodcock's: *A place to stand on* 100) In White's fiction, the movement away from the society is glaring whereas in Laurence's fiction women seem to work within the social restrictions. The quests for individual identity are marked by the conflict between the inner

and outer selves of the protagonists. This conflict creates an anguish of isolation and a break down of communication. What is interesting is that White emphasizes the aspect of alienation forcefully, whereas Laurence stresses the break down of communication even while calling for the need to reach out to other individuals in the society.

The quest for Self-realization is marked by certain traits of the protagonists i.e. the questioning of social values, withdrawal from society, urge to be free and instinct for survival. It is a gradual process and thus, a series of events brings about the awareness. In his essay, "The Functions of Imagery in Patrick White's Novels" Michael Cotter defines it as "a final culminating moment in which the whole life is given a meaning."

In the novels of Patrick White, women undertaking quest for Self-realization may be classified under two heads: **Earth Mothers** and **Illuminati**. Earth mothers, through their bountiful, protective and understanding nature, respond to everyday life in a simple and direct manner through instinct and intuition. The Illuminati on the other hand, moves away from the society and their experience of Self-realization gives them knowledge of the self and knowledge of the world. Mary Hare and Ruth Godbold in (**Riders in the Chariot**) are fine examples of Earth Mothers. Theodora Goodman (**The Aunt's Story**) Laura (**Voss**) Elizabeth Hunter (**The Eye of the Storm**) or Ellen Roxburgh (**A Fringe of Leaves**) are luminaries. Patrick White stresses on the humility and simplicity as necessary conditions for Self-realization.

Theodora Goodman in **The Aunt story** is first of Patrick White's characters who undertake a quest for the realization of **Self**. At the beginning of the novel, we see Theodora being defined in terms of the roles forced upon her by society: an ugly spinster with no bright chances of marriage and an aunt to her niece. Further, she is unfairly compared with her sister. Her loneliness is alienated by a series of characters in the novel who prophesize Theodora's vision: "You'll see a lot of funny things Theodora Goodman. You'll see them because you've eyes to see. And they'll break you. But perhaps, you will survive." (AS p.45) Theo's insight into things is established early in the novel when she is riding around the place with father. "There was peace of mind enough on Meroe, you could feel it, whatever it was and you were not certain, but in your bones." This kind of insight reaches a climax in statement of faith to Gen. Sokolnikov in the Jardin Exotique Section, where she realizes that : "the Fall is a necessary prerequisite for the Resurrection." (**The Eye in the Mandala P.36**)

There is 'The Great Monster Self' which looms large in the novel, gets exorcised in Jardin Exotique Section. At Hotel Du Midi, people lead illusionary life. Wherein the various relationships of Theo are recounted with the destruction of Hotel Du Midi by fire. Theo's links with illusion breaks and she realizes the need for humility, simplicity and suffering in order to gain knowledge of the Self. She puts on a hat with a black rose. This rose is a Mandala's symbol indicating her new achieved wholeness.

The Mandala is a symbol of totality. It is similar to Jung's explanation: "a symbol of totality & the "dwelling of the God" its a protective circle, a pattern of order superimposed on psychic chaos. Mandala as a traditional symbol of unity and experience of wholeness as Patricia Morley points out: "The Mandala's image.....is an image of perfection....(Isa.40:20)

She further remarks that white uses the Mandala for Chariot as an all inclusive anagogic metaphor "Throughout his work to suggest the infinite and eternal living body, in which man has his being, the symbol which unites all other symbols, the word that contains all poetry".(17)

**Voss** is a chronicle of the exploration of Australia **Riders in the Chariot** (1961) is equally ambitious attempt to seek out and construct a mythology in postwar Australia ,a mythology derived from major religions, Judaism and Christianity but domesticated in the Sydney suburbs so as to be unmistakably indigenous to the white tribes.

The four riders in **The Chariot** are outsiders, separated from the culture in which they find themselves, but "United by the spiritual guest they share".(406)

Laura's journey in **Voss** is not lonely like Theo. Laura and Voss progress together. Voss's journey across the landscape is paralleled by Laura's journey through her mind-scape. While Laura teaches Voss the need of humility in accepting human weakness before God, it is because of her relationship with Voss that she herself returns to her religious faith. Laura's relationship with Rose also gains significance in the novel, because it is only through Rose that Laura learns about the true nature of suffering. As Rose tells Laura, "...I was not meant to suffer, not then, or now...But suffering creeps up." Laura understands from Rose's life that some superior power operates. This is when she tells Voss that their only hope of salvation lies in praying together. Laura surrenders herself completely to God. "My prospects.....are in the hands of God" (V 308). Mary Hare and Ruth Godbold gain Self-realization through their

roles as Earth Mothers. Cecil Haderati sums up comprehensively in his article “The Theme of Revelation in Patrick White 's novels.” “Their modes of reception are varied- in a fit in intellectual contemplation, in a sensual or physical joy.... as accepted mystery, as a subject for expression.....” (40). Mary Hare(**Riders in the Chariot**) is close to nature and her links with the human world is minimal. It is Himmelfarb and Mrs. Godbold who helps her to reach out to the human world. Her closeness to nature also enables her to conceive of the Chariot in terms of natural occurrences. She believes that “There is such a variety of good on Earth. And everywhere.” (RC 58). This enables her to establish her identity close to nature, which helps her to develop a strong sense of good and evil. On the other hand, Ruth Godbold is a perfect Earth Mother archetype in Patrick White's novels. The experience with suffering from a young age awakened in her compassion. She finds exaltation in simple acts of daily life, to express her belief, not in words....in performance of her duties polishing plates, scrubbing floors... she could have been offering up the active essence of her being in unstinted praise.(RC 245) Lending hand to others without differentiating, Ruth attains a state of equanimity, by universalizing her personal grief. Mary and Ruth together provide instinct and emotion in contrary to the intellect and imagination of Himmelfarb and AIF Dubbo. Illumination thus becomes collective in this novel. Ruth's own vision of Chariot was that “her centre was touched by the wings of love and charity” (RC 489) Ruth like Laura in Voss returns to civilization with more wisdom and vision.

There are protagonists who experience Self-awareness in a moment of insight and that changes their perception whereas there are others like Elizabeth Hunter in **The Eye of the Storm** strive continuously for Self-awareness and the moment of insight arrives much before the end of the novel.

The moment of insight itself becomes an annihilation of the Self, the conscience takes a rebirth and continues to live. Elizabeth Hunter's moment of illumination takes place at the Brumby Island. Furious with her mother's attempt to capture Edward Pehl's attentions, Dorothy runs away. In a solitary moment, Mrs. Hunter acknowledges her guilt and “she confesses her faults to herself) and accepts blame when nobody was there to insist on it, produced in Elizabeth Hunter a rare sense of freedom.”(ES 401) She searches for her children and mean while the storm gathers. She in a state of semi-consciousness and “just as she was no longer a body....the myth of her womanhood had been exploded by the storm. She was instead a being...” (ES 409) The moment of insight has taught her life and death and "the eye was no longer focused on her.” This enables her to come back to social life with a better



understanding. As Veronica Brady points out in her article, "The Eye of the Storm." Elizabeth Hunter here achieves:

Salvation' that is, completeness of existence not by denying but by affirming everything in her life, her failures as well as her successes, down to the last physical humiliations of old age. (62)

The Mysticism of '**Mandala**' and '**Chariot**' give way to a sense of wholeness in Ellen's character in **A Fringe of Leaves**. There are two phases in which the Protagonist's life is set in. White cultured society through her marriage to Austin on one hand, and another into the coarse aboriginal culture after the shipwreck when her husband and other men are killed. Ellen is docile and moulded to suit social norms in one and assertive in another. She is Earth mother like Ruth has close relationships with black children. This maternal instinct helps her to understand people. She mentions in her diary, "often on such nights at a country to which I belonged.... I would find myself wishing to be united with my surroundings not as the dead, but fully alive." (FL 92) Such an attitude helps her to survive in the aboriginal tribe. The acceptance of the savage culture like cannibalism and adultery comes naturally to her and she does not make an effort to interpret it. But her return to civilization suggests that she has learnt to combine and unite all aspects of life. She says, "I discovered another world which will remain with me for life." (FL 27)

There is no '**Manadala**' or '**Chariot**' guiding and unifying the vision of the protagonists in Margaret Laurence's four **Manawaka novels**. The protagonists of Laurence come to terms with their present by evaluating their past which helps them to discover and rediscover their lives. Memory acts as a unifying force of the past and the present. In **The stone Angel** the moment of illumination occurs when Hagar Shipley confronts willingly her past deeds, their by confesses and accepts the responsibility for the death of Bram and John to Murray Lees.

There is recapitulation of Hagar's past: her refusal to comfort her dying brother, to accept her sexual urge for Brem, to accept responsibility for John's death and her contempt for Currie-like Marvin etc. The present lies in accepting her responsibility and guilt. This acceptance gives her freedom.

Parallel to this plot, the religious framework is also obvious in the novel. The Old Testament story of Hagar- Abraham's second wife's honest confession. The final attempt of Hagar to hold the Glass of water can be interpreted in Christian sense of redemption. It is the

cup of Grace which she humbly accepts. The effect of coming to terms with her past certainly alters her present affirming the continuation of life. Similarly, Rachael Cameron in Laurence's **A Jest of God** comes to terms with her past inhibitions, fears and "discovers the growth inside her." She manages to harmonize her inner conflicts and outer Self. She visits Hector's funeral parlour, where she confronts death directly. "While human relationships are an attempt to counter isolation, death is recognition of it..." this experience is an eye opener for her. She travels her journey from initial rejection of her mother's church, where she says, "Bless me or not God for I'll not beg", to her progress where at the end, she prays "God's mercy on reluctant jesters, God's grace on Fools." As Patricia Morley points out: "Rachael's quest, like Hagar's is a search for freedom and joy...she wins a partial release from fear, a new understanding of her relation to her mother and an acceptance of mystery of human personality.." (Margaret Laurence 89)

Unlike Hagar and Rachael, Stacy in **The Fire Dwellers** is affirmative and does not deny life. Hagar and Rachael distance themselves out of pride and fear but Stacey in fact mourns human isolation. "She thinks of herself as common place and ordinary but the great achievement of her anxious, urgent voice is to reveal her extra-ordinary qualities of love, fortitude and especially vitality" (Clara Thomas, *The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence* 128) Stacey accepts that "blinding flash of light (FD255)" cannot happen in her life nor does she see profound implications of being a house wife and a mother. Her understanding is how to be a human being. Her quest for selfdiscovery continues in this direction in a circular form. There is no particular event which brings illumination for her. There are series of events that bring about her realization which wipes out frustrations of her past. She accepts change in the present which helps to take decision about her future. She now takes life as it comes to her. "If I could absorb the notion of nothing, of total dark, then it would have no power over me." (FD 263) and she accepts that each one has to work out one's salvation. This will come out of endurance, patience and wisdom. She says: "Give me another forty years, Lord and I may mutate into a Matriarch."

Another of Laurence's novels is interesting **The Diviners** where the river image opens and concludes the novel subtly and vividly captures Morag Gunn's growth as an individual. At the beginning rivers flowing fascinates Morag; towards the end, the same image urges to "look ahead into the past and back into the future, until the silence" (D 452-3) Her recollections range from the snapshots, memories, reminiscences and songs from her personal and ancestral past. There are again series of events in the novel; especially Christie's Funeral

scene brings the acceptance in her about her father, heritage and also her limitations as a writer. Being an outsider at Manawaka unlike other protagonists of Laurence, she acquaints herself well with the place and its taboos and she defies the conventions. "Freedom for Morag is the evasion of negative forces; not the quest for positive ones." (John Moss 79). The end of **The Diviners** completes the cycle of Manawaka as Clara Thomas perceives, "with a resolution of the ME and the NOT-ME into the humility of an acceptance of a place within the ALL."

The protagonists of both these writers undertake quests in order to realize the Self and to achieve this almost all the characters undergo tremendous suffering before gaining a vision. Both these writers view suffering, humility, simplicity as an affirmative feeling which strengthens the individual. Another shared aspect of these two writers is a vivid depiction of the place. The landscape has loomed larger in both literature is a recurring feature in the literature of Canada and Australia. These writers use landscape to probe the mindscape of the individuals. The female protagonists are travellers who assimilate all the experiences of both the landscape and mindscape and achieve their 'Self'. The meaning of their characters in the novels similar to as opined by Eliot in *Four Quastets* and embodied in his characters: "The only wisdom we can hope to acquire." Is the wisdom of humility: humility is endless which no doubt in the conclusion of **The Tree of Man Echoes**; "in the end there was no end."

Patrick White lays emphasis on single moments of illumination on the other hand; Laurence considers Self-realization as a gradual process which sometimes requires efforts of a life time. White is Metaphysical in his approach and deals with questions of good and evil, appearance and reality. Characters of White move away from the society whereas Laurence's characters work within the social framework; and there is no binding mystical frame work of a 'Mandala' or "Chariot like White. In White's fiction there is evolution from a spiritual, mystical stance to a position of 'Humanism'. Another area of difference lies in the depictions of the landscape by these writers. In Patrick White the landscape is raw, uninhabited, whereas in Laurence it is peopled with human figures. White's landscape remains the same, where every individual perceives its different aspects, and on the other hand, Laurence's Manawaka grows and changes.

The landscape becomes instrumental in achieving their "**Real Self**." The protagonists are voyagers who sets into the path to discover their interior conscious. The quest has spiritual, psychological and philosophical connotations. Their journey epitomises myth of

courageous, defiant failure against overwhelming odds. There may be differences in their fictional methods of expressions, perceptions but in sharing certain pre-occupations, they collapse differences in time, space and culture. Both the authors seek a mythic structure to embody their perception of contemporary and newly Australian and Canadian cultural awareness. And their primary concern remains essentially “*Humanistic and a deep concern with Human Life and it's meaning on this Earth.*” *The characters sought to embark in the wild meadows of life as Explorers to achieve their self-realization.*

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## **ICEs/OCEs/ECEs or WEs or IE: Englishes in the Contexts of Postmodernism, Postcolonialism, the Internet and the Globalization**

- Prakash Joshi

We are more than 100 years ahead of the time when Ferdinand de Saussure in Europe was lecturing and formulating his revolutionary ideas about language. We are more than 60 years ahead of the time when Leonard Bloomfield in the United States was propounding his structural linguistics. We are more than 50 years ahead of the time when postmodernism as a sort of cultural movement burst forth and changed our perception of everything, including language. We put these prefatory facts upfront because we have to consider whether English as a language and as a substantial entity still exists and can still be learnt and taught the way it had been learnt and taught for at least three to four hundred years before the arrival of Saussure. To some it may appear a quirky query. But it certainly is a serious question worth much thought. To explicate and to substantiate, let's read a quote from a perceptive article by Ewa Thompson. The article notes:

Something happened to English language within my lifetime. Its most subtle and ineffable level has been amputated... In public discourse, words have ceased to be... 'bearers of history and mystery'... Words have become carriers of public image and signs of aspiration to a public image... Following Ferdinand de Saussure, scholars have begun to treat words as 'points of intersection' rather than as entities that potentially carry within themselves multiple meanings, including spiritual ones (Thompson).

Published on 23 October 2018, the article voices the puzzlement and worry of many who have lived through the transition that postmodernism has caused in the past 50 odd years. More specifically, the article voices the puzzlement and worry of those generations of people who have seen language decentered, deconstructed, devalued and de-substantialized as an effect of postmodernism. In the spirit of an independent academic enquiry, however, it must be pointed out that the view of Ewa Thompson - and of others in her league - is a conservative view about the changes English has undergone in the past six or so decades. In fact, Ms. Thompson belongs to an inter-institutional association of conservative thought in academic and other matters in the US.

Going by the view of Ewa Thompson, the changes English has undergone or has been subjected to since the middle of the 20th Century would be seen as damage and impairment to the language. So much has happened in the period: postcolonialism and postcolonial thought took a firm hold in almost all fields in Humanities and Social Sciences; postmodernism arrived with almost a proverbial bang to alter our perception of all our cultural institutions; globalization ushered in and, in the course of time, brought the world to an unprecedentedly irreversible stage. And then came the Internet in a big way and introduced heretofore unimaginable digital media platforms, which only abetted and bolstered the effects of postmodernism and globalization. Though all of these events, individually and collectively, have done so much to English to give it the shape and character it now has, it is the Internet that has singly caused the most noticeable changes in the language. To some, these changes are a movement towards simplicity and greater communicativeness; but there are some others to whom they may appear damaging and impairing. David Crystal terms this “a distinctive genre of worry” (*Language and the Internet* 01). So because, “unlike sociologists” who “draw attention to the dangers of the Internet” in matters like “pornography, intellectual property rights, privacy, security, libel, and crime”, the scientists and scholars of language are “worried primarily about linguistic issues” thrown up by the Internet (Crystal, *Language and the Internet* 01). David Crystal summarizes the fears and worries of this set of people by a set of questions:

Do the relaxed standards of e-mails augur the end of literacy and spelling as we know it? Will the Internet herald a new era of technobabble? Will linguistic creativity and flexibility be lost as globalisation imposes sameness? (*Language and the Internet* 02).

The fears and worries that the questions carry do not apply exclusively to the Internet alone, but work as well in the context of associate or allied electronic mediums. David Crystal lists and explains six of them: Electronic Mail, Chatgroups, Virtual Worlds, World Wide Web, Instant Messaging, and Blogging (*Language and the Internet* 11-15). Each of them, Crystal suggests, has its own graphic, orthographic, grammatical, lexical and discourse features that may be (usually are) at variance from whatever we judge to be the standard language and usage (8-9); and, that is the reason for him to create a new linguistic category for the language that most generally appears on the Internet and associate electronic platforms. “Do we have to learn a new kind of language - ‘Netspeak’, as I shall call it - in order to be a netizen?”, he asks rhetorically and points out the multilingual applicability of the term Netspeak as compared to the term ‘Netlish’ or ‘Weblish’ that would only be applicable in the

context of English (*Language and the Internet* 19). The investigative thoughts he puts in the book in reference so far, *Language and the Internet*, the second edition of which came out in 2003 (the first being in 2001), exhibit a cautious but open scholarly approach. However, in his book published a decade later in 2011, titled *Internet Linguistics*, David Crystal puts the full weight of his long and impressive scholarship behind the Internet to support and defend it against the fears of (English) language purists. To do so, for a start, he justifiably dismisses those fears and those purists:

The prophets of doom have been out in force, attributing every contemporary linguistic worry to the new technology, and predicting the disappearance of languages and a decline in spoken and written standards. When we investigate the worries, we invariably find they are based on myths (Crystal, *Internet Linguistics* 03).

For an initial illustration, David Crystal mentions the example of “text-messaging”, which on its arrival at the turn of the century gave a fright to many who saw a “linguistic disaster” in it because they felt the “texters” were “pillaging our punctuation”, “savaging our sentences”, “raping our vocabulary” (*Internet Linguistics* 04). But just within a few years, the fright was seen to be misplaced. In the early part of the book, David Crystal not only ‘pillages’ all of those myths about the Internet destroying (English) language but also explains through examples that many of the conventions of the Internet, like abbreviations and the use of single letters or symbols to represent full words, have all had a beginning much before the arrival of the Internet. What he does in *Internet Linguistics*, in effect, is a well-reasoned and forceful rebuttal of the objections put forth by the purists, and something of an introduction to the features of (English) language as it appears in its Internet avatar.

Even if we restrict it to Netlish or Weblish, a discussion of the multitudinous features of Netspeak is quite a topic of a separate full-fledged discourse. Therefore, we will shift our attention to the issue of English vis-a-vis postcolonialism as a movement or a phenomenon. In order to avoid some possible confusions later and also in order to underline the specificity of the discussion here, we can posit that local cultural and geographical circumstances produce localized forms of postcoloniality, which, incidentally, is an observable and verifiable fact. So, we have an African postcoloniality that is different in character from the South Asian or the Caribbean or the kind that we would see on some Melanesian and Pacific islands formerly ruled by European colonial powers. Wherever the locations formerly ruled by Britain may be geographically on the World map, English exists substantially much due to



its status and impressive expanse, not simply because it was transplanted there by the British colonizers. And, everywhere, in all of those locations, the language lives in a state of conflict - a state that R.K. Gupta analogically describes as “that of a loving yet bickering couple who can live neither with or without each other”, a state he identifies as the state of “ambivalence” that is “characteristic” of all “former British colonies” (73). All of these former colonies, the scholar says, seem “riven by the conflict between the desire to retain English for its great utility in practical life and the emotional urge to discard it as a symbol and instrument of colonial oppression.” (Gupta 73). The universality of the conflict, geographically speaking, is much due to the character of English. Pramod K. Mishra specifies this character by pointing out that it is a language “whose tainted and suspect origins lie in the ideologies of colonialism”, and that it is a language capable of “producing structures of feeling and hierarchies”, and that it is a “language rooted in caste, class and gendered locations” (388). To substantiate his argument, he states, by reference to Gauri Vishwanathan, that “the colonial project through English involved” an “operation of the Filtration Theory of Macaulay and John Stuart Mill”, which meant “the supremacy of the Western civilization and hence the inferiority of the colonized native population” (Mishra 388). Filtration Theory, in this context and thus, became a ground for colonial hierarchy explicitly and for racial hierarchy implicitly. This is how English became a handy instrument for the British to extend and perpetuate their political and cultural empire in India. For a clearer understanding of the argument, it would be better for us to read a piece from Pramod Mishra’s source of information:

Linguistic and social stratification constituted necessary precondition for the preservation of a pure, frozen form of English culture, unadulterated by subsequent appropriations by other classes in any form, except perhaps in the relatively non-threatening form of translations. The English language and literature would remain confined to the class designated to receive instruction in it. The control exerted through the formal institutions of education further exploited the structure of Indian society to prevent English from degenerating into sheer vulgarity as in England (Vishwanathan 117).

Gauri Vishwanathan’s work cited above specifically studies the case of India, which indeed is a massively unique case; yet the broad outlines of the reasons and the framework of the implementation of the study of English in almost all British colonies have had some basic similarities.

Sordid, indeed, has been the beginning and the socio-political history of English in the former British colonies; but the turn of history thereafter has made English stay on and evolve and expand in all of those colonies. There isn't a single former British colony where some people have not spoken against the language and demanded its expulsion. But, notwithstanding the resistance and opposition, English has only grafted deeper, "has indigenized and grown local roots", and has "begun to thrive and produce innovative, regionally distinctive forms and uses of its own in contact with indigenous languages and cultures" (Schneider 02). The process may have been slow in the early decades of independence for the former colonies, but has gathered pace in recent years, especially in 21st Century. Edgar Schneider coins the term 'PCEs' - technically speaking an acronym - to designate these newly developing and proliferating and establishing postcolonial varieties of English. He argues that the term "describes their general characteristics in the light of a uniform theory" (04) and, at the same time, points to "a fundamentally uniform developmental process, shaped by consistent socio-linguistic and language-contact conditions", that has "operated in the individual instances of relocating and re-rooting the English language in another territory" (05). It is interesting to note that English in all of these PCE cases is the core issue in the contestations for decolonization and native/national identity; yet the language has a shared space and role in the processes of decolonization and assertion or creation of indigenous identity everywhere. The case of India can well be cited as the most illustrious example. From nearly half a century before Independence in 1947 to a little beyond, English was one of the major tools in the hands of some notable seekers of political freedom for India. The seekers of political freedom for India employed English to contend with the British. More interestingly, for some of them English was the weapon by which to breach the colonial cordon and reach out to the British Parliament and to the US for garnering sympathy and support for their cause. Post-Independence, English has been an ideological tool for many Indian writers and postcolonial thinkers and theorists to forcefully and effectively write back to the former colonial masters. What is true in the case of India, is true in the case of many other former British colonies, though in less and varying degrees. While considering the emergence of new varieties of English, however, one has to first understand that language is a social construct and then has to see the different and differing social circumstances in different colonies far apart from one another. Since it was driven by different motives, colonization of faraway regions by the British wasn't a process entirely uniform. The motive determined the nature and the extent of contact between the colonizer and the local population, which in turn determined the character of the resulting new variety of English. For example, depending on the patterns of

distinctions among them linguists have identified at least five “relocation types” of English: “monolingual ancestral English”, “monolingual contact variety”, “multilingual scholastic English”, “multilingual contact variety”, and “multilingual ancestral English” (Schneider 25). Listed here are the five patterns of Postcolonial Englishes that have emerged, in Sarah Thomason’s view, as “the results of language contact”, which in her “three-way division” are “contact-induced language change, extreme language mixture” and “language death” (10). To understand it better, let’s make one more and perhaps the last reference to Edgar Schneider. Keeping in mind Thomason’s concept and its explication, he proposes a meticulously prepared ‘Dynamic Model for the evolution of Postcolonial Englishes’, which, as he describes with thoroughly done illustrative examples from different Postcolonial Englishes in different locales, makes a “progression” through “five characteristic stages: foundation, exonormative stabilization, nativization, endonormative stabilization, and differentiation” (Schneider 32). Counting along ‘Trade Colonies’, ‘Exploitation Colonies’ and ‘Settler Colonies’, he lists as many as sixteen postcolonial Englishes. From Fiji and New Zealand at one end to Jamaica and Canada at the other, they come almost full circle around the world. Without going into the linguistic details, it can be argued that the process resembles the processes of the development of cultures and societies in the situations of intercultural or inter-societal contacts. The dominant culture of the colonizer (the culture of the British in the context of this discussion) has seen roughly a similar progression in the former colonies.

The proliferation, the expanse and the diversification that English has undergone in the past two centuries is of an unprecedented and unrivalled scale. And the reasons for this to happen are numerous. Ever since this proliferation and diversification of English language became a full-fledged field of study, linguists have devised quite a few denominations and names to describe the proliferating and ever growing forms of these ‘new’ Englishes. At some stage, around 50-60 years ago, the scholars in the field devised denominations that go by the popular abbreviations/acronyms of ‘ENL’, ‘ESL’ and ‘EFL’ to broadly distinguish between the English spoken and used in the lands of its ‘native’ speakers and the Englishes spoken and used in the territories where it has a different status. Certainly, the abbreviations and the classification must have been found to be useful in the early stages of the opening of the field of study. But, equally certainly, the classification and the rigidity of the moulds of the classification suggest a hegemonic hierarchy that can be seen as a continuation and perpetuation of British colonial supremacism. The major questioning of the classification, however, comes from the linguists who find the abbreviations and the classification

technically flawed and insufficient. Andy Kirkpatrick, for example, begins a book of his by exposing the denomination ‘English as a Native Language’ as questionable and ambiguous because the word ‘Native’ in this context doesn’t fulfil the criteria he envisages. He finds that “the difference between varieties of English can be explained by the fact that they are all nativised” (Kirkpatrick 07). By “a nativised variety” Kirkpatrick means “a variety that has been influenced by the local cultures and languages of the people who have developed that particular variety”, which, naturally, implies that all varieties of English have been ‘nativised’, including those that grew and developed in Britain and America and other settler colonies (07). At a later stage in the book, he points out the “shortcomings” in the entire ENL/ESL/EFL classification (28). In the first place, ENL misrepresents the case of Englishes in such places as are identified with this variety, which include Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK and the USA. The variations within these Englishes are enough to disqualify the homogenous sounding denomination of ENL. The same fact would apply to the cases of ESL regions, the regions formerly ruled by Britain - India, Nigeria, Malaysia and a couple of Caribbean islands being the prime examples. The geographical and cultural distances among these regions only ensure a wide variation among the Englishes spoken and used there. A more serious “shortcoming” according to Kirkpatrick is that it is “difficult to find countries that can be accurately classified as EFL countries”, because the “increasing role” English is playing in “EFL countries such as China and Japan” only blurs the distinction between ESL and EFL regions (28). It is easy to see that the denominations of ENL/ESL/EFL and the classification they suggest almost stand invalidated. A judicious replacement comes in the form of the model of the ‘three circles’ of Englishes devised, proposed, explained and analyzed by Brij B. Kachru:

The spread of English may be viewed in terms of three concentric circles representing the types of spread, the patterns of acquisition and the functional domains in which English is used across cultures and languages. I have tentatively labelled these: the *inner circle*, the *outer circle* (or *extended circle*), and the *expanding circle*. In terms of the users, the inner circle refers to the traditional bases of English - the regions where it is the primary language... (Kachru 12).

The model of ‘concentric circles’ does away with the hierarchy and hegemony that the ENL/ESL/EFL paradigm seeks to establish, and, at the same time, extricates English language from colonial traps. With the idea of a ‘native’ or ‘nativised’ variety of the language having been abandoned in the model of concentric circles, all varieties of English - spoken

and used by all cultural groups in all parts of the world - get a spatially egalitarian recognition, which goes with the spirit of the time and surely decolonizes the language. The notion of a faraway located 'standard English', too, gets destabilized in the 'concentric circles' model because every variety of the language is seen as carrying the potential to grow into a standard in its own right, which indeed is the case with at least a couple of varieties of English. The model also takes into account the phases and stages through which English has passed in the three circles. The interesting twist, however, is the fact that it is the outermost circle, the 'expanding' circle in Kachru's nomenclature, that legitimizes English as "an international or universal language" because it is here in this circle that we have countries like China, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Israel, Arabian countries, Greece, Russia and a few more. If we see the locations of these countries and put together their populations, we will get the scale at which English is growing as an international language. This is a scale unprecedented both in its geographical expanse and its numerical strength.

Now that it is settled that English has proliferated all through the world and, in the course of time, diversified, we can take up a discussion about what have come to be known as Global or World Englishes. To set the tone for the discussion, let's take a quote tersely delineating the fact of the spread of English in the past five centuries:

In the period between the end of the reign of Queen Elizabeth I in 1603 and the later years of the reign of Queen Elizabeth II in the early twenty-first century, the number of speakers of English increased from a mere five to seven million to possibly as many as two billion. Whereas English was spoken in the mid-sixteenth century only by a relatively small group of mother tongue speakers born and bred within the shores of the British Isles, it is now spoken in almost every country of the world, with its majority speakers being those for whom it is not a first language (Jenkins 02).

Taking into account both the L1 (first language) and L2 (second language) situations, these two billion - and increasing - speakers of English represent almost every part of the world. As noted earlier, some of those regions of the world have never been colonized by the British. Latin American countries, China, Japan and Korea, for example, were never colonized by the British, and yet they have English language increasingly being used for some or the other purposes. Some might argue that Latin American countries have the compulsion to pick up English because they exist under the cultural and linguistic and economic dominance of the United States of America just next door to them, metaphorically speaking. However, the

argument is either entirely invalid or valid in a larger context: invalid because it doesn't explain the cases of Japan and China and Korea; and valid because it explains, by extension, the cultural and linguistic and economic dominance of the US over the whole of the world. Adopted and being increasingly used by the peoples of the regions of the world never colonized, "English is now going through a transformation almost on a par with what happened when those Germanic tribes first arrived in Britain 1500 years ago" (Seargeant 03). By reference to Michael Toolan, Philip Seargeant cites some hypothetical but very realistic and interesting instances of the internationalization of English. The instances picture "a Turkish businesswoman communicating with a Korean sales representative at a convention in Sao Paulo" or "a Finnish diplomat discussing climate change with the Romanian scientist at a conference in Johannesburg" (Seargeant 05). These instances may not be factual in the way history documents events, but they are realistic and truthful in the way literature delineates events. The instances are realistic because they represent the world in which English has reached the level of universality that would be essentially required of an international language. This very diversified and continuously further diversifying English, naturally, is no more rooted in its original cultural environment. As the language stands divested of a single cultural reference, however variegated internally, which some linguists say is essential for the identity of a language, even the name of the language has come under the calls for revising. The suggestion to rename English may sound somewhat weird if one looks at what Michael Toolan suggests as the new name for the language - "We call it Global" (qtd. in Seargeant 05). Coming from a worthy linguist with a long career as a Professor of English Language at the University of Birmingham, the suggestion can indeed give us an initial surprise because for all of us who have known, read and studied English, the word 'Global' should denote an adjective, not a noun that English language is. But, then, coming from him - Michael Toolan - the suggestion has a subtle sense that may escape our attention if we do not look deeper. Apparently, Toolan intends to liberate English and set it free from its local moorings in the culture of its origin. His suggestion reaches us in its full clarity when we read the justification he offers:

Since this International English is not strictly a worldwide language, and since it is becoming increasingly released from a sense of rootedness in one or more ethnic homelands (whether that is thought of as England, or the Anglo-Saxon world, or the Anglo-American world), we would give it a label which uses neither the misrepresenting term *World* nor the residually-ethnicist one *English*. Hence my suggestion that we call it Global (Toolan 07-08).

The logic Toolan offers does make a profound sense. However, the new name he suggests would appear far too radical and farfetched to many. That surely should be the reason why the new name he suggests does not catch on with the community of linguists. It is the simplistic ‘Englishes’, propounded by Brij Kachru, that has earned some recognition. While Toolan’s logic stems from a combination of socio-linguistic and historical factors, Kachru’s takes into account just the fact of the multiplicity of the simultaneously current varieties of English.

The debate about what new or modified name we call English by, with an ever increasing number of its speakers along with an increasing number of its continuously evolving varieties, may be of little consequence for those who aren’t interested in the nitty-gritty of linguistics. To them, this debate may appear a jargon laden discussion of and on minutiae. There is another set of people, the scholars in the broad areas of socio-political-economic affairs of the world, who would find such a discussion entirely futile and distracting. One may even safely say that the purely academic and otherwise meaningless debates about the name or the renaming of English have not only died down but have also been found redundant by some. Of course, we need a proper evidence to make such a claim. We find that much needed evidence in the second edition of Alastair Pennycook’s *The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language*. Pennycook meaningfully titles the introductory chapter of his book as ‘The World in English’ and notes that the “very concept of an international, or world, language was an invention of Western imperialism”, and goes on to refer to the case of the spacecraft Voyager, launched in 1977, “drifting on its lonely trajectory in search of other life-inhabited galaxies” and carrying “recorded messages of greetings in fifty-five of world’s languages” (01). The principal message, he informs, is in the “Austrian-accented voice” of Kurt Waldheim, the then UN Secretary General, “bidding anyone who may hear a welcome in the global, the universal, language: English” (Pennycook 01). Whether intended or not, therein hides an irony. While on the one hand the overwhelming global dominance of English was being debated and contested in 1970s and 1980s, on the other there was this launch of Voyager carrying the principal message of greetings in English to the extraterrestrial beings thousands of lightyears away. Lest one may miss noticing the irony, Pennycook almost highlights it when he clarifies that his attempt in the book is to “explore the implications of this spread of English in both its global (or even universal) expansion” (02). So, the irony is that while people in many parts of the world may still question and oppose the language for different reasons, English is tipped to become a

universal lingua franca in a cosmic - extraterrestrial - sense in the odd event of the Voyager someday actually reaching a planet with creatures who can understand or decode those recorded messages.

It should be sensible, therefore, not to begrudge the status of English and accept that it is a language continuously “absorbing a number of local features in the geographical locations where it is being used” and that “it naturally adapts to the new values and relations in global communication” (Facchinetti et al. 10). Had such flexibility and such adaptability not been the qualities of it, English would not have come this far to become the unrivalled language of the world. To meaningfully conclude, let’s take a quote from a companion to 20th century literature, published in 2006:

At the turn of the millennium, international English had become an instance, perhaps the paradigmatic instance, of the paradoxes of globalisation. Carried to every continent by British imperialism, consolidated by US Neo-imperialism as the international language of mass entertainment, commerce, advanced research and the internet, global English is simultaneously uniform and diverse, local and planetary, metropolitan and peripheral, centripetal and centrifugal, singular and plural” (McHale and Stevenson 04)

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## The Enigma of the Mysterious Love Relationship in *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe*

-Ashok Sachdeva

### ABSTRACT:

The Ballad of the Sad Cafe by Carson McCullers is a novella which narrates Gothic Southern tale of loneliness, social ostracization, and lives of quiet desperation about a strange young woman who becomes the victim of a sinister plan as she tries to offer hospitality to her townsfolk. The plot delves into the irrationality of love as well as the gloom and misery of broken relationships. The central theme is the interaction between the lover and the beloved, who are from "different countries." Love is a shared experience between two individuals. The beloved is only a stimulation for the lover's stored-up love, and the lover suffers because he or she understands that love is a lonely thing. According to the narrator, the beloved may be of any type, since the quality of any love is established by the lover. As a result, everyone wants to be the lover, since the condition of being adored is unpleasant to the majority of people. The beloved fears and despises the lover, and for good cause. For the lover is always attempting to strip his darling naked. The novella concludes with "The Twelve Mortal Guys," a small piece about twelve men in a chain gang whose deeds summarise what happened in town.

### KEY WORDS:

Gothic, legendary, dreary. isolation, lonesome, estranged, secluded , loveless, the hunchback

Carson McCullers's most nearly perfect depiction of her most recurring theme-the enigma of the love relationship is *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe*, a work of art which has won such critical acclaim, is "...one of the really distinguished works of short fiction of our time," says Louis Rubin. (*Sewanee Review*, 509). It is also a prime example of southern Gothic or southern grotesque. It is a lyrical fable or fairy tale set in a world that is less physical and more poetic, with characters who are legendary rather than real. Irving Howe calls it "one of the finest novels ever written by an American" (*New York Times Book Review*, 5). Writers and critics like Tennessee Williams, Mark Schorer, Ihab Hassan, and Edward Albee have appreciated this work. Albee adapted this story to the stage in 1963.

The novel opens with a description of the pathetic condition of the largest building in a dreary town. The building was once a cheerful and prosperous cafe and the town was also populated then. The old building, completely deserted, leaning to the right is now about to collapse... on the second floor there is one window which is not boarded; sometimes in the late afternoon when the heat is at its worst a hand will slowly open the shutter and a face will look down on the town. It is a face like the terrible dim faces known in dreams -- sexless and white with two grey crossed eyes which are turned inward so sharply that they seem to be exchanging with each other one long and secret gaze of grief. The face liners at the window for an hour or so, then the shutters are closed once more and as likely as not there will not be another soul to be seen along the main street. These August afternoons -- when your shift is finished there is absolutely nothing to do; you might as well walk down to the Forks Fall road, and listen to the chain gang.

*(The Collected Poetry, 30).*

The problem of the place is isolation and loss of communication. This passage describes the condition of the dreary town isolated and "like a place that is far off and estranged from all other places in the world" (3). Loneliness of the place can be symbolised by the face at the solitary un-boarded window, which appears to be a photo in an album. According to this song, the café holds the secret to the town's plight. Flashbacks are used to tell the cafe's narrative. In the true ballad manner, it is expressed that the cafe holds the key to the plight of the town. The story of the cafe is narrated in a flash-back.

There are three sections to the narrative. Amelia's ten-day marriage and her loveless existence are the focus of the first section of the novel. The first part of the narrative makes a passing mention of it, but the complete storey is told as a flashback inside a flashback in the second part where we see how Amelia's life and the community are changed as love enters her life. It focuses on the end of Amelia's relationship with love and how it affects her and the community she lives in.

The novel begins in a small, secluded hamlet in the American South. Miss Amelia Evans, a powerful woman in both physically and mind, is approached by a hunchbacked man holding only a suitcase who claims to be her family.

Miss Amelia, the owner of the large boarded up house which was first a store and then a cafe, and of a still in the swamp, is an eccentric lady, an abnormal woman. She is a

lonely woman leading a solitary life. She is manly in form and demeanour, masculine in build and manner. She is indifferent to the love of men. She excels at every manual task she takes on and thrives. She is good at everything manual that she does, and prospers. But she is ill-at-ease with people, neither giving nor receiving love. She feels uncomfortable among others and does not know how to give or receive love or affection. Because of his love for her, her spouse endures a full change of character, and she suffers as a result of her treatment of him. Her treatment of her husband, who undergoes a complete transformation of character on account of his love for her, is outrageous, and she pays for it when she is smitten by love in turn.

In the spring of her thirties, she discovers the love of her life. It takes the form of a little hunchback named Lymon Willis, not of a winged blind lad named Cupid. Like a real lover's demigod, it is out to avenge Amelia. Even when the street is dark, Amelia's store is lit at that hour. As long as cousin Lymon is around, Amelia's heart stays alight in the store's cum café. The arrival of love signals the beginning of the second chapter of the novelette. The café's tale begins here.

When Miss Amelia, whom the villagers see as a calculating woman who never acts without reason, accepts the stranger into her home, suspicions emerge that Miss Amelia did so to take what the hunchback had in his bag. When the rumours reach their pinnacle, a group of eight guys come to her business and spend the day sitting outside on the steps, waiting for something to happen. Finally, they all rush into the store, surprised to see that the hunchback is still alive. With everyone inside, Miss Amelia brings out some booze and crackers, which surprises the guys even more because they had never seen Miss Amelia gracious enough to allow drinking within her home. This is the start of the café. Miss Amelia and Cousin Lymon, the hunchback, unwittingly start a new custom for the village, and people assemble inside the café on Sunday evenings, often until midnight.

The locals see, with surprise, that Miss Amelia has fallen in love with Cousin Lymon and has begun to change significantly. When the villagers witness this, they associate it with another strange episode in which Miss Amelia was also involved: her ten-day marriage. Before falling in love, Miss Amelia was married to a man named Marvin Macy who was a terrible and cruel creature. He altered his habits and became more pleasant, but when his love was rejected after a failed ten-day marriage in which he gave up everything he owned, he

reverted to his old self. He flew into a frenzy, committing a slew of offences before being apprehended and imprisoned in the state penitentiary.

When Marvin Macy is released, he comes to town and begins to exploit Cousin Lymon's admiration for him, using him to break Miss Amelia's heart. Macy and Miss Amelia get into a physical struggle, and just as Miss Amelia thinks she has the upper hand, Lymon jumps her from behind, allowing Macy to win. Macy and Cousin Lymon ransack the café, shattered the till, stole Miss Amelia's curios and money, and then fled town, leaving Miss Amelia alone.

The first meeting of Amelia and the hunchback puts us in mind of the encounter between Jesus and Samaritan woman.

Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink....

...for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.

.....

Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not

neither come hither to draw. Jesus saith unto her, Go, Call thy

husband and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no

husband.

Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said. I have no husband. For

thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not

thy husband; in the saidst thou truly.( St John 4:7-18).

During his travels, Jesus goes through Samaria; the hunchback responds, "I was travelling" to Stumpy Macphail's enquiry, "where you come from" ( 8). "And now Miss Amelia was taking up with her a dirty little hunchbacked stranger, come from God knows

where" (12). The mention of kinship and the subsequent estrangement of relatives ( "for Jews have no dealings with Samaritans) is present in the scene between Amelia and the hunchback: "Aside from her [the great aunt who was dead], there was only one double first cousin who lived in a town twenty miles away, and this cousin and Miss Amelia did not get on so well, and when they chanced to pass each other they spat on the side of the road" (7), Amelia gives him a drink, and he provides her with an opportunity to experience.

The rest of the dialogue, in which Jesus asks her to call her husband, she says she does not have one, and Jesus points out that she is living with someone who is not her husband, has a peculiar relevance to the second and third parts of the narrative and draws attention to the meaning and message of the story, which centres on Amelia's sin, namely, rejection of love. She harshly rejects Marvin Macy's love, humiliates him, and throws him out, seizing all of his worldly belongings that he had transferred to her in the goal of gaining her affection. When love is formed in her heart, she refuses to welcome her husband, who has now returned, and atone for her sin, instead entertaining someone who is not her husband under her house. As the narrative progresses, we see the hunchback forcing Marvin Macy to live in the same house, but Amelia's attitude remains same.

The Samaritan woman has a strong resemblance to Amelia's original. In 1940, Carson McCullers visited a club on Sand Street in Brooklyn and saw a prostitute known as "Submarine Mary" or " The Queen of Heaven" (Hoffman 68) " After five marriages, the Samaritan woman is now cohabiting with a man who is not her husband.

The café adds a bright environment and ambience to the town. People are pleased with the café. Everyone behaves well . "For the atmosphere of a proper cafe implies these qualities: fellowship, the satisfactions of the belly, and certain gaiety and grace of behaviour 1 " (23). Amelia is now a changed person. The town has undergone a full change as if the entire place were resurrected. And so ended three days and nights that saw the entrance of a stranger, an unholy holiday, and the establishment of the café " ( 23). It is an allusion to the arrival of Jesus, with his death and entombment, and his rising on the third day ushering in a new way of life. Amelia and the hunchback retreat within the home for three days, during which the hunchback is not seen . This gives rise to a slew of suspicions and rumours, such as he was murdered by Amelia. The café is born on the third day's night.

The birth of love in Amelia's heart is the primary cause of this transformation. The characters are grotesques, but the power of love is seen. This passion may have nothing to do with sex. It is, first and foremost, an issue of the heart.

First of all, love is a joint experience between two persons -- but ...not mean that it is a similar experience to the two people involved. Often the beloved is only a stimulus for all the stored up love which has lain quiet within the lover for a long time hither to....He (the lover) comes to know a new, strange loneliness and it is this knowledge that makes him suffer. .... He must house his love within himself as best he can; he must create for himself a whole new inward world-- a world intense and strange complete in himself.... A good man may be the stimulus for a love violent and debased, or a jabbering mad man may bring about in the soul of someone a tender and simple idyll. Therefore the value and quality of any love is determined solely by the lover himself ( 26-27).

This shows that the author has strong feelings for love. According to her, love requires no reciprocation, and because the object of love is merely a stimulation for all the lover's stored-up affection, it may be any person or thing, howsoever strange. It may be a hunchback like Lymon. Love may cause major complications for want of reciprocity. The author proposes a peculiar and intriguing hypothesis here:

It is for this reason that most of us would rather love than be loved. Almost everyone wants to be the lover. And the curt truth is that in a deep secret way, the state of being loved is intolerable to many. The beloved fears and hates the lover, and with the best of reasons. For the lover is forever trying to strip bare his beloved. The lover craves any possible relation with the beloved, even if this experience can cause him only pain ( 27).

Carson McCullers is unconsciously developing a theory of hatred rather than love. Everyone will end up by hating everyone else and being hated in turn if what she says is true. As a result of what happened in Amelia's cafe, she makes this general thesis. The story itself could serve as an illustration of her hypothesis.

The story is a proper objective correlative of the theory of love advanced by the writer. The main characters do not uphold the author's theory by their display of the principle of love. The three characters involved Amelia, Lymon, and Marvin Macy act in accordance

with the theory of the priest in Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*: "when you love you wish to do things for. You wish to sacrifice for. You wish to serve." ( *New York* , 75) .

With dog-like devotion, Marvin Macy offers everything he has to Amelia and follows her everywhere she goes. The hunchback gives up his own safety and comfort in order to help Marvin Macy defeat Amelia in order to win his heart. Amelia devotes herself to caring for and serving the hunchback, making numerous sacrifices in the process. Marvin Macy is allowed to stay in his room and she suffers daily agony as a result of her affection for him. Amelia is a strange woman who has no interest in sex. When she is around people, she is uncomfortable and her only use for them is to make money from them (5). In her behaviour of Marvin Macy, there is no evidence that she dislikes him because she dislikes being loved. No evidence exists that the hunchback's disdain of Amelia stems from any animosity toward Marvin Macy or his desire to please him to demonstrate how much he despises Amelia's affection. There is no evidence in the text that the lover attempted to strip his beloved of any of his or her physical or spiritual qualities.

According to Oliver Evans, there are parallels between the two works. "The Egg," "A Rose for Emily," and " A Clean Well-Lighted Place." by Sherwood Anderson, William Faulkner, and Ernest Hemingway all come to mind. (Evans 136-37).

Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, which likewise deals with guilt and retribution, is more closely associated with *The Ballad*. She betrayed her sweetheart after appearing to accept him and married him in a church, and that is Amelia's sin: she rejected love and betrayed her partner cruelly. A decade later, the hunchback enters her life and she falls head over heels in love with him. In *The Ballad*, the albatross is murdered by Marvin Macy, who subsequently transforms into the polar spirit of retribution and the hunchback takes on the symbolic albatross around the sinner's neck, The hunchback soars into the air "as though he had grown hawk-wingss," across more than twelve feet, falls on Amelia's back, and grips at her neck, swaying the balance in Marvin Macy's favour in the struggle ( 67-68). Like the albatross on the old mariner's neck, he is there to stay. Remedies have been exacted on Amelia in every way possible.

For Amelia and the town, the course of retribution and its results are very similar to those of the ancient mariner. The other sailors on the ship are furious with the mariner for having killed the good luck bird. When the fog lifts, they excuse the same and thereby become accomplices in the crime. In *The Ballad*, the town is aware of Amelia's "scandalous



and terrible means" in bringing Marvin Macy's downfall. He was remembered everyday as "this broken bridegroom, locked in the gloomy penitentiary, many miles away" on the first night of the cafe (34). As a result of their continued participation in the cafe's festivities, the general public becomes complicit in criminal activity. Both *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *The Ballad* end as vengeance takes the form of a terrible loneliness and the ancient mariner's suffering is presented against this back ground, "My soul in agony" and "We stuck, nor breath nor motion; As idle as a painted ocean/Upon a painted ship" (*The Rime of Ancient Mariner*).

The dreariness of the town after the departure of the hunchback in *The Ballad*, which is a ballad-style repetition of the opening part of the novelette with minor variations:

Yes, the town is dreary. On August afternoons the road is empty, white dust, and the sky above is bright as glass. Nothing moves-there no children's voices, only the hum of the mill rots with boredom. You might as well go down to the Forks Fall highway and listen to the chain gang "( 70-71).

Amelia's face at the window, with her two crossed eyes seeking each other out "to exchange a little glance of grief and lonely recognition," speaks volumes of her loneliness in the context of this background.

The narrator sees the chain gang as a bright spot in an otherwise gloomy picture of loneliness. He believes that "the twelve mortal men" represent all of humanity and that their song is a symbol of love as a momentary escape from spiritual isolation. Ihab Hassan thinks the chain gang is a bad idea. A metaphor of human condition was seen in Pascal's vision of chain gang members looking at each other with sadness and hopelessness. In contrast, Mrs. McCullers' song about "twelve mortal men" managed to conjure, for once, the indestructible ecstasy of endurance and transcendent suffering. (*Radical Innocence*, 226).

This epilogue emphasises the unity of the twelve men. As long as they are here, they will not be able to go. And yet... there they are. In a prison cart, they sing "Just twelve mortal men who are together"(72) as they approach. As a contrast to the town's seclusion, this sense of community is evident. A solution cannot be found here. Those who are imprisoned or trapped in their hopes and disappointments may find it comforting. The solution lies in the higher kind of love, which Jesus calls "a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* puts it thus , “ He prayeth well, who loveth well Both man and bird and beast/He prayeth best, who loveth best.”

The narrative seems to point to this ideal in spite of the author's intentions and her doctrine of love. The story has the mythological aura of the transcendent, and the triangle group of people that comprise it has the legendary aura of the mythic-from the huge man or woman Miss Amelia to her similarly giant rival Marvin Macy to the trickster figure of the dwarfish tiny hunchback Cousin Lymon.

The novel is so full of narcissistic mirror reflections that it collapses in on itself like Miss Amelia's crossed eyes, which are "turned inward so sharply that they seem to be exchanging with each other one long and secret gaze of grief." ( [mookseandgripes.com](http://mookseandgripes.com)). The tale seems to emerge from a single projective mind, with all of the characters serving as poetic manifestations of desire.

McCullers' narrative is a hideous manifestation of these theoretical principles. While the central plot revolves around the mysterious arrival of the hunchback and the equally mysterious transformation of the “formerly forbidding Miss Amelia into the doting lover of the indifferent and exploitative Cousin Lymon”, the story's background focuses on Miss Amelia's marriage many years before to Marvin Macy, for whom she was the beloved. (<https://uploads.strikinglycdn.com>). Miss Amelia declines the job and sends her heartbroken lover Macy away. When Macy, now a famous crook who has done time in jail, returns and becomes Cousin Lymon's favourite, the narrative ultimately leads to a classic conflict between the two giants over the small guy. Cousin Lymon hops on Miss Amelia's back like a little animal and helps shift the tide in Macy's favour just as the drama approaches its conclusion. Miss Amelia is fractured and broken as a result of the hunchback's departure with his loves.

The town itself serves as the background for this tripartite interaction, a classical chorus for which the centre godlike individuals serve as a crucial uniting factor. When Miss Amelia falls in love with the hunchback, the neighbourhood rallies around the café, "the warm heart of the town," in communal meetings inspired by Miss Amelia's distilled magic wine.

Cousin Lymon is a magical being with the "instinct to establish immediate and vital contact between himself and everything in the world." He is the stereotypical enigmatic stranger; no one knows who he is, how old he is, or where he comes from.

When Cousin Lymon abducts Marvin Macy, the town becomes lonely and depressed, "like a place far away and estranged from all other places in the world." Instead of uniting them in social oneness, the sole liquor accessible transports the people into a perilous inner realm.

The novel concludes with a coda that argues that, despite the disintegration of the community order formed by the lover between Miss Amelia and the tiny hunchback, the depiction of "The Twelve Moral Men" still contains a symbol of unity, although a unity in despair. The narrator recalls a chain gang of seven black men and five white men singing a solemn and joyous song that seemed to emerge not from the men, but from the land itself.

Charles E. May rightly remarks, "*The Ballad of the Sad Café* is one of the best known modern examples of what might be called short fiction's tendency toward the principle of incarnation. Even as the world of the story is that of hard physical reality, the poetic power of the storyteller transforms profane reality into the realm of the sacred, projecting human desire in its most elemental forms".

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## Mary Prince's *The History of Mary Prince*: Testimonio of Physical and Psychological Violence

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### Abstract:

Black women's slave testimonios provide an opportunity to explore the injustice and cruelty endured by black slave women. It has granted recognition to the disadvantaged women and promoted the fight against oppression endured by black slave women during slavery: "By virtue of its collective representativeness, testimonio is, overtly or not, an intertextual dialogue of voices, reproducing but also creatively reordering historical events in a way which impresses as representative and true and which projects a vision of life and society in need of transformation" (Zimmerman 12). In the early eighteenth and nineteenth century in the West-Indies, white colonists and slave-owners through legal, economic and social system of slavery used physical and psychological violence to control, degrade and devalue the black slave women to extract maximum economic benefit from them. Mary Prince's testimonio *The History of Mary Prince* unravels the exploitation, brutality, and oppression of black slaves by white slave-owners. It depicts the struggle and resistance of Mary Prince who tried to seek freedom from her cruel slave-owner first by approaching the Anti-Slavery society in England and afterwards with the publication of her life story in 1831.

Testimonio is a Spanish term which means "witness account" (Mora), in English it means testimony which involves an "act of testifying or bearing witness in a legal or religious sense" (Beverley 26), yet the connotations of the term are different. Testimonio is a genre associated with "Latin American atrocity narratives" (Nayar 84). John Beverley defines testimonio as "a novel or novella length narrative in book or pamphlet (that is, printed as opposed to acoustic) form, told in the first person by a narrator who is also the real protagonist of the events he or she recounts, and whose unit of narration is usually a "life" or significant life experience" (30-31). Textual categories included in testimonio are: "autobiography, autobiographical novel, oral history, memoir, confession, diary, interview, eyewitness report, life history, novela-testimonio, nonfiction novel, or "factographic" literature" (31).

In a testimonio narration is done by an author/teller who experiences or witnesses the events. Furthermore, testimonio is inclusive of many other genres but does not usually include fiction:

testimonial writing may be defined as an authentic narrative, told by a witness who is moved to narrate by the urgency of a situation (e.g., war, oppression, revolution, etc.). Emphasizing popular, oral discourse, the witness portrays his or her own experience as an agent (rather than a representative) of a collective memory and identity. (Yudice 44)

Testimonio is a “new postfictional form of literature, with significant cultural and political repercussions” (Beverley 43). John Beverley and George Yudice emphasise that in a testimonio the resistance of the discourse emerges in a context of political urgency which gives coherence to the genre. However, all testimonios are not examples of resistance writing some provide detailed information about the life at margins. When a testimonio is written as a genre of resistance it “calls attention to itself, and to literature in general, as a political and politicized activity. The literature of resistance sees itself furthermore as immediately and directly involved in a struggle against ascendant or dominant forms of ideological and cultural production” (Harlow 28-29). The narrator uses testimonio as “resistance literature” (Harlow qtd. in Beverley 31) as it exists “. . . at the margin of literature, representing in particular those subjects—the child, ‘the native’, the woman, the insane, the criminal, the proletarian—excluded from authorized representation when it was a question of speaking and writing for themselves” (Williams qtd. in Beverley 25). Testimonios dismantle the conventions of dominant literary discourse that reinforces the idea of supremacy of one culture over another. The marginalised people use oppressor’s tool that is, writing to refute predetermined cultural, economic, and sociological roles imposed by dominant culture. Therefore, testimonio as a literary genre facilitates the voices of the subaltern subjects to be heard, who otherwise are often kept outside the official history of the country.

Testimonio or testimonial narrative as a distinct literary genre developed and evolved in Latin America during 1960s. The origin of testimonio can be traced to sixteenth century literature of conquest, which comprised of “series of nonfictional narrative texts, such as the colonial crónicas” (Beverley 31). The Crónicas described the experiences of the soldiers and the priests who followed the conquistadors in their expedition to the New World. This kind of writing is found throughout the nineteenth century in the form of autobiography, hybrid essays, and diaries as Beverley mentions the existence of: “the “national” essay

(Facundo, Ossertoes), the war diaries (diarios de campana) of, for example, Bolivar and Marti or the Romantic biography” (31). The genre further evolved and widened with the popularity of “the anthropological or sociological life history composed from tape-recorded oral accounts developed by social scientists” (Beverley and Zimmerman 173). These tape-recorded oral accounts developed by prominent anthropologists Oscar Lewis and Ricardo Pozas in 1950s led to the emergence and subsequent publication of testimonial texts.

Testimonial narrative as a literary genre was institutionally recognised by Cuba in 1970: “Latin American testimonio coalesces as a clearly defined genre around the decision in 1970 of Cuba’s cultural centre, Casa de las Americas, to begin awarding a prize in this category in their annual literary contest” (Beverley and Zimmerman 173). Also, the success of Che Guevara’s book *Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War* (1963) on Cuban Revolution, promoted the emergence of testimonio throughout the Third World as “literature of personal witness and involvement designed to make the cause of those movements known to the outside world” (Beverley 14). It has been argued that genre of testimonio “came into existence due to the Cuban Revolution, more specifically due to Miguel Barnet’s recording of the life story of Esteban Montejo under the title *Biografia de un cimarron/The Autobiography of a Runaway Slave* (1966)” (Gugelberger 8). This recording of the life story of a 105 years old former slave narrates a community’s struggle for survival in the historical context. A substantiable number of testimonios were produced during the “. . . national liberation in 1960s and 1970s in South and Central America” (Denergi 229) as testimonios recorded “. . . the stories of guerrillos, resistant fighters, organized workers, community leaders and miners in Bolivia, Peru, Nicaragua, Cuba, Chile and Brazil” (Denergi 229). As a result, testimonio emerged as a revolutionary genre not only in Latin America, but throughout the Third World with the spread of armed struggle against hegemonic oppression.

*I, Rigoberta Menchu: An Indian Woman in Guatemala* (1984) is a noteworthy specimen of testimonio from Latin America for which Rigoberta Menchu received Nobel Peace Prize in 1992. *I, Rigoberta Menchu* is a first-person account of the cruelty of the Guatemalan government towards native Guatemalans. Rigoberta Menchu was criticised by David Stoll in his book *Rigoberta Menchu and the Story of All Poor Guatemalans* (1999) for providing incorrect information as many of the incidents mentioned in the text were not her personal experiences. However, she cleared her stance: “I’d like to stress that it’s not only my life, it’s also the testimony of my people. . . . what has happened to me has happened to many other people too: My story is the story of all poor Guatemalans. My personal experience is

the reality of whole people.” (1) asserting her individual identity as a native Guatemalan, she also addresses the tale of oppression of native Guatemalans to the whole world.

As such, testimonio is usually the first-person account of life history of an individual but also carry powerful social significance as they speak of the oppression experienced by marginalised groups. In this regard George M. Gugelberger observes, the speaker ‘I’ in testimonial narratives is the “allegory of the ‘we’- the community, the people” (3) whereas in testimonies the eye witness speaks only about his/her experience. Therefore, the voice of speaker represented by ‘I’ in testimonios explicitly describes not only the oppression experienced by an individual of marginalised group, but it also implicitly speaks of the reality of oppression experienced by an entire group: “Although a testimonio is technically an account made by one person, it represents the voice of many whose lives have been affected by particular social events” (Reyes and Rodriguez 528). The most important characteristics of testimonios is the effect it has on the readers as Beverley states:

what is important about testimonio is that it produces, if not real, then certainly the sensation of experiencing the real and that this has determinate effects on the reader that are different from those produced by even the most realist or ‘documentary’ fiction. . . to subsume testimonio under the category of literary fictionality is to deprive it of its power to engage the reader. (22)

Literary testimonios by dismantling or constructing a literary and political discourse about the victimised people raise consciousness among intellectuals, academicians, and social activists to create awareness among readers about the oppression, injustices, and violence carried out by the dominant culture with the purpose to gather solidarity for the people of marginalised groups as: “testimonio aspires not only to interpret the world but also to change it” (Beverley xvi).

Oxford English Dictionary defines the word “violence” as “the exercise of physical force so as to inflict injury on, or cause damage to, person or property” (qtd. in Bufacchi 18). Thus, violence is exertion of force to physically injure or abuse which leads to physical, emotional, psychological, material damage to an individual. Physical violence is a “severe and painful outside act against the bodily integrity of humans” (Unsal 31), which includes behavioural acts of beating, battering, assault, rape, murder which sometimes leads to illness, disability, and death. Besides, “The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in



or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation” (Krug et al.) leads towards psychological trauma. According to article 33 of Istanbul Convention, psychological violence is considered an intentional offence “seriously impairing a person’s psychological integrity through coercion or threats” (qtd. in Jeney Petra 18). The implementation of different forms of psychological violence like verbal abuse, humiliation, threats “represent deliberate attempts to break down the will of individuals. . . [and] to induce a sense of ‘learned helplessness,’ that the abuse continues whether or not the victim cooperates.” (Physicians for Human Rights qtd. in Hopper and Hidalgo 189). The history of black Africans who were transported to the North and South America and the Caribbean has a history of victimisation and oppression accompanying physical and psychological violence manifested in whipping, lynching, branding, and inhumane tortures. The institution of slavery was held together through violence which alienated black Africans of their culture and reduced them to chattels.

Vittorio Bufacchi in *Violence and Social Justice* (2007) states:

An act of violence occurs when the integrity or unity of a subject (person or animal) or object (property) is being intentionally or unintentionally violated, as a result of an action or an omission. The violation may occur at the physical or psychological level, through physical or psychological means. A violation of integrity will usually result in the subject being harmed or injured, or the object being destroyed or damaged. (44)

The idea of “integrity” (Bufacchi 44) here refers to “the quality or state of being complete or undivided” (41). The physical damage to the bodies of black slave women and the psychological abuse suffered by black women during slavery was an act of “violation of the integrity” (44) of the black slave women. The trauma inflicted on their body and psyche due to acts of violence was so immense that it took away the “psychological and/or physical unity” (46) of the black slave women.

When analysed from the point of view of the victim/black slave women, the act of violence involved the ‘intentionality’ because the whites deliberately aimed at causing injury and suffering to the black slaves: “violence is the intentional infliction of physical or psychological injury on a person or persons” (Steger 13). The testimonios documenting incidents of violence inflicted on black slaves and their sufferings suggest that psychological abuse and physical violence was the worst aspect of black slave violence. bell hooks in her book *Ain’t I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism* stresses on the reinforcement of

hierarchical division by the whites in the society as she states: “As far back as slavery, white people established a social hierarchy based on race and sex that ranked white men first, white women second, though sometimes equal to black men, who are ranked third, and black women last” (78). Hence, black slave women resided at the bottom of the social hierarchy which further gripped them into physical and psychological violence, and marginality. In this paper Mary Prince’s testimonio *The History of Mary Prince* (1831) through textual analysis underscores Mary Prince’s as a victim of physical and psychological violence.

Mary Prince (1788-1833) was born in Bermuda, British West Indies and sold to Captain Williams. Later, she was hired to serve Mrs. Prudent, whose daughter Fanny taught her to read. The mother and the daughter treated Mary with kindness. However, after the death of Mrs. Williams, Prince was sold to Capt. I— and then to Mr. D—. She worked in Turk’s Island in the salt ponds. She was taken to Antigua after being sold to John Wood in 1815. She also joined the Moravian Church, met and married Daniel James, a freeman in 1826 against the wishes of her cruel master John Wood. In 1828 Mary Prince went to England with Mr. and Mrs. Wood. In the same year, she approached Anti-Slavery Society in Aldermanbury, East London. She reported to them about her illtreatment by the Woods and exercised her right to freedom under English law which allowed her to remain a free woman in England but if she were to reunite with her family and return to her homeland Antigua, she would again be a slave. In 1829 she was employed as a domestic servant in the household of Thomas Pringle, the secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society. Here, Mary Prince narrated her life story to Susanna Strickland which led to its publication in 1831.

Mary Prince’s *The History of Mary Prince* is a collaborative text transcribed by Susanna Strickland, edited by Thomas Pringle in 1831 and was published by Anti-Slavery society in the same year to support the abolitionist cause. Thomas Pringle decided to publish Mary Prince’s life story as “the idea of writing Mary Prince’s history was suggested by herself” (THMP3). Besides, Mary Prince wanted to expose the “horrors of slavery” (29) and which continued even though an Act of Parliament ending the slave trade was passed in 1807. She through her testimonio has advocated for the emancipation of the black slaves: “All slaves wanted to be free —to be free is very sweet” (38).

*The History of Mary Prince*, the first-person narrative of the life of Mary Prince, a West Indian slave of African origin, encapsulates her life story which describes her sufferings as a black slave in Bermuda, Turks Island, and Antigua and as a domestic servant in London.

Her narrative underscores her quest and struggle for freedom from the brutal control of her owner Mr. Wood whom she accompanied to London in 1828 in the backdrop of the abolition movement in London. Mary Prince's *The History of Mary Prince* "is used as a testimony in the literal and legal sense . . . to a much wider system of cruelty and oppression" (Ward 35).

Mary Prince and her "little brothers and sisters" (THMP7) spent their childhood days happily under the ownership of Mr. and Mrs. Williams as their mother was a "household slave in the same family" (7). She was completely unaware about her being a slave because of the kindness showered on her by Mrs. Williams and her daughter Miss Betsey with whom Mary and her siblings often played. Other slaves in the William household also received kind treatment from her mistress as Mary Prince narrates Mrs. Williams was "a kind-hearted good woman" (7) who "treated all her slaves well" (7). Mary Prince lived a contented and carefree childhood as she and her siblings were given light work. In her early childhood, Mary Prince was not physically beaten or mentally tortured in the William household but as a black slave girl she served the purpose of a playmate to Miss Betsey.

Slave owners treated humans as commodities by buying, selling, and employing them as domestic servants or field workers for household work, or for the sole purpose of creating wealth. As a victim of white slave owner's exploitation and violence, Mary Prince was sold after the death of Mrs. Williams to raise money for the second marriage of Mr. Williams: "Mary, you will have to go home directly; your master is going to be married, and he means to sell you and two of your sisters to raise money for the wedding" (THMP 9). Mary Prince, as a black slave child, served the purpose of a transferable property to be used by her master to fulfil the financial obligations that emerged due to her master's second marriage.

Mary Prince in her testimonio *The History of Mary Prince* exposes the white slave-owners' different means to psychologically control the black slaves: "separation from familiar surroundings, deception, creation of confusion, social isolation, prohibition against dissent or free will. . . threats of harm, and creation of fear" (Anderson and Zimbardo qtd. in Hopper and Hidalgo 190). When Mary Prince reached the age of twelve, she underwent separation from her mother and siblings due to their sale to different slave-owners. With pain and sorrow in her heart, Mary Prince's mother took her children to be sold to the slave market in Hamble Town, Bermuda: "See I am shrouding my poor children; what a task for a mother!". . . . "I am going to take my little chickens to the market" (THMP 10) as the children of slave parents were destined to become slaves.

Mary Prince recollects her intense pain and trauma due to her separation from her mother and siblings: “Oh, my mother! my mother!” I kept saying to myself, ‘Oh, my mammy and my sisters and my brothers, shall I never see you again!’” (13). The psychological distress and torment Mary Prince, her siblings, and her mother suffered in being separated portrays the violation of the integrity of the souls of black slave women and her children.

Mary Prince’s second owner Captain I— used physical violence to control and punish black slave men and women. Mary Prince’s journey of suffering as a twelve years old black female slave began with her arrival at the house of her new owner Captain I— at Spanish Point in Bermuda. Captain I—’s wife Mrs. I— not only taught her household chores but also brutally punished Mary Prince and other slaves for small mistakes. Mrs. I— was a cruel lady who used physical violence and punishment to control and exercise her authority:

she caused me to know the exact difference between the smart of the rope, the cart-whip, and the cow-skin when applied to my naked body by her own cruel hand. And there was scarcely any punishment more dreadful than the blows I received on my face and head from her hard heavy fist. She was a fearful woman, and a savage mistress to her slaves. (THMP 14)

highlighting that the objective of violence against women, is to “reinforce a dominator model” (hooks 24) in which the “authority figure” (hooks 24) is regarded to rule over the person who is without power to maintain the rule “through practices of subjugation, subordination, and submission” (hooks *The Will* 24). Stephanie M. H. Camp has analysed and commented on the relationship between black slave women and white mistresses:

Not only were bondwomen the victims of male violence, but they also routinely received the back of their mistress’s hand. In the management of household slaves, planter women did not balk at the use of violence. Their style tended to the temperamental . . . Slaveholding women yanked hair, pulled ears, smacked faces, burned skin, punched bodies, and stabbed at random. (43)

And if, Mrs. I— was not satisfied with the use of rope and cow-skin to flog and whip on black slaves she resorted to other methods of torture with an intention to inflict physical pain: “My mistress was not contented with using the whip, but often pinched their cheeks and arms in the most cruel manner . . . . I was licked and flogged, and pinched by her pitiless fingers in the neck and arms, exactly as they were” (15).

Mary Prince in her testimonio gives insight into the daily harsh punishments endured by black women: “Sadistic floggings of naked black women were another method employed to strip the female slave of dignity. In the Victorian world, where white women were religiously covering every body part, black women were daily stripped of their clothing and publicly whipped” (hooks *Ain’t I 59*). As such, beatings of black slave women in the context of slavery conveyed sexual undertones and implications: “Flogging. . . was a public act, involving an exposed nakedness, and unsolicited male gaze sometimes even attracting spectators and enthusiasts” (qtd. in Whitlock 23). Furthermore: “Sadistic floggings of nude black women were socially sanctioned because they were seen as racial abuse, a master punishing a recalcitrant slave, but they were also expressions of male contempt and hatred for the female” (59-60). On one occasion, when Captain I— found that cow got loose and ate “sweet-potatoe slips” (17), he brutally whipped Mary Prince: “I cannot remember how many licks he gave me then, but he beat me till he himself was weary” (THMP 17). The punishment inflicted upon the naked flesh of Mary Prince was an act of physical and psychological violence which was socially sanctioned by the white supremacist society which revealed the “deep hatred of woman that had been embedded in the white colonizer’s psyche by patriarchal ideology and anti-woman religious teachings both motivated and sanctioned white male brutality against black women” (hooks *Ain’t I 53*). As a consequence, Mary Prince’s body acted as a site of physical violence and enslavement.

The use of physical violence was the mechanism used by the institution of slavery to physically coerce black slave women into submission as: “the whip. . . was the institution’s indispensable and ubiquitous instrument” (Morgan 391) practiced on black household slaves and also on slaves working on plantations. And this violence was “usually unchecked by, any external authority. If a slave died as a result of punishment, the master almost always escaped retribution: essentially, the owner could punish as he wished” (Morgan 391). Mary Prince witnessed the peak of physical violence, cruelty, and brutality exercised by Captain I— on poor Hetty, a French black household slave, who regardless of being pregnant was physically assaulted:

One of the cows had dragged the rope away from the stake to which Hetty had fastened it, and got loose. My master flew into terrible passion, and ordered the poor creature to be stripped quite naked, notwithstanding her pregnancy, and to be tied up to a tree in the yard. He then flogged her hard as he could lick, both with the whip and cow-skin till she was all over streaming with blood. He rested, and then beat her again and again. Her shrieks were

terrible. The consequence was that poor Hetty was brought to bed before time, and was delivered after severe labour of a dead child. (THMP 15)

As a result, Hetty not only suffered miscarriage but unable to bear severe physical violence: “All slaves said that death was a good thing for poor Hetty” (16). Hetty’s untimely and painful death filled Mary’s heart with horror. Consequently, Mary Prince remained psychologically disturbed and upset for many days: “I could not bear to think about it; yet it was always present to my mind for many a day” (16).

Mary Prince has also exposed the pathetic living conditions of the slaves working in Turk’s Island. She was sold to Mr. D— in Grand Quay located at Turk’s Island where she worked as a labourer for ten years. The process of extracting salt in Turk’s island was very tedious: slaves had to stand in shallow lagoons of seawater for many hours and had to rake the evaporating crystals to the seashore which resulted in skin ailments. Mary Prince narrates how her legs and feet developed blisters and swelled: “owing to the boils in my feet, I was unable to wheel the barrow fast through the sand, which got into the sores, and made me stumble at every step” (THMP 20). Mary Prince and other black slaves were put to work throughout the day in harsh climate without medical assistance in Turk’s Island:

We were then called again to our tasks, and worked through the heat of the day; the sun flaming upon our heads like fire, and raising salt blisters in those parts which were not completely covered. Our feet and legs, from standing in the salt water for so many hours, soon became full of dreadful boils, which eat down in some cases to the very bone, from standing in the salt water for so many hours, soon became full of dreadful boils, which eat down in some cases to the very bone, afflicting the sufferers with great torment. (19)

Mary Prince has not only narrated her sufferings in *The History of Mary Prince* but also has given voice to the sufferings of other slaves thus, her narrative constantly shifts between ‘I’ and ‘we’. Although the individual identity of Mary Prince is affirmed and retained throughout her testimonio, but her continuous switching to ‘we’ points towards her description of ‘collective identity’ of the slave community in particular which is an established feature of testimonio. Her narrative exposes not only her personal miseries but also expresses the despairs of West Indian slave community. Mary Prince has narrated her story of bondage and slavery with an intention to demand solidarity to awaken people to take action against the institution of slavery in West Indies: “I have been a slave— I have felt what a slave feels, and I know what a slave knows; and I would all the good people in England to know it too, that

they may break our chains, and set us free” (21). She not only has represented herself as a black slave and a woman but also acted as an agent for oppressed African-Americans to demand and promote social justice and social change.

The ill-treatment to which the slaves were subjected to in *The History of Mary Prince* exposes that the white man’s morality had degraded and dehumanised to such an extent that there was no consideration even for aged slaves. Mary Prince narrates how Master Dickey, son of white slave-owner Mr D— had brutally punished an old black slave woman Sarah for not barrowing the wheel faster: “after beating her severely, he(Master Dickey) took her up in her arms and flung her among the prickly-pear bushes” (THMP 22). Master Dickey’s infliction of physical violence on Sarah left her old fragile body “grievously wounded” (22). She could not survive battering and developed “venomous prickles” (22), and she died after a few days. Her death highlights that slavery continued “to extract the maximum economic value from slaves and casting aside those bodies that inevitably became useless, and on the other, of attempting to ameliorate the worst excesses of forced labor so as to preserve this so-called resource” (Grinnell 156).

The prolonged ill-treatment suffered by Mary Prince severely affected her health. She was diagnosed with rheumatism soon after she started working as domestic help and nurse in the Wood household: “My work there was to attend the chambers and nurse the child, and go to the pond and wash clothes. But I soon fell ill of the rheumatism, and grew so very lame that I was forced to walk with stick. . . . Every week I had to wash two large bundles of clothes, as much as a boy could help me to lift; but I could give no satisfaction” (25-26). Besides, her eyesight became weak but she received no compassion and medical care from her owners and was transferred to “a little out-house” (25). Woods not only physically harassed Mary Prince but also used abusive language to inflict psychological violence on her as she recollects in her testimonio: “My mistress was always abusing and fretting after me. . . . One day she followed me foot after foot scolding and rating me” (THMP 26). Woods lacked compassion and sympathy for Mary Prince.

In the nineteenth century, women were defined through their roles as wives and mothers. An enslaved black woman needed permission from their owners to marry. Mr. and Mrs. Wood became angry and enraged by seeing Mary Prince disobeying them by exercising her freedom to marry a free black carpenter named Daniel James after meeting him at

Moravian church. This was a powerful act of resistance by Mary Prince to take her own life decisions which further indicated her daunting spirit and her refusal to accept her slave status.

Mary Prince remained devoid of happiness and stability in her domestic life because of her status as a slave: “I had not much happiness in marriage, owing to my being a slave” (THMP 30). Also, Mrs. Wood’s behaviour towards Mary Prince became harsher and worsened: “Mrs Wood was more vexed about my marriage than her husband. She could not forgive me for getting married, but stirred up Mr Wood to flog me dreadfully with the horsewhip” (30). As enslaved black women needed permission from their owners to marry anyone so that they could extract maximum profit from their labour, Mr. and Mrs. Wood became angry and enraged by seeing Mary Prince disobeying them by exercising her freedom to marry a free black slave as black slave women were “Often deprived of family ties, they (black slaves) were deprived as well of inheritance and of the enjoyment of the fruits of their own labor. Those to whom they belonged, who extracted their unpaid labor, denied them their full humanity” (Mbembe 47).

Bondage awakened in Mary Prince a strong desire to buy her freedom from Woods and for this she saved enough money: “I asked my master and mistress to let me buy my own freedom. With the help of Mr Burchell, I could have found the means to pay Mr Wood; for it was agreed that I should afterwards serve Mr Burchell a while, for the cash he was to advance for me” (THMP31), but the Woods’ outrageously refused her: “Mrs Wood was very angry – she grew quite outrageous” (31) and called Mary Prince “a black devil” (31), although, “She sold five slaves whilst I was with her; but though she was always finding fault with me, she would not part with me” (30). Mr. and Mrs. Wood psychologically harassed Mary Prince first by deliberately giving her false hopes of freedom to her and then by refusing to sell her to other slaveholders.

Mary Prince accompanied Woods to England and this was a half-blessing to her. According to English law, Mary was a free black woman in England. Since slavery was not fully abolished in all British colonies, Mary Prince would be captured as a black slave if she tried to return to her native place Antigua in West Indies. The atrocities and brutalities of the Woods’ family on her continued in England too: “I knew that I was free in England, but I did not know where to go, or how to get my living; and therefore, I did not like to leave the house” (THMP33). Mary Prince bore Woods’ torture and psychological violence for a few months in England because she had no place to go in England. But after many months of



torture and humiliation, Mary left Woods' household in England for their inhumane treatment, cruelty, and lack of compassion towards her: Stop,—before you take this trunk, and hear what I have to say before these people. I am going out of this house, as I was ordered; but I have done no wrong at all to my owners, neither here nor in the West Indies. I always worked very hard to please them, both by night and day; but there was no satisfaction, for my mistress could never be satisfied with reasonable service. I told my mistress I was sick, and yet she has ordered me out of doors. This is the fourth time; and now I am going out. (33)

Mary Prince's slave-owners used the power of physical punishment and violence to scare and torture black slaves. Torture as a form of punishment must “. . . mark the victim; it is intended, either by the scar it leaves on the body, or by the spectacle that accompanies it, to brand the victim with infamy” (Foucault 34). The scarred and bruised body of Mary Prince examined by Susanna Strickland, Thomas Pringle's wife and others testified the physical violence endured by Mary Prince: the whole of the back part of the body is distinctly scarred, and, as it were, chequered with the vestiges of severe floggings. Besides this, there are many large scars on other parts of her person, exhibiting an appearance as if the flesh had been deeply cut, or lacerated with gashes, by some instrument wielded by most unmerciful hands. (THMP 64)

Mary Prince's voicing her narrative is an act of resistance to unfold the atrocities and brutalities suffered by black slave women in the British West Indies. Her tormented, scarred, and broken body stands “testament to the institutionalization of human greed and brutality in the British Empire” (Paquet 143). The History of Mary Prince is a slave testimonio which “drew attention to the continuation of slavery in the Caribbean, despite an 1807 Act of Parliament officially ending the slave trade” (back cover). Therefore, Mary Prince's slave testimonio is “the story of the self to advance social and political change” (Paquet 143).

Through her testimonio Mary Prince has strived to make sense and meaning out of her physical and psychological sufferings by sharing her experiences with others: “Prince rereads and reinscribes the meaning of her life; her body and pain become her central text, a counter narrative to the inscription of slavery” (Baumgartner 261). In this testimonio Mary Prince represents her individual struggle to control her own destiny along with the collective experience of oppressed slaves. Her attempt to voice violence, to show resistance, to

articulate oppression through writing reveals the intricacy of the discourse between black slave women and their white master/white mistress.

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## **Folk Theatre in India: Various Forms and Types**

-Satish Kumar Harit

### **Abstract:**

Purpose of this paper is to discuss origin, development and continuation of Folk theatrical forms in various regions of India. Folk theatre in Indian in its rudiment forms came into existence with the dawn of civilization but gained momentum in fifteenth century after foreign invasions and decline of Indian Classical drama. Being embedded deep in the regional identities, it has served as a potent tool of interpersonal communication and entertainment and also as a cultural ambassador. Since each folk theatre form has a particular community, language, area and way of life, they differ from one another in execution, staging, costume, make-up and acting style. Owing to their high performability, immanent ductility, immediacy of appeal and hold on the tender nerve of the spectators, they have survived vicissitudes of history. Eventually they became very effective in conveying messages for social, economic and cultural development and in arousing the conscience of the people in support of many political and social campaigns and against many social evils.

**Key Words:** Folk theatrical forms, performability, immediacy of appeal, immense heterogeneity, diversity, shift in value paradigms, improvisation, adaptation.

Aristocracy and its patronage had provided Sanskrit drama a congenial environment to flourish in its glory up to twelfth century but the Muslim invasions and consequent political turmoil hit the final crushing blow and sounded the death knells of its stage performance. About fifteenth or sixteenth century can be seen the rise of the 'Loknatya' (people's theatre) in almost every state of India, however, the very basic rudiments of folk theatre in establishing itself as an art form has already been there in the mores, heritage and tradition of India. A few forms of entertainment like folk drama, shadow-puppet plays, and dances and music were prevalent especially in the rural areas even when Sanskrit drama was enjoying its hay-days. Decline of Sanskrit drama led to the emergence and evolution of many folk theatrical forms which were performed mostly at public squares where audience could gather easily and the themes of which, mostly of love and chivalry, were based on the traditional or mythological stories of heroic personages. Owing mainly to the absence of a

national language and decline of Sanskrit drama, a variety of folk drama developed and got popularity in different regions in different vernacular languages. Folk theatre has not only been entertaining people, it has served as cultural baggage and preserved glorious Indian tradition like a cultural ambassador. According to Sheelita Das: The Folk theatre having roots in native culture is embedded in local identity and social values. Besides providing mass entertainment, it helps Indian society as indigenous tools of interpersonal, inter-group and inter-village communication for ages. Folk theatre has been used extensively in India to propagate critical social, political and cultural issues in the form of theatrical messages to create awareness among the people. As an indigenous form it breaks all kinds of formal barriers of human communication and appeals directly to the people. (Das 1)

The classical theatre, which was mainly based on *Natyashastra*, was much more sophisticated in its form and nature and mostly urban-oriented whereas the traditional theatre, which had evolved out of common people's social life, was simpler, immediate and closer to the rural milieu. Ross Kidd also observed: "The plays grew out of the situations, experiences, and analysis of the actors who are themselves villagers...They create their own dramas out of their own collective analysis of their immediate situation and the deeper structures in which they are embedded. This is a genuine expression of the people." (Kidd 117)

Rituals in rural India first displayed the rudiments of drama. These rituals varied from region to region as they drew their typical character from the tribe or clan which practised them. Varied facets of the rituals and their colossal impact on Indian culture and life formed the very base of the folk theatre in India. About the role of tradition in the origin of the folk forms, G Shankara Pillai remarks: Tradition is not an isolated phenomenon. It is the residue of the total achievement of a generation. The fabric of its life pattern, passed onto other generations, and if we want to analyse it, we have to examine all its aspects—sociological, ethnic, ecological and cultural layers of tradition must be examined in detail, and the backgrounds of traditional forms analysed in all their multiplicity. These forms (I refrain from calling all of them theatre) have their own idioms of expression, obviously based on the nature, conditions, and ultimate aims of performances. (Pillai 43)

It is yet not definite whether forms of folk theatre did exist in ancient times. Though commonly scholars believe that it grew in the sixteenth century and thereabouts, its origins must go far back for, as anthropologists posit, on local community levels evolution of entertainment is a natural process of social life and doesn't need any extrinsic motivation.

This is pointed out by E.M. Forster in his famous book *Aspects of the Novel* where he suggests, talking in terms of storytelling tendency, “It is immensely old—goes back to neolithic times, perhaps to Paleolithic. Neanderthal man listened to stories, if one may judge by the shape of his skull (Forster 34). From storytelling must have grown the ritual of enactment of roles, songs and dancing too. What is peculiar about it is its immense heterogeneity and diversity. In a continental size land like India one can guess perfectly independent development of theatre-like entertainment form in such far-flung places as tribal worlds of Nagaland, Tibet, Kalinga, Ahom, Jhabua, Kashmir’s isolated pockets and so on. The point is that in the absence of a formally recorded documentation of these social activities, one is either left to the memory of the communities or sheer speculation. One thing, nevertheless, is clear; while classical drama of the *Natyashastra* school was a monolithic urbane form promoted by society’s elites, ‘theatre of the masses’ can be considered as a swollen stream ever alive, moving and thriving in ever-changing form. It had its own tradition, but it wasn’t rigidly bound by prescriptive guidelines and showed willingness to change to the demands and exigencies of time and society. That is perhaps one reason why the neo-look experimental modern drama tends to examine the resources of folk-theatre amid its magnificent variety to re-invigorate itself rather than to the fixed contours of classical Sanskrit drama.

Each folk theatre form has a particular community, language, area and way of life. Initially these were purely devotional in tenor and typically revolved around religion, local legends and mythology but with changing times it became more secular in content and began to focus on folk stories of romance and valour and biographical details of local heroes.

Indian folk theatre can be divided into two broad categories—Ritual/Religious Theatre and Secular Theatre. The religious folk theatres mainly evolved around the aspects and stories from history, religion and myth but the secular folk theatre actually emerged as a typical form of entertainment. Despite their differences, both the forms mutually influenced and thrived together. Because of its close association folk life, and readiness to alter, it has been seen as more dynamic than codified classical forms. This could also be the reason why folk theatre lent its full force to modern Indian drama which in its experimental forays looked for innovative elements and absorbed some elements of folk performances. Girish Karnad, Badal Sircar and Vijay Tendulkar are major dramatists to employ them.

The *Jaatras/Yatrakirtnya* and *Nautanki* of Bengal, the *Dhulia Bhaona* of Assam, the *Bhari Gan* of Assam and Meghalaya, the *Maach* of the Malwa regions of Madhya Pradesh, the *Terukuttu* of Tamil Nadu, the *Veethinatakam* of Andhra, the *Yakshaganas*, *Bayalata*, *Attadata*, *Doddata* and *Sannata* of Karnataka, *Kutiyattam*, *Mohiniattam* and *Kathakali* dance dramas of Kerala, *Lalita*, *Khele*, *Dashavtar* and *Tamasha* of Maharashtra the *Bhavai* of Gujarat, and the *Chadiya-Chadiyani* of Orissa, *Khayal*, *Rammat*, *Gavari* and *Phad* of Rajasthan, *Rass* and *Jhoomer* of Punjab, *Swang* (Saang) of Haryana, *Ramna* of Uttarakhand, *Banthra* of Himachal Pradesh, *Bhand Jashin* of Kashmir started presenting, besides the religious stories, some historical, social and political themes. The mythological episodes of both classical and local importance were presented in a manner that minimized their religious aspect. In North India, *Ramleela* and *Rasleela* plays, stories of Satyawadi Harish Chandra, Nala-Damayanti, Bhagat Prahalad were also staged to present historical or social events, folk tales or medieval romances along with religious sentiments. Some of the above theatre forms are discussed in detail here:

**Jaatra:** Originated in Bengal in the 15th century as a result of the Bhakti movement, it was one of the best structured forms of folk theatre. It became a popular theatre form in eastern Bihar and Orissa also. It was initially known as *Krishna jaatra* due to the influence of Chaitanya, the spiritual founder of Gaudiya Vaishnavism. It's a living and vivid form of music theatre and draws its plots generally from Hindu mythology, recount stories about Shiva, Rama or Kali, popular legends.

It has also been quite successful in projecting the social and the cultural needs of the people in the region and served as a vehicle of political education. During colonial period its immense mass appeal led to its being used as a vehicle for emanating reformist and nationalist feelings. In his famous *Swadeshi Samaj* speech in July 1904, Rabindranath Tagore advocated the use of *Jaatra* as a potent medium to reach the rural masses. During the freedom movements, a quite distinct form of *Swadeshi Jaatra*—nationalist form of *Jaatra*—evolved which used Gandhi's non-co-operation movement and anti-untouchability movement as its favourite themes. Its scripts originally included songs and musical verse but its performance consists now mainly of action-packed dialogues with a few songs. Even after independence its popularity continued and it began to be used to project various burning social problems. In many regions of Bengal, it is still used as a popular medium for political campaigns during elections.

**Bhaona** is a presentation of the Ankia Naat (a one-act play) of Assam. Written in Brajavali, a unique Assamese-Maithili mixed language, these are curious amalgams of the cultures of Assam, Bengal, Orissa, Mathura and Vrindavan. Srimanta Sankardeva devised this form in early sixteenth century to convey religious message through entertainment to the rural people. The Sutradhaar, or narrator begins the story, first in Sanskrit and then in either Brajboli or Assamese. Primarily centered on Hindu deity, Krishna, they are unique because of their dialogues, costumes, ornaments, entries and foot movements. They are generally staged at namghars and xatras in Assam but their custom now is particularly kept alive in Majuli to entertain foreigners.

**Nautanki** is a popular theatre form in Kanpur, Lucknow and Haathras in Uttar Pradesh. Various meters and verse forms like Doha, Chaubola, Chhappai, Behar-e-tabeel are used in it. Initially only men acted in Nautanki but nowadays bold dances of women have become the center of attraction. A few female performers like Gulab Bai of Kanpur gave a new dimension to this old theatre form. Despite new forms emerging in this technological age, nautanki continues to hold its own sway on people's hearts over a large area. In post-independence India, this form began to be reshaped so as to use it to exhibit social themes like adult education and family planning.

**Raasleela** is a form of devotional operatic play performed mainly by amateur groups during different kinds of religious festivities in the regions south of Delhi, particularly in Vrindavan. Raslilas are divided into two sections. It starts with 'rasa' (dance) and is followed by lila (play). It is dedicated to Krishna. The characters of Krishna, his beloved Radha, and the gopies (the cowherd girls) are played by young boys. It exquisitely combines prose dialogues with songs to enact Krishna's pranks.

**Maach** derives its name from Hindi word 'manch'. It is the traditional theatre form of Madhya Pradesh in which songs (vanag) are given prominence in between the dialogues (bol). It is believed to have originated either from the *Khyal* form of Rajasthan or Turra Kalagi troupes that accompanied the Maratha forces into Central India. The tunes of this theatre form are known as rangat. Tales of some semi sacred characters or historical figures borrowed from local legends, *Purans*, *Ramayana* or *Mahabharata* are sung in it. Sometimes the tales of Raja Gopichand, Prahlad, Nala and Damayanti and the Malwan heroes—Tejaji and Kedar Singh also feature in these plays.



**Bhavai**, the traditional dramatic form of entertainment in Kutch and Kathiawar regions of Gujarat, is a rare synthesis of devotional and romantic sentiments. It is a kind of ritual offering made to the Hindu goddess, Amba. Instruments like the *bhungal*, *pakhaawaj*, *rabaab*, *sarangi* and *manjeera* are usually used during its performance.

**Tamaasha** is a traditional folk theatre form of Maharashtra. It flourished in the courts of Peshwa rulers during the 18th and 19th centuries and reached its pinnacle in the reign of Baji Rao II. It has evolved from the folk forms such as Gondhal, Jagran and Kirtan. Unlike other theatre forms, female actress known as Murki is the lead performer and the chief exponent of dance in it. Classical music, footwork at lightning speed of the *lavani* dance, and vivid gestures of the performers to express different emotions gives it a distinctive character. Many Tamasha plays were performed during freedom movements, especially during the non-co-operation movement. Even after independence Tamasha, though with a few variations, began to be used as an important tool for spreading government ideologies and propaganda.

**Therukoothu**, which literally means "street play" is the most popular form of folk drama of Tamil Nadu. It is performed at open places in the villages mostly at the time of annual temple festivals of Mariamman (Rain goddess) to gain rich harvest. It comprises a cycle of eight plays based on the life of Draupadi. Kattiakaran, the Sutradhara of the Therukoothu performance, gives the gist of the play to the audience and Komali entertains the audience with his buffoonery. Its performance includes lively dances and songs sung in a high pitch by the actors who wear wide colorful costumes, sparkling shoulder plates, elaborate head-dresses and thick bright make-up.

**Yakshagaana**, predominantly seen in the coastal districts of Karnataka, is traditionally presented from dusk to dawn. It is based on mythological stories and Puranas. The most popular episodes are from the Mahabharata i.e., Draupadi swayamvar, Subhadra vivah, Abhimanyu vadh, Karna-Arjun yuddh and from Ramayana i.e. Raajyaabhishek, Lav-kush Yuddh, Baali-Sugreeva yuddha and Panchavati. It presents a unique harmony of music, fascinating costumes, authentic styles of dance, improvised gestures and extemporaneous dialogue.

**Krishnattam (Krishna enactment)**, folk theatre of Kerala, came into existence in the middle of 17th century A.D. under the patronage of Zamorin King Manavada of Calicut. It is based on the Krishna lore and 'ashtapadis', i.e., eight verse songs of Jayadeva's Gitagovinda. It is a cycle of eight plays performed for eight consecutive days. The plays are Avataram,

Kaliyamandana, Rasa krida, kamasavadha, Swayamvaram, Bana Yudham, Vivida Vadham, and Swargarohana. The episodes are based on the theme of Lord Krishna - his birth, childhood pranks and various deeds depicting victory of good over evil.

**Koodiyaattam**, one of the oldest traditional theatre forms of Kerala, follows the performative principles of the ancient tradition of Sanskrit theatre. The characters of this theatre form are: Chakyaar or actor, Naambiyaar, the instrumentalists and Naangyaar, those taking on women's roles. The role of protagonists is played by Sutradhar (narrator) and the Vidushak (jester). It is the Vidushak alone who delivers the dialogues. Emphasis on hand gestures and eye movements makes this dance and theatre form unique. In 2001, *Koodiyattam* was officially recognized by UNESCO as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

**Dashavatar** is the most developed theatre form practiced by farmers of the Konkan and Goa regions. The performers personify the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu—the god of preservation and creativity. The ten incarnations are Matsya (fish), Kurma (tortoise), Varaha (boar), Narsimha (Human body with lion head and claws), Vaman (dwarf), Parashuram, Rama, Krishna, Buddha and Kalki. Apart from stylized make-up, the Dashavatar performers wear masks of wood and papier mache. The performance is usually accompanied by three musical instruments—a paddle harmonium, tabla (tabor) and *zanj* (cymbals).

**Swang**, a popular folk theatre form of Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh mainly employs music, dance and song to accomplish 'rasa' and display softness of emotions. A group of ten to fifteen artists use verse and prose dialogues to enact religious stories or popular folk tales on the stage. The two important styles of *Swang* are from Rohtak and Haathras; the former uses Bangru (Haryanvi) language while the latter uses Brajbhasha.

**Bhand Pather**, centuries old traditional theatre form of Kashmir, is a unique combination of music, dance and acting. Usually, the performances begin in the evening with a ritualistic dance called *chhok* and unfolding gradually, it ends in the early hours of the morning. Satire, wit and parody are commonly employed to incorporate mythological legends and contemporary social commentary to induce laughter. The performers or *bhands* most of whom belong to the local farming community dance to the tune of specific instruments like the *swarnai*, *mukam*, *dhol* and *nagara* to enact their way of living.

**Banthra**: Belonging to Himachal, Banthra theatre is a fusion of music, dance, drama and versification. Being an impromptu theatre form and performed without script and director, it

is the true reflection of cultural wealth of the region. It is mostly performed around Deepawali. It is also organised by a person for the deity on the fulfillment of his wish or 'mannat'. A number of forms of this folk theater with unique execution and style are performed in the different regions of Himachal. The people of Shimla and erstwhile Mahasu state call it Kariyala, while in Mandi, Bilaspur, Sirmaur, and Kangra districts, it is known as Banthara, Swang, Budechhu, and Bhagtu respectively. The performers are correspondingly known as Karayalchi, Swangchi, Budechhi and Bhagtias, etc.

**Ramman** is a form of ritual theatre celebrated annually in April after 'Baisakhi' in the courtyard of Bhumiya Devta temple adorned in the twin Saloor-Doongra Villages in the Garhwal region of Uttarakhand. It is made up of highly complex rituals that involve the recitation of a version of the epic Ramayana and various legends. This is also accompanied by the performance of local songs and masked dances. During this festival, Bhumiya Devta is taken by the local inhabitants in the form of a procession from his residing place to the central temple of the village. The procession is followed by beatings of drums and masked dance performances given by the locals. When the festivity ends, Bhumiya Devta goes to stay at one of the houses of the village for a year till the next year festival.

**Puppetry:** As a form of theatre, puppetry has been in practice in almost all the parts of India since ancient times. Being an inexpensive medium, it is used for entertainment, conveying purposeful messages, transmitting knowledge about Indian myths and legends. Earlier it used to derive its material mostly from the deeds of heroes or life of Indian kings; and many a time it was also used as satire to expose the socio-political milieu, but in the modern times, many educational institutes use them in kindergarten and primary classes to demonstrate proper pronunciation and to help learners in developing language skills. The Centre for Cultural Resources and Training imparts a comprehensive and integrated training to enable the learners to prepare, manipulate and produce a variety of programs for educational and other purposes. The following four major forms of puppetry have been in practice:

**Glove or Sleeve Puppets:** This form has been prevalent mostly in Orissa, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Puppeteer wears them like a glove on his hand and controls the movements of their heads and arms with his fingers to coordinate with the story he narrates in prose or verse. These stories are mainly based on Ramayana or Radha and Krishna.

**Rod Puppets:** Rod puppets are almost similar to glove puppets in their operation. In this form the three-dimensional moving puppets are fixed to heavy bamboo sticks and then tied to

the puppeteer's waist who manipulates them with the help of rods. A few examples of this form are Putual Nauch of West Bengal, Yampuri of Bihar and Kathi Kundhei of Orissa.

**String Puppets** (marionettes): In this form the puppeteer, with his manipulative skill, controls with strings the body parts of dolls (katputali) having multiple joints. The dolls are generally made of wood and are eight to ten inches tall. Eyes, mouth, nose and other facial features are oil-painted on them. The body is stitched or wrapped with a little colourful garment. Miniature jewels or other embellishments are added to give them a realistic appearance. Katputali shows of Rajasthan, Malasutri Bhaulya of Maharashtra, Sakhi Kundhei of Orissa, Bommallattam of Tamilnadu, Gombeyatta of Karnataka and Putla Nach of Assam are a few examples of this form.

**Shadow Puppets:** In this form the puppeteer uses shadows of flat figures usually made of leather coloured black and white or some different colour. He presses them lightly against a transparent sheet stretched on an adjustable frame with a strong source of light behind to project the image in order to create dramatic effect on the audience surrounded by darkness all around. Such forms are in practice in Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamilnadu, Karnataka and Kerala.

Since most of these performances are given on the open stages or arenas generally surrounded by audiences, the performers keep changing their place on the stage so as to be more impressive and to give the situation a greater significance. Usually, the dialogues are also delivered in a high pitch to reach out to a larger audience. This technique also reduces the chance of boredom through repetition and stillness. The creative artists mostly improvise adding something or the other to the original dialogue on their own. The changes brought through improvisations, carry the spectators into spells of ecstatic state. All these help in establishing a direct relationship between the artists and the spectators. The clown in these performances also plays a prominent role. While being humorous, he also touches upon the socio-economic, political issues and situations with a lot of satire and irony. The clown makes his appearance on the stage in different ways to suit the requirement of his role. If the king, in traditional theatre forms, decides to do something not in the good interest of the subjects, the clown appears on behalf of the subjects to make the audiences laugh and at the same time expose the anti-people attitude of the king. The element of clown in certain meaningful roles can be seen in most of the major dramatic traditions—in Europe, in the East

and other countries. His role sometimes appears to be more important than his stature and position, as we see in Shakespeare and Ben Jonson.

Having been dependent on their local customs, most of these theatrical styles have their own unique form and consequently differ from one another in execution, staging, costume, make-up and acting style. Nevertheless, there can be traced some broad similarities also. The south Indian forms like *Kathakali* and *Krishnattam* mainly emphasize dance forms; the north Indian forms like the *Khyal*, the *Maach*, the *Nautanki* and the *Swang* emphasize songs; The *Jaatra*, the *Tamasha*, the *Bhavai* stress on dialogues in their execution, but the latter two place focus on comedy and satire also. Though the style of dance also differs, these traditional folk forms synchronize the theme of the performance. The integral elements of all these different folk forms are identical even though the areas differ. The music of traditional theatre is very dynamic and in a few of them it is very systematic also. Talking of music, it is important to point out in certain developed folk forms though songs are closely woven into the overall dramatic matrix, they dominate the shows to such an extent that the plays often run full houses only for their music. Artists in Marathi Sangeet-Natika like K.P. Khadilkar, Annsaheb Kirloskar, Bal Gandharv, Jitendra Abhisheki, etc. owe their success to the plays like 'Sita Swamvar', 'Nal-Damayanti', *Kichak Vadh*, etc. Marathi musical drama can be equated with European operas. Some of the practices of these traditional folk theatres of different areas are the same. According to Suresh Awasthi:

Music is highly systematical and developed as in Ankia Nat of Assam, Rasleela of Uttar Pradesh and Yakshagana of Karnataka. Song-dialogues are set to various melodies prescribed for different situations and characters. Specific rhythms are prescribed for the entry and the exit of different types of characters. Orchestral pieces are often used for the entries and exits of the characters and as incidental music as in Jatra of West Bengal. The orchestra plays in union with the vocal line and repeats the melodic phrase giving the actor an opportunity to present choreographic patterns and enrich its gestures by an elaborate interpretation of the text as in Kathakali (Awasthi 53)

With its verve and vivacity Indian folk theatre is more than just a theatre form. It unfurls the saga of the voyage of Indian drama from the eposes to the modish theatre pattern. It is the chronicle of Indian drama where for the very first-time theatre broke the barrier of

orchestra and pits and reached the mass in a whole new way through the quixotic brilliance of music, song and folklores.

In addition to the already discussed developed forms, dramatic art is clearly perceptible in folk dances like the *Gambhira* and *Purulia Chhau* of Bengal, *Seraikella Chhau* of Bihar and *Mayurbhanj Chhau* of Orissa and in some of the solo forms of Indian classical dance, like *Bharat Natyam*, *Katthak*, *Odissi* and *Mohiniattam*. Dramatic contents can be traced in some of the ritual ceremonies like *Mudiyettu* and *Teyyam* in Kerala. Many puppet theatres like 'Shadow' (Gombeyatta of Karnataka, Ravana Chhaya of Orissa), 'Glove' (Gopalila of Orissa, Pavai Koothu of Tamil Nadu), 'Doll' (Bommalattam of Tamil Nadu and the Mysore State and Putul Naach of Bengal) and 'String puppets' (Kathputli of Rajasthan and Sakhi Kundhei of Orissa) also flourished in India to represent dramatic art.

Folk theatres occupy a unique place especially in the life of rural and semi-urban Indian populace whose aspirations, ideals, wisdom and world of imagination they represent in one piece. Being highly performative, they have survived vicissitudes of history due to their immanent ductility, their performability and their fundamental and effective rapport with the id impulses of the spectators. Indian folk theatres explore the channels of fluidity and efflorescence in human character, the essential inter-contextuality of dance, drama and songs along with the possibilities explored taking cognizance of context as part of text and the location of meaning in the spectators. Folk performances like *Khyal*, *Swang*, *Maach*, *Bhagat*, *Nautanki*, *Tamasha*, etc. successfully juxtapose contemporary with antique, ruminative with wisecracks and performance of godliness in inclusive community feeling the bonhomie of fair. All these local attempts at entertainments for the people remained in vogue in different parts of India. Since the main purpose of these performances was to provide entertainment, simplicity of language, staging and costumes characterize them. However, most of these theatrical forms in the rich theatrical traditions of India have either shrunk or are on the verge of extinction due to changed socio-cultural pressures, loss of audience and stigmatization of these art forms as 'low' and 'vulgar' in the cultural matrix of Indian society as most of these were performed by hereditary as well as amateur artists from the dalit sections of Indian society such as Bhand, Nat, etc. Another reason is the rapid shift in value paradigms across all sections, and what can be characterized as urbanization of the cultural matrix which spans across the rural-urban divide. Kironmoy Raha remarks:

It was the traditional folk forms of music, dance and theatre that survived them (Sanskrit and Prakrit drama) and the imposition of an alien culture with hardly a mark of injury. They continued in an unbroken tradition—responding, absorbing, evolving as they have always done to the needs and urges of the common people. (Raha 04)

However, the traditional folk forms are frequently incorporated in the urban theatrical performances also, but most of the time with a little dilution in the name of improvisation. Cinematic adaptations of folk forms of dance and song and their performance by inefficient practitioners of those forms rather adulterates and is uncongenial and detrimental to the preservation and growth of such forms. According to M K Raina:... it is exactly here that the problem lies and the very real danger of degeneration and the worst forms of revivalism—as this urban exercise is usually one of the short cuts, and is ambitious and exploitative in nature. The urban theatre worker has picked up the product, but has Ignored aspects of its genesis—its history, its anthropology, its religion and therefore its link with the past. (Raina 29)

The first Five Year Plan after independence encouraged the performing arts as an effective means of public enlightenment. Observing some of the popular Folk Theatre forms like *Jaatra*, *Nautanki*, *Bhavai*, *Tamasha*, and *Puppet Shows* it was realised that they are traditional and most effective ways of communication with the people in rural areas, therefore they should, in addition to electronic media, be used for conveying messages for social, economic and cultural development which would ultimately help in overall development of the nation. That is why they began to be used as source of media for creating awareness and launching government programs about adult education, rural health schemes, eradication of untouchability, family planning, women empowerment, anti-dowry, small-scale industries, agricultural technologies and different aspects of socio-economic change. Realizing the importance of folk forms, an eminent theatre personality K. N. Panikkar writes:

We see that the performing arts of our country even while maintaining their own specialties and the differences in the details of structuring related to the form, operational style and other aspects, evince at the same time a semblance, inter dependence and interconnection. The unity of a well defined goal has never been affected by the multiplicity of regional traditions. (Panikkar 15)

The renowned drama critic Martin Esslin's message about the importance of the rich folk theatre delivered on world theater day, on 27<sup>th</sup> March 1989, is pertinent irrespective of region, race and religion. In the words of Martin Esslin:

In an age where, the world is flooded by a deluge of cheap commercially motivated material on television, the live theatre, the guardian of traditions and individuality of cultures, threatened by this avalanche of homogenized triviality has become more vital to the continued richness and variety of human culture than ever before in the history of mankind. ([https://www.world-theatre-day.org/pdfs/WTD\\_Esslin\\_1989.pdf](https://www.world-theatre-day.org/pdfs/WTD_Esslin_1989.pdf)).

Folk Theatre became very effective in arousing the conscience of the people in support of many political and social campaigns launched by Mahatma Gandhi. In 1940s, Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA), successfully used many of the popular regional theatre forms to create social awareness and enhance political education. Mukunda Das, Utpal Dutta used the medium of *Jaatra* for inculcating the spirit of patriotism and political awareness among the masses of Bengal. P. L. Deshpande, Shahir Amar Sheikh and Shahir Sable used Folk Theatre forms in Maharashtra as a technique of generating national identity and social awareness. In India, state governments, All India Radio, Doordarshan, the Directorate of Field Publicity, the Departments of Public Relations and Information, Department of Science and Technology, the National Institute of Design and many Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have been the biggest users of Folk Theatre for propagation of developmental programs among the masses.

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## **Man-Woman relationship in Bankim Literature: The case of Nagendra, Suryamukhi and Kundanandini in Bisabriksha**

-SANTANU BANDYOPADHYAY

Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay (1838-1894), the doyen of modern Bengali prose, published his first social novel 'Bisabriksha' in 1873 as a book. It was earlier serialised in his famous journal 'Bangadarshan' and to say that the contemporary reception was overwhelming would have been an understatement. Apart from being an instant success the novel attained immortal fame with the course of time and became an integral part of Bengali cultural life. The Hindi version of Bisabriksha was published from Sialkot in 1891. Miriam S Night translated the novel in English in 1884 as 'The Poison Tree' with an appreciative introduction by Sir Edwin Arnold. Bankim himself translated a part of the novel in English as 'The Bane of Life' for presenting the same to Lady Alice Lousia, the wife of Sir Alfred Charles Eliot (1890-1893), the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. The novel was translated into Swedish language in 1894. Amritlal Basu, the famous actor known as Rasaraj made the novel into a play. The play was staged successfully a number of times.

Apparently the central problems of the novel are male polygamy and widow-marriage but there have been many underlying subtle subtexts of human relationships running concurrently like rivers underground. Bankim, a stupendously learned individual, was a representative, par excellence, of the elite *bhadralok* (genteel) class and he wrote essentially for the English educated *bengali bhadralok* society. All the male characters like Nagendra, his *bete noire* and rival in love Debendra, his brother-in-law Shrishchandra and even his friend and conscience-keeper Haradeb Ghosal, belong either to the landed gentry or to the English-educated middle class. Male characters of Bankim do not present much variety and complexity but his women-characters are beautiful and intelligent with strong personalities. Suryamukhi, Kundanandini, Kamalmani and Hira are much more vividly memorable as artistic creations compared to their male counterparts like Nagendra, Debendra or Shrishchandra in Bisabriksha. But before delving into these issues further, we may describe the main plot of the novel in brief.

Nagendra, a rich zamindar, encountered Kundanandini, a most beautiful girl, by chance in one of his journeys to Calcutta. He saved the girl from utter destitution on account of the death of the lone male survivor of her family and; from the clutches of lecherous men by

bringing her to his residence to be raised under the tutelage of his devoted wife Suryamukhi. Kundanandini got married to Tarapada, a school teacher, much older than her and Debendra, the rogue, acquainted Kundanandini as a friend of Tarapada. Devendra became desirous of having Kundanandini with unreciprocated love. Devendra was a distant relative of Nagendra whose family lost its fortune to the family of Nagendra in a legal fight. Cursed by destiny, Kundanandini prematurely lost her husband to disease and again became alone and helpless in this vast world. Suryamukhi, being a kind woman, gave shelter to her again by bringing her to Nagendra's mansion and the tale starts. Nagendra became attached to Kundanandini, who grew to be a paragon of innocent beauty over the years. The infatuation of Nagendra towards Kundanandini grew day by day before the eyes of Suryamukhi and the latter agreed to the union of Kundanandini and Nagendra. Kamalmani, the young and married sister of Nagendra, loved and respected her sister-in-law Suryamukhi to the hilt. She tried to dissuade her brother Nagendra from marrying Kunda with the help of her husband Shrishchandra but in vain. The marriage took place in time and Suryamukhi left her matrimonial home in severe pain and anguish without informing anybody a priori. Laden with guilt, Nagendra immediately went out in search of Suryamukhi and vowed not to return home without finding her. Hira, an influential maid of the household of Nagendra, who for her insolence and misdemeanour, fell out of favour of Suryamukhi, the lady of the house, was seduced by Debendra and lost her honour. Debendra used Hira to pursue Kundanandini without any success as such. Realising the same, Hira became jealous of Kundanandini and waited for an opportunity to harm Kunda. When Suryamukhi came back to her matrimonial home everyone in the household became distracted and as Nagendra failed to visit Kunda even for once at that hour she became sad and depressed. Taking this opportunity Hira suggested Kunda to end her tragic life and left some poison for Kunda who committed suicide by consuming the same. Hira faded into dark oblivion thereafter except re-appearing at the very end as a craving mad woman to see Debendra dying untimely of alcoholism. The fundamental tenet of Bankimchandra in this novel is that a person should learn to control his or her desire if such desire goes against the norms of the society. Bankimchandra called it *chittadamana* (forsaking of desire or *pravritti*). To him expression and demonstration of selfless romantic pre-matrimonial love (as shown in his historical novels like *Durgeshnandini*) or conjugal love between a married couple (Nagendra-Suryamukhi or Shrishchandra-Kamalmani) is both ethical and moral while any man-woman love outside it is unethical and immoral bringing ruin and destruction of the family and society. Bankimchandra has shown in his own inimitable style that if a person like Nagendra could hold back his desire for

Kundanandini, a widow, a tragic sequence of events in the lives of him, his devoted wife Suryamukhi and the innocent Kunda could have been avoided. Bankim describes rampant lust as a seed of poison which, left unchecked, blooms into a full grown poison-tree destroying everything good in its neighbourhood. To him Nagendra is the person guilty of such unchecked lust who sowed the seed of bisabriksha, the poison tree.

The relationship between Nagendra and Suryamukhi has been complex and the breakdown of their relationship cannot solely be attributed to the beauty and charm of Kundanandini. Suryamukhi was childless. In the nineteenth century Bengal, a childless married woman having enormous riches and prosperity with no opportunity to pursue any vocation other than maintenance of household, could be nothing but husband-centric. And she had a great regret. She once conceived a child but the child died in the womb. This is a greater misfortune than being a nulliparous woman in a society which views motherhood as the *raison d'être* of a married woman. She was completely and entirely devoted to Nagendra, her husband. In her own language, “You are my everything. You are my life and you are my afterlife.” She was ready to sacrifice herself for the perceived happiness of her husband. Such pronouncements are indicative of a suffocating devotion. On the other hand, Nagendra described Suryamukhi in the following terms, “Wife in relation, a brother in friendship, a sister in caring, a host in entertaining, a mother in affection, a daughter in devotion, a friend in enjoyment, a teacher in counselling, an obedient maid in looking after(me).” The lamentation of Nagendra of Suryamukhi after her departure from matrimonial home continued, “comrade in my life struggle, peace at home, jewel in my crown, apple of my eye, dearest to my heart, life in my body, everything of my life. Delight to my enjoyment, solace to my despair, aid to my intelligence, encouragement to my work. She is light to my eyes, music to my ears, wind to my breath, world to my touch. She is the happiness of my present, memory of my past, hope for my future, good deeds of my afterworld.” Bankim has used a mixture of figures of speech like sustained metaphors, climaxes and apostrophes to vividly capture the entire range of emotions of Nagendra, categorically and consciously avoiding irony or sarcasm for which he was known for to keep the lament heart-felt. After all, reason has never been a good friend of men at the time of losing a dear one to uncertainty.

It is evident in the novel that Nagendra tries his best to elevate himself to the standard expected of him by Suryamukhi and he spectacularly fails in his endeavour because attainment of such standard as a man and a husband was not humanly possible for a mortal like Nagendra. And he starts to hate himself for such failure which further pulls him towards

innocent Kunda. The almost divine purity of devotion of Suryamukhi was suffocating for the male ego of Nagendra who wanted to just have an ordinary life with an ordinary woman. Suryamukhi was no ordinary woman. She was extremely possessive also though the trait is not readily apparent to the reader. It is true that she never objected to the marriage of Nagendra and Kundanandini but it hurt her so much that she did the ultimate against all socio-religious norms of the day i.e. desertion of her matrimonial home under her own accord without any prior hint to anybody. The proud woman she was, she was not ready to share her husband even with the innocent Kunda though the practice of taking a second wife while the first one is living had social sanction at that time. This was her way of punishing her husband for transgression and for coming down from the high pedestal of demi-god. This was also a self-inflicted punishment by Suryamukhi for her failure to stop her husband from committing such transgression. Bankim plays the judge. Suryamukhi comes back to her matrimonial home seamlessly. Kunda died conveniently by consuming poison, paving the way clear for the reunion of Nagendra and Suryamukhi. But the fundamental question remains. Will it be the same again? Kunda died an unhappy and unfulfilled woman. She was not favoured by destiny. She had no control over her life at any point of time. Born in a family of an aristocratic pauper, she was never really cared for, her feeling was only briefly appreciated by Nagendra and on return of Suryamukhi even that small appreciation was gone forever. To paint such utter negligence of Kunda by Nagendra, Bankim used the personal metaphor of a broken doll, mercilessly tossed aside by a child after playing with it for some time. She was never really valued by anybody even though she was innocent enough even not to realise her own good. She only wanted to live along with Nagendra and Suryamukhi in harmony. She had no enmity towards anybody. Still she had to die. Can the death of such an innocent woman fail to cast shadow on the future conjugal life of Nagendra and Suryamukhi? Bankim hints to such a shadow masterfully by saying that the innocent protestation of love by Kunda at the time of her death was permanently etched in the memory of Nagendra. Kundanandini will always be there in the household of Nagendra. She achieved in death what she could not achieve in life.

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## The Theme of Slavery, Bondage and Caste in Dalit Literature

-Brati Biswas

### Abstract:

The paper is an attempt to study the close relationship of the chaturvarna /caste system to concepts of slavery and bondage that has been highlighted by many Dalit writers. Jotirao Phule in his seminal work *Gulamgiri* (1873) linked the caste system and its laws to slavery. He illustrated how Religion was used to support this unequal power dynamics and many Dalit writers like Omprakash Valmiki and Bama have consistently highlighted this nexus between caste and slavery. The paper will analyse these ideas with specific reference to the Bangla Dalit novel *Pitrigan* (1998) by Samerendra Baidya. *Pitrigan* is set in East Bengal and narrates the story of three Namasudra bonded labourers, Chander, Dinnath and Gangacharan who slave for the Brahman Mahajan Harinarayan Chakkotty (Chakraborty) to make cultivable a portion of the bil called Chanda. The three “kaamlas” or bonded servants live in the bil and are not allowed to go home to their families. The relation between the peasants and the Mahajan is purely an exploitative one. The Mahajan abuses his social and economic power to control the lower caste populace of the village. The Novel raises issues of resistance and identity and critiques the legitimization of exploitation of Dalit labour. The paper would focus on *Pitrigan* while placing it in the context of Phule and Dalit writing .

### Keywords

Slavery, Dalit, Caste system, Bondage, Exploitation, Selfhood

The paper is an attempt to study the close relation of the chaturvarna /caste system to concepts of slavery with reference to the Bangla Dalit novel *Pitrigan* (1998) by Samerendra Baidya. Jotirao Phule in his seminal work *Gulamgiri* (1873) linked the caste system and its laws to slavery. He illustrated how this unequal power dynamics was maintained and perpetuated with the help of Religion.

In his 'preface' to *Gulamgiri* Phule uses a quotation by Homer as an epigraph to suggest the link between the caste system and slavery the quote says, 'the day that reduces a man to slavery takes from him the half of his virtue', meaning the branding as a Slave was de humanizing and reductive, it took away from the slave the 'virtue' of being a person and an individual. Slaves were considered as non human, without feelings and were bought and sold as cattle and were treated as chattel. The slave was a product of an unequal power hierarchy based on race, ethnicity, gender or caste. In his 'preface', Phule highlights how the caste system was worse than slavery and created perpetual slaves of the Dalit community.

Phule in *Gulamgiri* creates a counter narrative to the Brahminical legitimization of the caste system through religion and established social practices. He contested the Brahminical projection regarding the caste system based on their Shastras which state that God created the caste system and therefore it was a universal given. In this system all privileges, power, access to resources is reserved for the upper castes. Inequality is legitimized through religion and ideology of caste supremacy, the idea of Karma is used to suggest that past life sin leads to one being born as a Sudra. It is important to note that Phule underlined the idea that caste is a construction of the Aryan/ Brahmin and not a universal truth. Branding as lower caste brands that person as lacking merit and this creates the ideology of Brahmin superiority, supremacy and dominion.

The Dalits are slaves created by the caste system which denied them access to education and knowledge permanently, they were kept on the margins at the bottom of a hierarchized society.

Phule draws parallels between colonization of the aborigines of India by the Aryans with European colonization of aborigines elsewhere. The Atisudra was branded as the 'other' of the Brahmin as was the slave to the white colonizers of Europe and America. Phule begins by praising the anti-slavery movement of the white world to clearly establish the fact that the pro slavery rhetoric was flawed and the proponents have understood the false construction and consciousness it breeds. On this critique of slavery he builds his criticism of the caste system by drawing parallels between the two. According to him the Aryan/ Brahmin outsiders had a relation of conflict with the aborigines. These aborigines are today the outsiders so designated by the caste system. Through the insider outsider debate he constructs the idea of misappropriation of rights and privileges by the Brahmins.

Many Dalit writers like Omprakash Valmiki and Bama have consistently highlighted this nexus between caste and slavery. Bama in her novel *Karukku* highlights the exploitation of Dalit labour for the benefit of the upper caste: when I saw our people working so hard night and day, I often used to wonder from where they got their strength. And I used to think that at the rate they worked men and women both, every single day, they should really be able to advance themselves. But of course, they never received a payment that was appropriate to their labour. And another thing. Even if they did the same work, men received one wage, women another.



Later she speaks about her community as being 'born to work '. The children too would 'go to work like adults '.

They worked in the match-box factory.

They work at sticking on Matchbox labels; they make firecrackers and use chemicals at an age when they should be going to school' studying like everyone else and playing around in the evenings, they are shut up inside the factories instead... How can they afford to study where it is such a struggle even to fill their bellies (Excerpt, Kumar et.al. 99).

Omprakash Valmiki in his Autobiography *Joothan* talks of 'begaar' or free labour and a system of barter of labour for stale food or *joothan*. He echoes Bama :

Everyone in the family did some or other work. Even then we didn't manage to get two decent meals a day. We did all sorts of work for the Tagas, including cleaning, agricultural work and general labour. We would often have to work without pay. Nobody dared to refuse this unpaid work for which we got neither money nor grain. Instead we got sworn at and abused ( Excerpt, Sood et al. 28-29).

The Dalits like the slaves were belittled and hailed by cuss words. They are not allowed a respectable sense of the self.

*Pitrigan*, the Bangla Dalit novel focuses on the tradition of using Dalits as bonded labour. It is set in East Bengal and narrates the story of three Namasudra bonded labourers, Chander, Dinnath and Gangacharan who slave for the Brahman Mahajan Harinarayan Chakkotty (Chakraborty) to make cultivable a portion of the bil called Chanda. The three "kaamlas" or bonded servants live in the bil and are not allowed to go home to their families. The relation between the peasants and the Mahajan is purely an exploitative one. The Mahajan abuses his social and economic power to control the lower caste populace of the village. The Novel raises issues of resistance and identity and critiques the legitimization of exploitation of Dalit labour.

The job they do is very difficult, life threatening, arduous and requires skill and strength. The narrative highlights the tremendous skill, courage and effort of the peasants who attempt to tame the bil, but the Mahajan, a slave driver remains unimpressed by their efforts. He sends

his overseer (Gomostha) Nibaron to periodically check on them. He makes them believe that they have to serve him because he is a Brahman and if they do not they would go to Hell. The Dalit labourers believe that they have to serve the Brahman Mahajan to the best of their ability because they partake of his food. They are presented as God fearing, honest, simple and loyal people who initially do not question their bondage to the Mahajan. The lack of capital among Dalits results in their economic and ideological subjugation. The only capital that a Dalit has is his physical self and skill. In *Pitrigan* the Dalit self is literally and figuratively in 'bondage' to the dictates of the Brahman Mahajan. The emancipation of the Dalit self has to be both economic and ideological because a free mind without economic capital or freedom cannot bring into being a holistic individual Dalit self.

The old men Dinanath, Gangacharan and Rasik ideologically represent the Harijan point of view. They believe that they have to obey the Brahman because their religion dictates them to do so. They cannot imagine themselves to be equal to him. They accept the karmic theory doled out to them by the Mahajan as proof of their economic and social debility. Rasik's son Chander represents the Dalit point of view. He refuses to accept the Mahajan as a superior being on account of his birth. He accepts bondage to him due to his economic debility and not due to his 'low caste'. He rebels and strains at the leash right from the opening of the novel.

Dinnath and Gangacharan are old and are contemporaries of Chander's father Rasik. Chander works in place of his father who is old and infirm. The arrangement suits the Mahajan as Chander is an able bodied young man and works better than Rasik. Furthermore, the Mahajan also has an eye on Jamuna, Chander's wife, and keeping Chander out of the way is part of his plan to sexually exploit her. The Mahajan is depicted as a wily manipulator who uses his sweet tongue and sympathetic posture to push the people deeper into debt. In *Pitrigan*, the Mahajan is presented as a predator who feeds on the Dalit man's labour and preys on the Dalit woman.

The novel opens with the three "kaamlas" on a cold, stormy night at Chandar bil. The Mahajan visits them and rides on Gangacharan's shoulders to evade getting soiled by the mud (*Pitrigan*, 10). The stereotype of the Dalit as it exists in the public domain comes across in the speeches of the Mahajan. He calls them useless, worthless, 'Shala', 'Kutta', 'Shaitan', 'Haramkhor', 'Bilabhoot', 'Chotolok', 'Charal', and 'Shuor' (Swine). All these epithets reveal a negative image of the Dalit as inefficient, uncultured, dishonest etc. According to the Mahajan, the Dalit is a burden and a parasite. Though they abuse him in private, in his

presence they remain silent. Their pain and suffering at the hands of the Mahajan creates a unique bond of love, understanding and solidarity between the three men. They are the victims of the Mahajan's greed to colonise the bil areas and though they understand him and his motives they remain helpless and beholden to him.

The novel presents two points of view as existing among the Dalits. The older generation believes in following the dictates of the Mahajan and the Hindu religion. Dinnath, Gangacharan and Rasik cannot think of revolting against the Mahajan. The Mahajan had sexually assaulted Dinnath's wife Nayantara which is believed to be the reason behind her suicide. But Dinnath continues to venerate the Mahajan and mutely obey him. Dinnath had been the Mahajan's bonded slave from the age of twelve after the death of his widowed mother (13). He is conditioned to look up to the Mahajan and cannot think of opposing him. Rasik too demonstrates a very suppliant attitude when the Mahajan summons him to scold him regarding Chander's visits home. The Mahajan demands that Jamuna should come and work in his house to make good the loss caused by Chander. Chander refuses to let his wife go to the Mahajan's house and so he comes home to warn Jamuna. Rasik scolds and slaps Chander to make him obey the Mahajan, (33) because for Rasik and his generation the Mahajan is like God.

Chander, the new generation Dalit male craves the freedom to be his own self, to work for his own betterment and not be bound to the Mahajan. Chander wants to be self sufficient and not be dependent on the Mahajan's sympathy or dole. His quest for self respect, independence and caste solidarity are markers of the Dalit consciousness vis-a-vis the Harijan consciousness of his elders. His rebellion shows the way to Dalit selfhood for the community, but when he tells his father to sell the land and homestead to free themselves from the Mahajan's clutches, (39-40) Rasik refuses to sell. The turnaround in the older generation's perspective comes about through a series of events. Rasik comes to visit Chander in the bil and on his way back drowns in the bog. Chander finds Rasik's half-eaten body among the hyacinths in the bog and chooses to bury him there rather than cremate him. Dinnath assures Chander that those ceremonies are not for people like them. Dinnath here appears not to subscribe to the dictates of the caste Hindus and their rituals.

Gangacharan and Chander return to the village to inform everybody of Rasik's death. The Mahajan offers Chander money for the shrad ceremony which he refuses and this leads the Mahajan to instigate the community elders to pressurise Chander to perform the shrad of his father. Chander bows to the community decision and the community collectively share the

responsibilities of the shrad. The shrad puts Chander further into debt and to ease his financial burden Chander decides to catch fish from the bil and sell them in the market. Dinnath and Gangacharan scold him because they believe that Chander, a Namasudra, belongs to the cultivating caste and it is not right for him to sell fish like the fishing community. They believe that Chander would lose his caste if his un-caste like actions became public knowledge. When the Mahajan comes to know about Chander's rebellion he manipulates the community to proclaim their judgement against Chander. At the community meeting Chander accepts the accusations and Dinnath and Gangacharan state that they too were party to Chander's un-caste like action. The community elders have no other option but to excommunicate them. Chander is moved by the solidarity Dinnath and Gangacharan show towards him. This episode reflects the deep seated caste consciousness of the Namasudra peasants and the influence the Brahmans exert over them. It also represents the alternative to Brahmanical dominance to be possible through Dalit solidarity. The incident in the text opens the debate regarding the Hindu and non Hindu identity of the Dalit. Phule too questions the Hindu identity of the Dalits in *Gulamgiri*. Chander believes that religion is used to victimize the Dalits and keep them in the debt trap for generations. After his father's death Chander decides to sell his home and land. Ram helps him to find a buyer among the weavers who were buying land and taking to cultivation. Chander takes Ram and Bhajohari along to the Mahajan's home as witness when he returns his debt. The Mahajan is very angry and abusive but the three stand their ground. Chander asks for the amount of debt recorded under Rasik, Dinnath and Gangacharan's names and takes the whole amount and puts it at the feet of the Mahajan's wife and declares that from now onwards they were 'free' (137). This makes Bhajohari realise the power of Dalit solidarity and he says that if the 'Charals' remain united the Mahajan will not have any power. He tells Chander, "you make us proud" (138), acknowledging his contribution in awakening the community to its strength. The community head, 'Morol' too understands his mistake in getting manipulated by the Mahajan. The people begin to comprehend that the fissures in the community are bred by the 'upper castes' to divide and rule them. Chander shows them the way to self assertion, power and freedom.

Chander decides to buy some bil land from the Zamindar. On his way back to the village Chander takes the bil route so that he can take Dinnath back home with him. Dinnath savours his feeling of 'freedom' and this highlights the importance of independence for the Dalit self to grow. On their way back they are ambushed by the Mahajan and his men and Dinnath dies; Chander regains consciousness and realises that his people have come to help. The novel ends with Chander's assurance to Dinnath's body, "Nothing to fear anymore! They all have come..." (154). It is an assertion of community solidarity.

Chander, revolts against the tyranny of the Mahajan, the Brahmanical customs and even the dictates of his own community. He becomes the voice of reason of his community

and guides them to question established norms and to challenge them. He emerges as the new Dalit protagonist, awakened, aware, and ready to fight caste discrimination. He revolts against the Brahmanic hegemony of the Mahajan and its oppressive strictures. Economic debility coupled with a low caste currency creates a world full of disadvantages for the Dalit. In the case of the Dalit self class and caste interface create different subject positions. The deliberate attempt of the upper castes is to keep the Dalit from ascending the class ladder. That is why the mahajan is reluctant to free Chander from the bondage of debt. The Mahajan and his kind want the Dalit self to be indebted and suppliant to them for everything. The image of the Dalit self that emerges in the form of Chander is a defiant one who refuses to acknowledge the Brahman as having contributed materially or otherwise to his selfhood. It is a self that is constructed as a positive alternative to the self abnegating image proffered by the 'upper caste' to the Dalits as their suitable self image. This new self re-constitutes the given of Dalithood to create an independent, individual being. It is a self that takes pride in its honesty, courage and skill. This self has a sense of history of the community and the discrimination they were subjected to. This self critiques images that re-iterate and reify the given stereotypes of the Dalit. The self as a rebel breaks all the old moulds and re-fashions itself. In this refashioning it reflects the pioneering spirit of their ancestors. Their ancestors created a physical and cultural space which they called their own, the Bangla Dalit writers attempt to create a space and identity of their own in the literary domain. The literary space mirrors and also interacts with other domains of human activity. The public and private spheres, the past, present and future all coalesce and merge in the literary space. Baidya represents the Namasudra people as hard working, sincere, skillful, honest and courageous. He frees the Dalit self of negative imputations and imbues it with self respect and pride.

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## **Dalit Literature in Bengal and Partition: A Study of Interrogating My Chandal Life by Manoranjan Byapari**

-Sudeep Kumar  
- Ms. Arti

Partition literature in India offers a site to document the haunted memories of Partition. It tends to lighten the horrors of partition by allowing the people to express themselves. This literature also works as people's history because a writer writes about the experiences of a particular section of humanity which was still undocumented. Writers from different caste, creed, religion, and nationality write about their perspectives on partition. They include post-partition riots, communal politics as well as the effect of partition on the minorities including women and the lower castes who were already marginalized in Indian society. Ayesha Jalal and Sugatha Bose, the noted historians, in their book *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy*, point out:

The colossal human tragedy of the partition and its continuing aftermath has been better conveyed by the more sensitive creative writers and artists – for example in Saddat Hasan Manto's short stories and Ritwik Ghatak's films – than by historians (Bose and Jalal 164).

Partition literature encompasses the genre of novel, poetry and short story writing which maintain the essence of the great tragedy. There are many works which are written on the theme of partition which include Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956), Rahi Masoom Raza's *A Village Divided* (1966), Bhisham Sahni's *Tamas* (1974), Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* (1965), Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day* (1980), Intizar Hussain's *Basti* (1980), Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* (1988), Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1980), Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (1988), Urvashi Bhutalia's *The Other Side of Silence* (1998), Kamla Bhasin and Ritu Menon's *Borders and Boundaries* (1998), Yasmin Khan's *The Great Partition* (2007).

A new frame has been added to the partition literature which involves the perspectives of a minorities within the society. The marginalised section which was never considered the part of mainstream society is considered the new center in the changed scenario. The way they were affected by Partition of India, it was perhaps never

documented in the official history. There renowned writer, Saadat Hasan Manto was one of the pioneers who brought the poison taste of the partition on paper by portraying the lives of lunatics and women in his short stories through his personal experiences.

Manoranjan Byapari, a Bengali Dalit writer, also belongs to the same tradition. He is also known as rickshaw puller writer. Born in Barishal, Bangladesh in 1950 in a Namashudra family, he never got any formal education. Along with his family, he migrated to West Bengal at the age of three. Being a Dalit refugee, he was doubly marginalized in Indian Hindu society. His family settled in a refugee camp in Bankura, Shirmanipur refugee camp area. They never got any place for permanent settlement. They were never sanctioned as much land as provisioned for upper-caste refugees because the government officials overseeing the procedure themselves belonged to upper-castes. Byapari left his home at the young age of fourteen in the search of better opportunities. He visited different places that include Assam, Lucknow and Delhi but everywhere he was discriminated in the name of caste. Either he was not given proper payment, or he was brutally beaten for minor mistakes. At one point, he also joined the Naxalite movement. He was arrested and sent to jail, but he converted his jail journey into an opportunity to learn how to read and write. When he was a rickshaw-puller, he met with Mahasweta Devi and started writing for her journals. In one of his interviews, he informs about his writing: "I am one of them, so I write about them- a rickshaw puller, a vagabond, a prostitute, a helper in a lorry, a thief called Bhagaban (god), a futureless assailant with a knife" (Bagchin.p). He further says: "I write because I can't kill. When a kid is raped in Kathua or a man is punished for using his village well, I feel like shooting. But I can't, so I write and kill the villain" (Bagchin.p).

The present paper is a two-way endeavour: first, to read the distinctness of the dalit writings in Bengal and second, the way migrant status of a lower-class Dalit worker in Manoranjan Byapari's autobiographical work *Interrogating My Chandal Life: An Autobiography of a Dalit* (2017) makes him more vulnerable in caste Hindu Indian society.

#### Dalit Consciousness in Bengal and Partition

Dalit movement in Bengal draws its initial inspiration from Matua Sahitya which emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Harichand Thakur was the leader of

the Matua community. He belonged to Namashudra community who were then known as 'Chandals'. He led people to rebel against the title 'Chandal' which was ascribed to them. In 1911, they got success in getting new name "Namashudra" which was given to them, but it did not bring any change in their situation. His son, Guruchand Thakur, together with Christian missionaries, opened schools for Namashudra community which make them conscious of their situation. Rabindranath Tagore wrote in an essay "*Dharmer Adhikar*" (1911) about the condition of Namashudras:

I saw in the village that no other caste would plough the land owned by the namashudras; no one would harvest their crop; no one would build their houses...Fornofault oftheirs,wehavemadetheirlife difficult at every step. From birth to death, they are made to serve a sentence of punishment... (Byapari and Mukherjee 4118).

The early signs of Dalit consciousness became visible in Bengal in 1870s when various social movements helped lower caste communities to assert their identity. Two Dalit communities – Rajbansi and Namashudra– contributed a lot in raising the social awareness. Rajbansi community was located in the Northern part of Bengal having districts of, Dinajpur, Cooch Bihar, Jalpaiguri, and Rangpur. The Namashudras were from the districts of Faridpur, Khulna, Jessore, and Bakarganj in the Eastern part of Bengal and to some central parts.

Jogendra Nath Mandal was a Bengali Dalit leader from Namashudra community who brought Dr.B.R. Ambedkar Schedule Caste Organisation in the state of Bengal in the year 1945. His opinions about the Dalit-Muslim alliance in the context of partition of the nation brought the conflict in the Dalit leaders as they believed that the historical records of Dalit and Muslim masses are always interrupted by communal disharmony. Mandal believed that the interests of Dalits and Muslims are similar, and they can achieve their goals together. But other Dalit leaders were uncertain of their existence in the Muslim dominated area before the partition. The Schedule caste league divided into two other political groups which remained divided on the issue of Partition and were supporting the different mainstream political parties.

In 1946, the riots took place in Noakhali and Calcutta which enlarged the level of disagreements. Jogendra Nath Mandal was the part of Muslim League under of ministry of Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, who was considered as the mastermind behind the communal disharmony, resulted in Mandal's unpopularity among Hindus. His schedule Caste federation was in complete opposition to the partition. With all the chaos going on,



the Communist Party also entered the frame with their ideology. In the last days before Partition, Dalit movement was going-on in its full swing, but the partition shattered it and added a new phase of struggle in the lives of lower caste people.

Mandal's strategy of Dalit-Muslim union after Partition resulted in no good rather it made the lives of Dalits much worse. It not only divided them physically but mentally also. The territory of Ranbansi community was divided by the political and geographical boundary of the twonewnations i.e., the new cartographic border of India and the newly build nation, East Pakistan. The districts of Namashudra community went to the new nation. As oftheirreligiousidentity,the Dalit communities in East Pakistanwerein a great trouble. Theirmigrationdidnot happen just after the partition,ratherit happened in the waves. It was entirely different from that happened in the Northern part of India inPunjab.

In the first wave of migration, those who shifted were the upper caste Hindu gentry and working middle class who were educated and having a job. Because of the lack of resources, very few Namashudra peasants were able to migrate. Dalit people also denied the migration because they were deceived by the false promises of the authority. Mohammad Ali Jinnah said that the nation is made for the sake of protecting the rights of every individual irrespective of their religion. Former Prime minister of Pakistan, Khwaja Nazimuddin said on the birth anniversary of Jinnah: "Pakistan is not the state of Muslims alone, it belongs to all peoples and communities who live in it and who are loyal to it" (Bandopadhyay, and Chaudhury 3). The airy promises for the better future for Namashudas all resulted in vain with the Islamization of the nation. The Hindu community was declared as minority and "other". The effort of Namashudra peasant to get equal rights and justice made them declared as "rebels" in 1948.

In the newly built East Pakistan, Dalit people were forced to double marginalization. They were made the victims of communalriots by the Muslims majority and the discrimination in the name of caste withinthe Hindu minority of East Bengal. There was a difference in the treatment of Hindu minority and Schedule caste peasants. The discrimination on the basis of religion spiraled in both nations after the death of their prominent leaders Mahatma Gandhi and Mohammad Ali Jinnah. With the declining health ofJinnah,his hold on the politics started getting weak. Many people started

migrating, but lower caste peasants had no other alternative but to stay there. The reports noted that by the year 1949 around 1,870,535 Hindu peasants crossed the border from East Pakistan to India.

In 1949, an incident occurred in Khulna district in East Pakistan which led to the riots in the nation after Independence for the first time. In the village Kalshira, consisting of Namashudra population, the police came in the search of the communists and the anger of villagers led to the killing of one police constable. Two days later, the police force together with "Ansars" attacked twenty-two villages having Hindu Namashudra population. The news of the attack crossed the nation and reached the West Bengal and led to the communal riots in Howrah and Calcutta and make the Muslims migrate from the place. The vengeance spread from Khulna to Dacca and Rajshahi, then to Barisal and Mymensingh districts. The incident led to the second wave of migration of the Dalit peasants in 1950. Reports remark that by the year 1951, an approximation of 1.5 million people migrated to West Bengal and it increased to 2.1 million between the years 1950-1956. The Hazratbal incident in 1964 led to more migrations. There were many more people who are not recorded but they crossed the border and settled in the districts near the border. The migrants preferred to settle in the land of West Bengal due to the ties with religion and language. They were uprooted from their homes, but they wanted to hold some emotional connection. They started settling down in refugee camps or around the districts of 24-Paragans or Nadia located near borders, as the Muslim peasants were leaving their places.

The Congress government in West-Bengal refused to consider the migrants as permanent and lawful and demanded them to go back. On 8th April 1950, then Prime Minister of India and Pakistan Jawaharlal Nehru together with Liaquat Ali Khan respectively, signed the pact for the return of Migrants to their original places. Hindu Mahasabha also came in the light and asked for the military action against Pakistan. Many opinions came into the scene, but they were all trivial for refugees as their situation was still miserable.

The migration turned the lives towards a drastic and traumatic future. They were uprooted. The 1950's migrants came with the disturbing memories of violence which were haunting them to the rest of their lives. After 1951, the migrants started facing the various other sorts of problems also. During their train journey, the loots happened, and they

were stripped-off of all their possessions. Peasants could carry only fifty rupees per person. Women were captured and abused under the darkness of night. People lost all their life possessions in this disastrous event. Many of them were shot in the way. They lost all the connection with their homeland and came into existence with the new identity called 'refugee'.

The Bhadrakalok refugees who shifted during the first wave of migrants came up with the resources. After some time, the government also endorsed them, and they were settled in colonies located in Calcutta and near it. The settlement of the Dalit peasants who came with the second wave was miserable. They did not have many resources and whatever they had was looted in the train journeys. They were sent to the different refugee camps in the districts of Cooch Bihar, Nadia, 24- Paragans, Midnapur and Burdwan. The idea of caste is always a matter of great interest in India. It played an important role in the allocation of the camps to the refugees. Peasants were asked about their caste. The government did not show any proper concern towards their educational qualification and occupation but generalized them all with as 'Namashudra Cultivators' and a permanent inscription was made in their registration cards. Refugees choose to move in the camps where they hoped to find their relatives or any other familiar face. They created the communities in the camps. They had to face many problems for survival. They were staying there like a herd of animals with no privacy and sleeping together in large spaces. Reports note that in the Cooper's camp seventy thousand refugees were sharing just eighty toilets and due to bad hygiene, many were suffering from ill-health. In the camps, refugees provided with some cash aid and weekly ration, but they were never allowed to move out of their camps, interact with others and seek for jobs for the betterment of their future. Peasants spent their time in complete idleness. They were getting frustrated in the camps and were craving to move out to the world. Caste always showed its face and makes the lower caste people as victims. Dalits were living like the animals in the camps, on the other hand, the upper caste Hindus were able to get allocation of separate rooms in the camps.

The refugees wanted to settle down in the environment of West Bengal as they want to maintain ties with the language and custom. The partition stripped off them from their belongings but still, they were trying to search for roots in West Bengal. There was no vacant land for the rehabilitation of these peasants in West Bengal, so, the government

decided to settle them down in Orissa, Bihar, Assam and Andaman Island. In 1956, the Dandakaranya Rehabilitation Scheme was announced, which holds the idea of settling the refugees on the 78,000 square miles of uninhabitable, uncultivated land in the tribal territories of Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. They were forced to leave their camps and shift to the newly deserted land. From early 1950, the Namshudra peasants were clandestinely sent to the Island. In 1953, the new policy came into existence according to which only Namashudras were shifted to the Andaman Island. Refugees protested the forced transfer. The forcible migration resulted in many problematic situations for the peasants. They were feeling completely isolated from the outside world. Many of them returned back to West Bengal after finding the situation intolerable. Report indicate that after returning they were denied all sort of home aid provided by the government. In early 1958, Jogendra Nath Mandal, the leader of All Bengal Refugee Association called for mobilization of all the refugees, to act against the Dandakarnaya Settlement Scheme. He bought the true face of the Leftist leaders of United Central Refugee Council (UCRC) in the light by saying that they are all looking for self-interest, they are giving false hopes to refugees and filling their own pockets. He highlighted the idea of caste in the context of the rehabilitation of refugees in West Bengal. The report notes:

Shri Jogen Mandal has been spreading class and caste ... [hatred] openly in camps. In Bolpur and Uttartilpara camp meetings on 23rd and 24th February [1958], he openly accused caste Hindu employees and caste Hindu people for sending refugee families to Madhya Pradesh outside West Bengal. He accused Govt. to make West Bengal a caste Hindu state (Bandopadhyay and Chaudhury 10).

The Left dominant group demanded from the government to settle the refugees in West Bengal only. The areas of Sundarbans were found out to be the vacant land. Fifteen thousand refugees left the Dandakarnaya to settle themselves in West Bengal. Many were arrested by police officials and returned to the resettlement camps and the remaining of them reached to the Marichjhapi island to resettle themselves. They made the island the well-settled colony in which they opened the school, fishing industry and health center. Later, the state government declared the settlement as illegal. They came up with the argument that the land is the part of forest reservation and by settling there the forest acts have been violating. After the failure of the government in persuading the people to

abandon the place, it took the strict steps. On 26th January 1979, it ordered for the economic blockade on the Marichjhapi island and send thirty police boats. Police destroyed the huts, tube-wells and fisheries to make the people leave the land.

Media started covering the activities that were happening on the island. The records show the use of teargas by the police. They blocked the whole of the island and started arresting the people who were going to the mainland to earn their livelihood. Reports note that almost one thousand people died of starvation during blockade. The government declared section 144 on the island, according to which the gathering of more than four people is legally prohibited. The Communist Party Marxist (CPM) defied the court's order and continued the blockade as it had police under its control. Many people started dying of starvation, but they did not come up in agreement with the authority. In the final third step, the government allegedly hired the Muslim gangs from Bangladesh to assist the police, as it was considered that they were least sympathetic, and they started the forced execution. It created havoc. Women were raped. Police started arresting the men and they were sent into the jails. The murderous operation resulted in the death of many people and at last, their dead bodies were dumped into the river. One of the victims reported that around ten thousand refugees out of fourteen thousand who went to West Bengal to settle themselves, returned to their previous place and the remaining were dead. Although the opposition came up with the protest march, no official investigation was done, and no criminal charges were laid on those who were involved in the massacre. The Scheduled caste and Tribe Commission of India did not take any step on the issue, it cleans its hands by saying that no atrocious behavior happened with the Dalits in 1979. It also denied accepting any fault even though its reports contained the excerpts of the brutalities happened with the untouchable on the Island.

### **Manoranjan Byapari as Bengali Dalit Writer**

Manoranjan Bayapari has the revolutionary works like *Interrogating my Chandal Life: An Autobiography of a Dalit* (2017) and *There's Gunpowder in the Air* (2018) to his credit. He has also written an essay "Is there Dalit life in Bengal?" He writes originally in the Bengali language and later his works have been translated into English. In his autobiographical work, *Interrogating My Chandal Life: An Auto biography of a Dalit*, By a paridocuments the troubles faced by the Namashudras who migrated from East Pakistan.

He writes about the brutality of human beings which comes up in the form of riots. It brings out the animalistic features of human beings and makes him raise weapons against the same person with whom he was staying for many decades.

Byapari provides a new frame of caste to the whole politics of riots. He says that there was a time when there were only a few Muslims in the Bengal. But later, the census recorded a greater number of Muslims than Hindus in Bengal and those were not of Iran or Iraq or Arabian descent but were the Hindus who have been dismissed from their religion by the intolerant society. The higher caste Hindus showed the contemptuous behaviour towards the lower caste people and the people of other religious identities which brought the bitterness among the people and the partition was just an event when the seed of bitterness started to bear the fruit. The writer says that the lower caste people did not show the irritation but Muslims were all ready for revenge and they took arms. The fear of the inhumanity of Muslims was making the Hindu minority irrespective of their caste to migrate in the newly drawn boundaries of India.

Manoranjan Byapari shares his experience when his family left their home from East Pakistan and tried to settle down in West Bengal. On arriving in West Bengal, they spent the initial days on the platform of Sealdah station. They were taken into the Shiromanipur refugee camps in Bankura. They stayed there for six years. The camp was divided into two parts i.e. Eastern area as *Aam Bagan* and Western as *Sal Bagan* according to their richness in mango trees and Sal trees respectively. He presents the first-hand experience of camps in which the five to seven member families were stuffed in the camps of six by eight feet. He explains the situation inside the camps by saying that there were only two tube-wells for the whole of the population living there, people had to stand in the long queues for a long time to arrange water to fulfill their whole day necessities. They were also provided with lentils and rice to cook and some cash according to the number of family members. Sometimes the quality of food was so bad so that it used to produce the stinky smell while cooking. There was no facility of laboratory and poor sanitary conditions. The new atmosphere was also creating problems for the people and many of them fell sick. Many people died in the camps. The government did not provide any proper medical facility to the refugees, in all the diseases including headache, fever, cold to dysentery, typhoid, jaundice and cholera, the same medicine for thrice was prescribed. The writer himself suffered the epidemic

situation.

Education gives them new insight to the world and to face it in a brighter light. In the previous centuries, it was limited to the people from the upper castes to maintain their status. Byapari's father had the hope that he can send his son in the government school which was there in the camp as he didn't want his son to remain blind like him. But as the day of his going to the school came near, the school was terminated. The condition of refugees was very miserable as the government has started taking its step back in providing the refugees with their necessities. The food and clothes received by the refugees suddenly stopped. There the refugees were just surviving as for them the light of the day is no less than the darkness of the night. The government stopped showing any responsibility towards refugees by saying that the newly built country is already in financial trouble and it cannot feed the unproductive people all the time. The novel shows the helpless situation of the refugees who had no land to stay, no resource to earn their livelihood and they were completely dependent on the government for their survival. But in the whole frame, the government was busy maintaining its power dynamics. In the newly drawn cartographic boundaries, no one was ready to take the blame of these new citizens as they had nothing to contribute in the country.

Before their arrival in Shiromanipur camp, the central government decided to send the refugees to Andaman Island, but the refugees rejected the whole scheme. On September 15, 1958, the government forcefully implemented the Dandakarnaya project and the refugees were forced to shift to the undeveloped areas of the neighbouring states. Byapari writes that the authority was trying to achieve two objectives through the scheme. They would get the final solution of the refugee settlement problem. Moreover, they expected some production from the long unproductive area. They kept on shifting from one camp to the other. The writer notes that there was one group of people who belonged to upper caste and they were educated and had resources, they laid claim over the expensive shelter in the state's heart and there was another group of people who were pushed to the remote island in the forest of Sundarbans, Marichjhapi and there they were brutally massacred.

Byapari recounts his miserable childhood in the novel. At the age of playing games and getting education, he was shifting from one camp to the other in search of better living conditions. He was never given the colourful toys and kites to play with. On the time of festivals when the other children were roaming around in the new dresses, he used to look at them from some dark corner of the camp. Unlike the other children, his

dreams were filled with darkness and scary voices of pain and suffering. He further says that his mother had the only torn saree in which she hides her body. The young Byapari took to the work at the early age of ten to fulfill his hunger for a better life. He laboured in many tea stalls. He was brutally beaten for the small mistakes and sometimes the owners used to cut some amount from his salary. His mind was filled with the bitterness and rage toward police and zamindars. He considers them together with the upper caste people as the enemies of poor downtrodden people. The young child even changed his surname to conceal his identity as a Namashudra because that was becoming the biggest obstacle in his way of getting a job. In his whole life, he kept on shifting from one thing to another which shows his helplessness towards settling down.

Byapari ran away from home when he was young. He looked-for better opportunities in life where he could find sufficient food and good night's sleep. The writer takes the character of Jeevan and narrates his experiences through the character. Hewrites: "I needed to see if the crop of the world had indeed been devoured or whether any remained for me and my tribe" (Byapari 41). He came in connection with the people from different caste and religion and recorded their attitude toward the lower caste people. He travelled to the Eastern and Northern part of India. In his lone travels, he was sexually harassed by the policemen. He got accompanied by the boy named Rajawho was keeping the same dreams as Jeevan. Manoranjan Byapari chooses the ironic names for his characters, the life of Jeevan was equivalent to death and Raja was almost the beggar.

Before reaching Assam, he worked in a tea shop for a few months but there he was never paid the salary. Byapari says that the world is not willing to give them anything. The world around not even give any value to their labour but searches for the ways to deceive them. He wanted to provide a better life and secure home to his family but for that, he had to struggle from one job to another.

*Interrogating My Chandal Life* highlights the fact that though the country is on the path of fast development, the stigma of caste never leaves the frame. In the novel, Byapari refers to the post-Partition Indian society and shows that even after Independence from the colonial rule, people are still suppressed. The present Dalit text is an attempt by the writer to record all the discriminations against the Namashudras in West Bengal and its neighbouring regions. The novel can be read as a review of government policies towards lower caste people which are made but the benefit never reaches to them. The writer not



only depicts his life journey but all lower caste people in Bengal also become a participant in it a sthein justice faced by all of the misquite similar.

The novel demonstrates not only the struggle of lower caste, but also that of the refugees who have crossed the border after Partition. They left their homeland and migrated to the places for the safety and betterment. The book is no doubt a powerful commentary over the failure of the governments who have settled the migrants physically but proved unsuccessful in their mental rehabilitation. The mental trauma was much more than the physical violence which people suffered. The leaders are busy in making strategies and extracting benefit for themselves rather than doing their jobs honestly. Byapari highlights the critical condition of the poor migrants belonging to lower caste. The book remains successful in projecting the combined effect of caste, class, and religious minority status in the life of a migrant worker.

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## **“The Dynamics of Survival and Acculturation in Thane Rosenbaum’s *Elijah Visible*”**

-Madhura A.S.

### ***Abstract:***

The twentieth century witnessed the radical changes in the world; social, cultural, political, and technical; the horrid experiences of the two world wars and its consequences. The Holocaust refers to the massive annihilation of European Jewry during World War II, when millions were systematically persecuted and exterminated solely because of their social, cultural, ethnic, or religious characteristics. The atrocities of the Nazis against Jews and other minority populations during the war were horrendous. Victims were captivated and transported like animals to concentration camps, where they endured continuous threats to life, depersonalization, and loss of significant others. They suffered from dreadful living, diseases, starvation and working conditions. And those who survived were subjected to terrible experiences (Eitinger & Major, 1993; Mazor, Gampel, Enright, & Orenstein, 1990). These kind of traumatic experiences of Holocaust survivors were well narrated in the works of Thane Rosenbaum. Being a son of the holocaust survivors, Rosenbaum himself has noticed the post-traumatic and immigrant experiences of his parents in an alien land. Thus the present paper examines the problems of the survival faced by the survivors in multi-cultural / ethnic regions of the post-*Shoah* period in the dislocated and fragmented world that has emerged as a challenge to the nineteenth and twentieth century “Modern Jewish Families”.

**Key Words: holocaust, jewry, survivors, Nazis, victims, and concentration camps**

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“The Holocaust” means the mass murder of Jews under the German Nazi Regime during the period 1941-45. More than six million European Jews were murdered at concentration camps such as Auschwitz and Birkenau. Ironically, history reveals the etymology of the term, which stands for a Jewish sacrificial offering which was burnt completely on an altar (Holos-whole, Kaustos-burnt). This was triggered by allegiance to Hitler’s racist doctrine viewed that the inferior Jews were aliens and a potential threat to the purity of the German race. In the early years of the Nazi rule in Germany Jews were ruthlessly persecuted. Hitler’s “Final Solution” arrived in the shadow of the World War II now famous as the Holocaust with large scale killing centres established in the concentration

camps that dotted different locations in Poland during the latter part of the Second World War.

During the Holocaust period, the persecuted Jews were living in hiding under false identities in constant stress of discovery; some often spent months in primitive and inhuman conditions or fighting alongside the partisans (Ben-Zur & Zimmerman, 2005; Yehuda, Schmeidler, Siever, Binder-Brynes, & Elkin, 1997). The traumatic experiences of Holocaust survivors provide the ground for in-depth studies of the long-term consequences of trauma on their survival and acculturation in the fragmented world. The importance of studying the long-term effects of the Holocaust on survivors produced an extended body of literature (e.g., Krell & Sherman, 1997). But even after six decades of the end of World War II the survivors are still divided about such effects of the Holocaust. Do most survivors continue to suffer from psychopathological disorders, such as chronic anxiety or depression (Niederland, 1968) and personality disorder? Or is this continuing psychological impairment restricted to a minor and non-representative portion of survivors, and do most of them have productive and successful lives despite the atrocities they endured? (Leon, Butcher, Kleinman, Goldberg, & Almagor, 1981)

Irving Howe highly influences the contemporary Jewish American fiction studies through his ideology of "what he saw as the waning influence of this literature". "The Howe Doctrine" helps to encapsulate the views of a American Jewish writer in the literary works. In the introduction to his 1977 collection of Jewish American stories, Howe broods over his belief that "American Jewish fiction has probably moved past its high point. In so far as this body of writing draws heavily from the immigrant experience, it must suffer a depletion of resources, a thinning-out of materials and memories. Other than in books and sentiment, there just isn't enough left of that experience." (Irving Howe: 1977)

Thane Rosenbaum's *Elijah Visible* is perhaps the best book written by a second generation holocaust writer. Rosenbaum in his literary works analyse the legacies of the children of the holocaust survivors. This book is written in a form of collection of stories of the traumatic experiences of holocaust survivors and their children. McGlothlin uses these painful stigmata as metaphors for the profundity of the "mark" left by the Holocaust on subsequent generations. "Second-generation texts, whether written from the perspective of the legacy of perpetration or that of survival, access badges, stigmata, and brands that signify Holocaust memory in an attempt to find a language to express the writers' sense of rupture, as

well as to build a bridge over the division between the parents' experience of trauma and violation and its effect on the children" (30). These scars reverberate throughout his book and are found among a variety of literary characters and are also written across the landscape of Holocaust memory as well.

Each story of *Elijah Visible* is structured around uncovering the generational tensions that forms the central theme of the book. This literary work, unravels the problems of alienation, identity and ethnicity in a graceful manner with well-knit plots, styles, and tones of the texts. Rosenbaum carefully situates his writing within general theoretical questions of survival, trauma and the perseverance of the past in the modern world. All stories of *Elijah Visible* focus on the holocaust experiences of holocaust survivors in general and its protagonists in particular. Adam Posner, the common protagonist of this book profoundly affected by the horrific past of their parents and struggles a lot to find a space within their traumatic legacy and in a post-Shoah period in America in which he has little awareness of his Jewish tradition. However, all the stories have a similarity with their protagonist, i.e. Adam and his second generation identity and in each story he is presented with different identity, with different age, with different profession and even has different parents. The present article focuses mainly on the themes of quest for identity, the dynamics of survival and finally the nature of adjustment in a multi-cultural space. The common identity of the protagonist in each story narrates the inherited problems of the survivors'; alienation, diversion, ethnicity due to the Holocaust legacy. These traumatic symptoms are deeply rooted in every holocaust survivors, which is incorrigible and inevitable.

Thane Rosenbaum's *Elijah Visible*, discusses the mechanisms of trauma that will reverberate throughout the lives of the holocaust survivors as the im/migrants. Rosenbaum himself articulates artfully how the legacy of survival and its traumatic after-effects resonate with his multiple character, Adam: "Some family histories are forever silent, transmitting no echoes of discord into the future. Others are like seashells, those curved volutes of the mind—the steady drone of memory always present. All one needs to do is press an ear to the right place" (*Elijah Visible*). This statement traces the "double move of recording rupture and restoring continuity in second-generation Holocaust writing" (McGlothlin, 65) through Rosenbaum's work. This kind of thematization of what the writers are doing offers clear-headed explications moves slightly outside the text to investigate what they perform. But sometimes the writers move slightly further outside the text. There are some instances in this

book where Rosenbaum tries to speak about the Jewish history and the establishment of the new state Israel attempts to give shelter to many dislocated Jews.

In the first story of *Elijah Visible* is entitled, “Cattle Car Complex” Adam is portrayed as a lawyer who works in Manhattan. With a busy schedule he was not happy with his own profession. He works very reluctantly as he is fully aware of his own legacy and “its contribution to the choices he was destined to make.” (Pg.4: *Elijah Visible*) Adam didn’t want to be alone in dark places. He didn’t want to use the elevators when he was alone. This shows how the holocaust survivors reared their kids. This was inherited by his parents as they were holed up in dark places for some time. This shows how they feel insecure always in unfamiliar places. They neither wished to go away from the society nor wished to mingle with the people. Even Adam also lived alone in a “Voiceless, sensitized shrine.” (Pg.4: *Elijah Visible*)

Why Adam is like this? What had made him to live all, all alone? The answer is clear. His parents were been taken to the camps by cattle cars and trains. This had made them afraid of travelling alone in the escalators and trains. Thane Rosenbaum is a sensitive writer who portrayed these characters with great subtlety in his stories:

“The Holocaust fades like a painting exposed to too much sun.

A gradual diminishing of interest once the rallying cry of the modern Diaspora; now like a freak accident of history, locked away in the attic, a hideous Anne Frank, trotted out only occasionally, as metaphorical mirror, reminding those of what once was done under the black eye of indifference.” (Pg.5: *Elijah Visible*)

Thane Rosenbaum tries to speak about the inherited legacy of the Holocaust children through the common character, Adam Posner. Here Adam is a mouthpiece of the writer himself. He seems to be an autobiographical character of the writer himself. *Shoah* was an inevitable thing which had become the inherited substance that was passed on by survivors to their children.

Adam had often heard the screams of his parents during nights. He had never learnt how to survive in an unknown place and how to breathe even in suffocating places. He is the living proof of his parents’ sufferings as he is “the umbilical connection between the unmurdered and the long buried.” (Pg.6 : *Elijah Visible*) Adam suffers from Claustrophobia and also of a profound fear of the dark. He doesn’t want to enter into theatre in the dark and

not to be among the crowd; instead he always preferred to be the cornered one in the functions. These incidents show how the survivors made their children marginalize themselves from the society. They preferred to be alone.

Jews considered Germans as brutal people and merciless killers. Once Adam was locked inside an elevator. Unfortunately he was stuck up inside the elevator due to some technical problems. As he was scared of the darkness he started screaming for someone's help over the phone. When a security guard, who was a German wanted to help him, Adam was not in a state to trust that man. This shows that even the children of the survivors are not able to come out of the hangover of the Holocaust. They still believe in their parents' words; not to trust Germans. Though the same German helped him to come out of the elevator and wanted Adam to visit to his place, Adam says: "Why should we resettled in Poland?... I don't believe they are work camps! We won't be happy. We will die there! I am feel it!" (Pg.9: *Elijah Visible*)

The above statement shows that the survivors' children no longer trust anyone though they are genuine persons. They suspect everyone. This is the lesson they were taught by their parents. They think all Germans are barbarians and Russians are their saviours. This also happened in the case of Adam when a Russian cab driver came to help him. Adam tells him: "Liberate us! We are starving! We are skeletons walking bones, ghosts! Get us out of this hell!" (Pg.10: *Elijah Visible*)

The Russian driver wanted to tell him that he was neither in the camps nor in the cattle car and had just he came out of the elevator. But Adam continued poring his anxiety saying that the Jews were selected for extermination and they cannot survive. Who would believe what had happened to them, how much they had suffered and who would say 'kaddish' to them. This shows that Adam is a universal child of the survivors. He speaks on behalf of his race. The children of the survivors are very sensitive, frightened and insecure people. This is how they were raised by their parents. Being the son of the holocaust survivor his suspiciousness about the people who saved him drags our attention when he says "Were they liberators or tormentors?"

"Romancing the Yozrheit Light" is another story in an anthology of short stories, *Elijah Visible*. It portrays the strong bondage between a mother and a son. The narrator of this story is again Adam Posner. This story reveals the importance of the Yohrzeit light in the Jewish family. The story begins with Adam's lament over the death of his mother who was a holocaust survivor. According to Jewish culture, one has to light Yozrheit light every year on the same day of one's death in order to commemorate the dead persons. Here we have a

central character who is least bothered about rituals and religion. He doesn't know the day on which he has to light Yozrheit lamp for his mother, Esther's death anniversary. He is in confusion as he lives in America and he follows Christian calendar. But there is a lot of difference between Hebrew calendar and Christian calendar. Performing Jewish rituals in a multicultural society speaks about the plight of the Jews in the modern world where they are listless and rootless.

Esther had raised Adam in the cosmopolitan society amidst multicultural people. Adam has adopted more of American lifestyle than of Jewish life. He also had many girl friends. But Esther had expected him to marry a cute Jewish girl. Like existential heroes even Adam used to find solace in the company of ladies. He kept on changing woman after woman and was not attached to anyone. This also shows the fickle mindedness of the children of the survivors and also reveals their unstable mind. Whenever Esther asked him to get married his reply was "I'm not even sure who I am or where I came from." This speaks volumes about the identity crisis of the second generation people. Adam's mother wanted to him to be a complete Jewish man whereas he was not at all interested in such a thing.

Only after the death of his mother, Adam realised the values of Jewish life and rituals. He tried to follow as much as he could. This shows that when they lost their parents the children of the survivors wanted to get back to their native culture. When he went to buy a Yozrheit lamp he came to know that many Jews live around there and they also perform this rite. This shows that many of the Jews were emigrated to America. After the death of Esther, Adam had to suffer from severe depression. As he was the only son of his parents he was deeply attached to his mother. He started feeling that he is in a dark world and everything seemed to be lifeless. This state of his mind started affecting his paintings. His paintings started reflecting these feelings, becoming even more "Spasmodic" and even portrayed the heated expressionistic images like: "Burnings, famines, sickness, nightmares-devastations of one sort or another." (Pg. 23 *Elijah Visible*)

As his life was dark, Adam wanted to delineate the dark side of New York in his paintings. These pictures not only reflected the madness of New York but also Adam's pessimistic vision. Being a cultured mother, many times Esther had asked him to paint something Jewish. But he was not at all interested in spiritual or cultural elements.

"Lost in a Sense" is a memorable story in *Elijah Visible*. Adam's parents are the holocaust survivors and he is very much upset that his parents have hidden so much from him. He talks about how the holocaust made his parents sceptical about everything. They

became over sensitive and cautious in every move of life. That is why they brought up their son, Adam with fastidious care and concern against all uncertainties. Adam begins this story by introducing his parents who had different experiences from those of Americans. None of the Holocaust survivors revealed their deepest secrets to their children. Instead they expected their children to face the problems on their own with fortitude. Miami is a place in America that is much associated with Jewish survivors. It has a people from Brooklyn, Florida, Manhattan and Long Island. Miami is the centre of attraction for survivors, retirees, refugees, Cubans and deep sea southerners. How Israel is for the Jews, Miami in USA is also very important settlement for them. Adam also talks about the Diaspora in this story:

Wandering Jews, still wandering, never knowing when  
or where to stop. The Diaspora exists even on the  
soil of biblical beginnings. (*Elijah Visible: P. 164*)

Suddenly the story moves on to the Adam's adulthood. He became a professor of Law. When he got a call from Brad, his childhood friend, he started recalling his past. His parents are already dead and he had buried them in Florida Cemetery. He was not able to enjoy his married life and got a divorce from his wife. His colleagues at the college used to tease the children of the survivors as: "the creatures of the spineless generation" (*Elijah Visible: P.167*) as the children of the survivors seemed fragile and delicate they considered them as cowards. They also used to criticize their family and their past thus:"...Linked by a lifeless umbilical cord that connected them in one bold consumer hook up to Wale Street, and then to those soulless suburban shopping malls..." (*Elijah Visible: 168*)

Adam's friends also looked at him with mistrust and suspicion. Adam was very cold towards every issue of life and neither bothered nor interested in anything. Adam recalls his childhood days quite often. He recalls how his parents were neither interested in playing with him nor interested in taking him out. Brad's father Mr. Isaacson was a hero for all the kids. He lived in Adam's apartment. He was the only man who is young, energetic and full of enthusiasm. Mr. Isaacson was very handsome and had a sense of humour which attracted most of the people in the apartment. But for Adam's parents nothing was important in their life. There was nothing noble, beautiful or sublime for them. Adam many times cursed himself for being the son of tormented souls. He sometimes felt sorry for his old father as he had suffered a lot in his life. He also felt pity for the Holocaust survivors. He says:



They were creatures of the night, of darkness of another world.  
 The Holocaust had distorted their vision, reprogrammed their faith,  
 purged them patience, created altogether new perspectives for  
 ordinary survival. (*Elijah Visible*: P. 170)

This is how the Holocaust had left its deep scars on its survivors. Even the children of the survivors also had to suffer. Adam's worry was about why his parents always wanted to be within four walls. Though Mr. Isaacson was also a survivor he was not like his parents. Instead he was very bold and strong to face the problems in his life in an unknown land. Adam questions his parents for having a child without knowing how to rear a child. He also had a complaint, why all these survivors wanted to have children if they didn't want to give their best to their children? Instead they were passing on "unwanted legacy" to their next generation. Fortunately, the Holocaust survivors demonstrate remarkable resilience in their personal, social, and communal life. This quality of astonishing resilience of the Holocaust survivors in various domains no doubt masks their vulnerabilities and difficulties. Yet it remains one of the important dynamics of survival and getting acculturated into a new geographical space and chiselling a psychological space of their own to have a vibrant sense of being which is the very business of living in this fast changing world of flux.

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## **ANALYZING AND REVISITING the FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE through A MALE LENS vis-à-vis SCARLET and ELIZA**

-Runoo Ravi

Noted Writer and critic Sudheesh Pachauri posits that feminist text can be read as feminine text only when we establish that it is not actually free from its “inter-text”, offering a greater scope. Since this scope has already been exploited by female readers of male texts, it is time men did the same vis-à-vis the female texts: more so because women have been situated as ‘outsiders’ since time immemorial and need to be included in the existing circle. (Satchidanandan 245)

At the same time, sociologist M.D. Jenson says that “[S]ocial change may be defined as modification in ways of doing and thinking of people. (Bhushan & Sachdeva 429) This modification or this change may not have occurred in totality with reference to the female, in particular. Interestingly, it has been few males who have created some of the strongest females in literature. So, it might be too simplistic to say that woman’s chief enemy is man. Imaginative flights might have been easier than actual implementation, but literature at least benefitted from the documentation of such liberating thoughts, even if only on paper. The females in those works exhibit the kind of strength and courage that continues to be highly inspirational. And, when we go through the works of Hawthorne and Shaw and look at the process through which they have moulded Scarlet and Eliza, in *The Scarlet Letter* and *Pygmalion* respectively, we find that the modifications were already present: though there was a difference of decades between Shaw and Hawthorne. In such a case would it be too preposterous to say that there were men, perhaps, who understood women better than the women themselves and were thus able to carve out iconic female characters, even at the cost of marginalising the male: the crux being that such males in the literary circuit were rare and very sparse in number.

George Bernard Shaw uses Prof. Higgins very effectively to bring out the strong, unseen side of the rough flower-girl, while the weak-kneed Freddy is used as the instrument for revenge by Eliza. And much as Chillingworth demonstrates the cruelty of patriarchy in his behaviour with his adulterous wife, Dimmesdale’s cowardice illuminates the dignity of Hester: both male characters are used by Hawthorne to exemplify the nobility of Hester.

Jasbir Jain writes that females, in literature are generally portrayed in two distinctly opposite roles, both stereotyped instead of realistic, either as subservient nurturers, helping and serving the family but never individuals in their own right: “(Jain 429) But both Scarlet and Eliza prove this wrong. Published in 1850, *The Scarlet Letter*, a work of historical fiction remains one of the most popular, classic novels by American author, Nathaniel Hawthorne. The novel is set in Puritan era (1642-1649) in the Massachusetts Bay Colony and tells the story of a young woman, Hester Prynne who struggles to create a life of dignity with her daughter after being publicly ostracized and punished for being an adulteress. Hester is ready to bear the sign “A”, upon herself, accepting the label thrust upon her but does not divulge the name of her lover; the man equally responsible for the predicament she faces all alone.

“...So powerful was the minister’s appeal, that the people could not believe but that Hester Prynne would speak out the guilty name; or else that the guilty one himself, in whatever high or lowly place he stood, would be drawn forth by an inward and inevitable necessity, and compelled to ascent the scaffold.

Hester shook her head.

“Woman, transgress not beyond the limits of Heaven’s mercy!” cried the Reverend Mr. Wilson, more harshly than before... “Speak out the name! That, and thy repentance, may avail to take the scarlet letter off thy breast.”

“Never!” replied Hester Prynne, looking not at Mr. Wilson, but into the deep and troubled eyes of the younger clergyman. “It is too deeply branded. Ye cannot take it off. And would that I might endure his agony, as well as mine.

“Speak, woman!” said another voice coldly and sternly, proceeding from the crowd about the scaffold. “Speak; and give your child a father!”

“I will not speak!” answered Hester, turning pale as death, but responding to this voice, which she too surely recognized. “And my child must seek a heavenly Father; she shall never know an earthly one!”

“She will not speak!” murmured Mr. Dimmesdale, who, leaning over the balcony, with his hand upon his heart, had awaited the result of his appeal. He now drew back, with a long respiration. “Wondrous strength and generosity of a woman’s heart! She will not speak!”

(*The Scarlet Letter*, pg. 92-93, emphasis added)

The lavish praise bestowed by Mr. Dimmesdale is a deliberate construct by the novelist. With the sense of relief expressed by the ‘partner in crime’, Hawthorne not only establishes the stoic dignity of Hester and her deep intrinsic belief in the Almighty, making her repentance thereby highly religious in nature, but also exposes the cowardice of the ‘real’ father whose sense of relief surmounts his participation the sense of shame that Hester was ready to bear all alone, completely absolving him of his guilt. Hester’s long-lost husband, provoking her to speak out the name of the child’s father is a weak character, as well. Hawthorne creates this villain to elevate the goodness of Hester at an even higher level and also to show the anomaly of the dominant patriarchal structure. This husband recognizes her at the scaffold, and knowing about her ‘misdeeds’, vows to find the absent lover, assuming a new persona, that of Roger Chillingworth, a physician, in that process but never bothering to take responsibility of his wife or to enquire how she managed in his absence and that what could have been the circumstances which led her to this vulnerable condition. Later, he not only meets Hester in the prison but also threatens her not to reveal his identity to the general public else he would harm the real father.

Hester settles at the outskirts and is soon hailed as a fine seamstress, much in demand. She brings up her daughter Pearl with great care, hoping that her misfortune does not befall her daughter: Hester’s sense of shame and guilt make her repent and be cautious all the time. She encounters temptations but is cautious and careful. Already impressed by her quite dignity and demeanor at the scaffold, her attempts to earn her livelihood, and moved by the acts of charity done for the poor, the residents, especially ladies, soon undergo intense transformations with regard to Hester’s character and the punishment inflicted upon her. These women had mutilated her character before the hearing, ready to punish her severely, and were cruel enough to commented that “...[A]t the very least, they should have put the brand of a hot iron on Hester Prynne’s forehead. Madam Hester would have winced at that, I warrant me. But she, ----the naughty baggage----little will she care what they put upon the bodice of her gown! Why, look you, she may cover it with a brooch, or such like heathenish adornment and so walk the streets as brave as ever!” (Hawthorne 71) And now, as the days passed and Hester’s true mettle as well as her devotion towards Pearl was observed and admired, the very same females recalled Hester’s entry at the scaffold on the day of the hearing. “...he [the staff] laid his right hand upon the shoulder of a young woman, whom he thus drew forward; until, on the threshold of the prison-door, she repelled him, by an action marked with natural dignity and force of character, and stepped into the open air, as if by her

own free will.”(72 emphasis added ) Hester’s natural beauty, dignity, and grace, belying her sin did not go un-noticed , either by the women or by the menfolk.

“She was lady-like, too, after the manner of the feminine gentility of those days; characterized by a certain state and dignity, rather than by the delicate, evanescent, and indescribable grace, which is now described as its indication. And never had Hester Prynne appeared more lady-like in the antique interpretation of the term, than as she issued from the prison. Those who had before known her, and had expected to behold her dimmed and obscured by a disastrous cloud, were astonished, and even startled, to perceive how her beauty shone out, and made a halo of the misfortune and ignominy in which she was enveloped.” (73-74 emphasis added)

Hester begins to gain back her respectability by her studied silence. C.S. Lakshmi writes that “...one comes to understand the quality of silence. By silence I don’t mean the absence of sound. I mean the silence that results from abstaining to put into language events, experiences, opinions, ideas, and thoughts. It is silence that is the result of non-mention...a lot of unsaid things”. (Maithreyi and Deshmukh 53, emphasis mine) Perhaps, this is the ‘Silence’ that spoke louder than the voice. It was this silence that made Chillingworth break into a frenzy, so much so to separate Pearl from her mother. It was then that the silence of the real father, the absentee lover, Dimmesdale, whose identity Hester had shielded for so long, even at the cost of her own character assassination and could now lead to a separation; infuriates and breaks the brave lady. Hester and Dimmesdale hold a clandestine meeting where Dimmesdale is apprised of Chillingworth, his physician who is also Hester’s husband, and the cruel plans. They decide to leave for Europe to start a new life. However, on Election Day, Dimmesdale gives a most inspiring religious sermon and then proceeds to climb up the scaffold. Unable to endure a life of weakness and gloom notwithstanding the religious responsibility he holds, he confesses his sin publicly, something he had rehearsed privately, a few days back. He dies in Hester’s arms, restoring her character and dignity and manages to retain his own dignity as well, through his act of supreme courage and consequent death. The twist of fate impacts Chillingworth as well, who exits the land incognito, leaving behind a considerable inheritance for Pearl. Years later, Hester is buried beside the grave of Dimmesdale.

In September 1959, eminent literary critic David Daiches had stressed on the three major factors that have influenced and, in a sense, produced the modern novel. He writes

(about): "...the breakdown of public agreement about what is significant in experience and therefore about what the novelist ought to select, the new view of time and the new view of the nature of consciousness---- (These three) co-operate to encourage the novelist to concentrate on aspects of the human situation which were not the major concerns of the earlier novelists, and to discover new techniques for achieving their new aims." (11) Hawthorne does just that. He selected a protagonist, a female, whose chastity was questionable. He managed to change the perception and prejudice of the general public towards the ostracized female not through any act of heroism but through their own observation. And most importantly, he made the two male protagonists, Dimmesdale, and Chillingworth, representing religion and medicine respectively, pale in comparison to the character of Hester, who was, in the social realm, a nobody: not an authority on any important aspect/feature of life. Hester's behaviour during her trial at the scaffold is both individualistic and non-conformist. She sticks to what she feels is right and this wins her immense empathy from the folks, especially the women folk. The emotional richness of Hester's character stems also from Hawthorne's treatment of Hester; the portrayal is sympathetic, not satirical. She had been estranged from the normal existence of women. Some attribute had been departed from her, the permanence of which had been essential to keep her a woman. And as a result of this 'departure', she assumed a 'freedom of speculation', speculating about the worthiness of the acceptance of such 'existence'. Hester represents strong feminist thought in Hawthorne's own time. Austin Warren has called her "a feminist in advance of the season" but it is Hawthorne who understands the enormity of Hester's feminist predicament. He proceeds to outline the task of the feminist as he sees it: "...it may be, such a hopeless task before her. As a first step, the whole system of society is to be torn down, and built up anew. Then, the very nature of the opposite sex, or its long hereditary habit, which has become like nature, is to be essentially modified, before woman can be allowed to assume what seems a fair and suitable position." (URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/458457>. access 14.01.2022) But to attain this, he prudently advises further, to not just wait for these impossible changes but also for a much-needed change in the essential nature of a woman. And that there is no abstract solution for a problem so complicated by the nature of humanity itself.

"The traditional scheme, promoted and endorsed by most men, (emphasize that) the woman's role was to love, admire and serve her man. Her identity was a reflection of her husband's." (Schultz 165) But Bernard Shaw's highly popular play *Pygmalion* (1912) does

not present a female protagonist who is conducive to such an idea even in her highly marginalised state. Eliza's non-conformity is not a feminist take: fully aware of her socially and economically deficient state and totally unaware of her physical beauty, she is candid to admit "Whoo marry me?" (Shaw 28) It is her confidence and assertiveness that is remarkable. On being reprimanded for being rude to the 'gentleman', Eliza retorts back, "Well, why wont he speak sensible to me?" (24)

George Bernard Shaw's ideas and his visions were certainly far ahead of his times. He is an undeclared feminist who creates strong female protagonists, each with a mind of her own, ready to tackle and shake the patriarchal structure in her own particular manner. Eliza's argument with Prof. Higgins regarding her relationship with Freddy puts a very strong statement: "Perhaps I could make something out of him [Freddy]." (101) This confidence certainly usurps the existing binaries, the power equations. It is not always the male who needs to support the female, it can be the other way round too. Celebrated feminist writer and critic Simone de Beauvoir says, "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman." (Tidd 74) Beauvoir has always resented the alterity that brings inferiority to the female. This alterity breeds inequality which then leads to hostility where man and woman consider each other as opposites and finally the woman's role is conditioned entirely by the biological factor of sex which is both demeaning and limiting. Many women did believe themselves to be inferior to men. But this inferiority did not have a biological basis: this inferiority was a result of the societal base, not because they were born women. The woman is indeed made a 'woman', due to the way she is treated in the male –dominated society. After generations of social, economic, and cultural discrimination, it is understandable that many women see themselves in this light. But Eliza was not ready to be a part of this prevalent philosophy. She is going to carve an identity of her own. And it is thanks to Shaw's vision that the metamorphosis of the 'guttersnipe' into a 'duchess' is not as significant the compliment Higgins pays Eliza in the fifth act: "Five minutes ago you were like a millstone round my neck. Now you're a tower of strength: a consort battleship." (Shaw 104 emphasis added) Eliza remains one of the most fascinating characters; fighting for her dignity, her rights and her dreams, undaunted even by her most adverse circumstances and troubled by an uncertain future but still never ready to settle for marriage as a convenient option.

As the play *Pygmalion* begins, Eliza Doolittle is shown as a dirty, unkempt, poor, twenty-year-old girl who sells flowers on the pavement for a living. A chance encounter with Henry Higgins, a professor of phonetics, on a rainy night would have gone un-noticed had



she not heard Higgins placing a bet with Colonel Pickering that he can transform Eliza from an uneducated, uncouth “squashed cabbage leaf” into a duchess, fit to be taken to the ambassador’s garden party within a span of just six months. Eliza lands at Higgins’ house and is coached by Higgins into ‘improving her speech’, the expenses borne by the Colonel. “But the consequences of Eliza’s makeover had been overlooked. She is now a misfit; sandwiched in between. Too fancy now to fit into her old neighbourhood, but without the income to maintain a lifestyle correspondent with her new manners.” (URL:<https://georgetownvoice.com>. Unshelved: Is Eliza Doolittle A Feminist Role Model? access 15.01.2022) Eliza is not ready to settle for marriage as the way out of her predicament. She wanted her education for self-reliance; her dream was to work inside a flower-shop and lead a life of dignity. Higgins’ confirmed bachelorhood does not deter her from developing feelings towards him and she thwarts his suggestion of a probable marriage to Colonel Pickering, considering him a father figure who taught her how a lady is to be treated. Her choice for a life partner could be Freddy, whom she could support with her educational abilities, and not the other way round. The end of the play has been left ambiguous with Higgins scoffing at the idea of Eliza’s marriage to Freddy and continuing to give orders to Eliza as he had become accustomed to.

Pygmalion was also not allowed to completely retain its Shavian<sup>1</sup> ideology because the audience was more inclined towards to a ‘sweet’ ending: ‘sweet’ here naturally denoted ‘marriage’ as subsequent goal to settle cravings for independence expressed by the feisty Eliza. If the socially superior Higgins was not compatible as a spouse, Eliza had to settle with the intellectually inferior Freddy; the point being that she had to get married, to continue the patriarchal dominance and not to think of an independent, ‘alive’ existence. Shaw was, in fact forced to write an epilogue/a sequel describing the marriage of Eliza and Freddy as well as stressing upon the role of Higgins only as a guardian, and nothing else, thereby maintaining the social strictures. As he observed Higgins tossing down a bouquet to Eliza in the 100th performance of the play during 1914, Shaw became so furious that despite the rising popularity and commercial gains, as expected by this ‘distortion’, he lashed at the producer that the ending was damnable; and that he, the producer, ought to be shot. The printed edition, where the sequel showing Freddy and Eliza’s marriage is kept separate, has perhaps a deliberately ambiguous end where Higgins laughs jeeringly and says, “...Nonsense: she is going to marry Freddy. Ha ha! Freddy! Freddy!! Ha ha ha ha ha!!!! [He roars with laughter as the play ends.]”(Shaw 105)

Feminist philosopher Bartky contends that: ...women suffer from self-loathing, shame and guilt....encouraged to take up as little space as possible...the face of the ideally feminine woman must never display the marks of character, wisdom and experience that we so admire in men...every aspect of their appearance [has] to comply with a dominant patriarchal power structure...[what we observe] are not sexual differences, they are constructed...disciplinary project of femininity is a 'setup' ".(Roberts 20, emphasis mine) But Shaw has created Eliza of stern stuff. Eliza is not the ideal feminine woman. She refuses to comply with the dominant power structure. Marriage is least of her priorities; economic independence is the topmost. She is ready to argue, fight, debate, and at the same time be very cautious about her character and her dignity. Even in her downtrodden and most miserable state, Eliza speaks her mind:

“LIZA [whimpering] Nah-ow. You got no right to touch me...

LIZA [almost in tears] I didnt want no clothes. I wouldnt have taken them. [she throws away the handkerchief]. I can buy my own clothes.

HIGGINS [deftly retrieving the handkerchief and intercepting her on her reluctant way to the door] Youre an ungrateful wicked girl. This is my turn for offering you to take you out of the gutter and dress you beautifully and make a lady of you...

LIZA. I aint got no parents. They told me I was big enough to earn my living and turn me out.

MRS PEARCE. Wheres your mother?

LIZA. I aint got no mother. Her that turned me out was my sixth stepmother. But I done without them. And I am a good girl, I am...

HIGGINS. ...What on earth will she want with money? She'll have her food and her clothes. She'll only drink if you give her money.

LIZA [turning on him] Oh you are a brute. It's a lie: nobody ever saw the sign of liquor on me. [ To Pickering] Oh, sir, youre a gentleman: don't let him speak to me like that.

PICKERING [ in good humoured remonstrance] Does it occur to you, Higgins, that the girl has some feelings?

HIGGINS [looking critically at her] Oh no, I dont think so. Not any feelings that we need bother about. [cheerily] Have you, Eliza?

LIZA. I got my feelings same as anybody else.

HIGGINS [to Pickering, reflectively] You see the difficulty?...To get her to talk grammar...

LIZA. I dont want to talk grammar. I want to talk like a lady in a flower-shop...

HIGGINS. Well, when Ive done with her, we can throw her back into the gutter...

LIZA. Oh, youve no feeling heart in you: you dont care for nothing but yourself. [ She rises and takes the floor resolutely]. Here! Ive had enough of this. I'm going [making for the door]. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, you ought.

HIGGINS. ...Have some chocolates, Eliza.

LIZA [halting, tempted] How do I know what might be in them? Ive heard of girls being drugged by the likes of you....

HIGGINS. Listen, Eliza. I think you came in a taxi.

LIZA. Well, what if I did? Ive as good a right to take a taxi as anyone else....

LIZA. No: I dont want no gold and diamonds. I'm a good girl, I am....

MRS PEARCE [patiently]... Come with me, Eliza.

LIZA [rising reluctantly and suspiciously] Youre a great bully, you are. I wont stay here if I dont like. I wont let nobody wallop me. I never asked to go to Bucknam Palace, I didnt. I was never in trouble with the police, not me. I'm a good girl----

MRS PEARCE. Dont answer back, girl. You dont understand the gentleman. Come with me.

LIZA [ as she goes out] Well, what I say is right. I wont go near the King, not if I'm going to have my head cut off. If I'd known what I was letting myself in for, I wouldnt have come here. I always been a good girl; and I never offered to say a word to him; and I dont owe him nothing; and I dont care; and I wont be put upon; and I have my feelings the same as anyone else---."

(Pygmalion, Act- ii, pg. 28-30, emphasis added)

Eliza's speech and Hester's silence; both are emphatic declarations of a strong, individualistic personality which refuses to cow down under societal pressures and injustices. Eliza's spirit

is strengthened, not weakened, by the discriminations she has been facing since childhood itself. She has not had the pleasure of a happy home and a loving mother. She has learnt to defend herself and be on guard. She is concerned about her future but more conscious about her morals and character. The aggressiveness she exhibits is neither unjustified nor denoting an edgy temperament; an attribute generally bestowed upon the females when they begin to assert their rights. “Since the child cannot find the love and affection which he wants and so sorely needs, he spends his energy building defenses against his almost overpowering anxiety.” (Strange 70) Shaw takes pains to create a protagonist who is not compartmentalized into the generally acceptable social mold. In all societies, the female has always reeled under the masculine assault. The male has always considered the female as an available tool and has burdened her with the traditional norms and the mantle of idealism. Patriarchy has allowed the male to understand only the language of power; morals and ideals do not suit his lips. Unfortunately, all the power vests in him and with the misuse of this power he constructs an ‘ideal woman’ and turns her into his slave. But Eliza is not an ‘ideal woman’. Jain and Rai assert that “economic independence for a woman is a great asset in any given situation.” (Jain and Rai 167) And Eliza proves them correct. As Prof. Higgins tries to placate her in his usual flamboyant manner, exhibiting sexism and rudeness, the confidence and clarity in her tone and words is praiseworthy. She will no longer be treated as a child “...You think I must go back to Wimpole Street because I have nowhere else to go but father’s. But don’t you be too sure that you have me under your feet to be trampled on and talked down. I’ll marry Freddy, I will, as soon as I’m able to support him.” (Shaw 102-103, emphasis added) The role-reversal is clearly evident and so is the power of education which makes her exclaim, “...I’ll go and be a teacher... What you [Higgins] taught me. I’ll teach phonetics...I’ll offer myself as an assistant to that hairyfaced Hungarian.” (103)

This bold and beautiful Shavian female was not allowed to exist as intended by its creator in the various adaptations on stage and celluloid, but Shaw made it sure that the original text will never be tempered with. The distortions in *Pygmalion*, suited to the romantic [read: male-dominated] taste have continued till date. Bollywood’s adaptation of *Pygmalion* as *Manpasand* (1980) itself was a complete disaster despite showing Higgins’ marriage with Eliza as the most conclusive end. However, it was the adaptation of *Pygmalion* as a musical play in two acts titled *My Fair Lady* (1956) that totally subverted Shaw’s notion of an independent, thinking female. The play offered an alternate end with a coy acquiescent Eliza whispering gently, “I washed my face and hands before I come, I did”, and Higgins

questioning softly “Eliza? Where the devil are my slippers?” [There are tears in Eliza’s eyes. She understands.]” (Lerner 122) In fact, the director Lerner himself confesses that he omitted the preface and the sequel because in it Shaw explained how Eliza ends not with Higgins but with Freddy and----“Shaw and Heaven forgive me! ----I am not certain he is right”. (ibid) Shaw’s *Pygmalion* had used the feminist perspective to present a realistic or convincing picture of the world women live in, helping the reader understand Eliza’s internal impasse. Shaw’s Eliza is strong, smart and sensible: she is also fiercely independent : ready to take care of herself and her spouse, too.

Hester, on the other hand, in her distress, falls into errors but is ready to bear the consequences. Her journey can be summarized as “the individual’s pursuit of identity and meaning amidst the social and economic pressures of mass society for superficiality and conformism”. (Flynn 9) While feminism believes that men and women should be equal, the gross inequality between Hester and her paramour Dimmesdale is very acutely obvious. Hester had to wear the scarlet ‘A’ as her punishment while Dimmesdale remained unknown. That Hester saves him from shame and becomes a single parent by choice is a strong attack on the existing social system by Hawthorne. Here the female, even after her apparent subjugation definitely emerges stronger. What gave Hester the courage? What helped her remain stoic and determined? How did she turn from someone openly abhorred, to someone grudgingly admired? The two male protagonists were enveloped with either cowardice or revenge, whilst Hester emerged pure and respectful even after the horrendous ordeal. Hester lived in the present; she acted according to the situation. For her, “... unlike measurable ‘clock’ time, lived time is qualitative: the ‘not yet’, the ‘already’ and the ‘present’ differ among themselves in meaning and value.” (Flynn 9) It is interesting to note that cinematic adaptations of *The Scarlet Letter* in India have done justice to the original intent, even though the film makers indulged in melodramatic overtones. *Hare Kaanch ki Choodiyaan* (1967) and *Kya Kehna* (2000) presented Mohini and Priya respectively as strong female protagonists, who managed to essay the central theme effortlessly. That the consequences of any act, whether correct or incorrect, committed together by the male and the female, especially related to copulation, should be borne by both: the onus should not be only on the female: discriminatory societal stigmatization should not be accepted rather, resisted.

Hester and Eliza represent the individual who “strives to recreate a reality of her own by her immanent faith in her will. And in doing so she feels that the freedom of her will is thwarted in the contingency of reality around her”. (Bhardwaj 5) They never let the blame

fall on their destiny but let their choices (their existence) mould their essence (their life). They (Eliza and Scarlet) use the 'conflict'; resultant of this power struggle, as an integral part of human existence since the Utopian concept of a 'free' existence cannot be applied in the real world to resolve the very same conflicts: conflict actually helps them emerge stronger. Thus, it is the response of the individual to the conflict that she/he faces which is more important than the conflict itself, depending on her/his own abilities. The conflict and the resolution of the conflict can then be seen as a part of the internal strength and basic character of the human being.

The words of celebrated French playwright, novelist and critic, Jean Paul Sartre about the social responsibility of the writer become very significant at this point. Sartre emphasises on the fact that "(W)riting is not simply writing, it is an act, and in man's continual fight against evil, writing must be deliberately used as a weapon. It is necessary that he (or she) understands this." (Dangle 324) Thus, if "it is important for men to read about strong women and enjoy those books, because things like that begin to change social attitudes," , as Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni states (Joshi 2); it is equally important for women to read about the strong women, created by strong men and realize and appreciate how the male bastion has also been trying to usher in the social change; even though in a limited number; Nathaniel Hawthorne and George Bernard Shaw being two most prolific examples.

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## Deconstructing Anthropocentrism and Ecological Consciousness: Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*

-Jasleen Kaur Sahota

Literature has played an important role in mirroring the important debates and decentering the prevalent discourses by adequately representing the issues bordering the margins. This paper analyses Han Kang's Man Booker prize winning novella titled *The Vegetarian* to uncover the various anthropocentric debates which are mirrored through the patriarchal structures. The book allows us to construct parallels between oppression of women and oppression of nature. By studying the character of its protagonist, one can argue that she stands for the deconstruction of such patriarchal ideas and anthropocentric discourses which opened the way for untrammelled exploitation of nature and the suppression of women. The novel is set in South Korea where a woman named Yeong-hye is haunted by grotesque dreams, first gives up meat, then food altogether in a radical refusal of human cruelty and destruction. The paper argues that through her refusal to eat meat, Yeong-hye becomes a critical voice to deconstruct the anthropocentrism of mankind. Thus, the protagonist's disillusionment with the human world and her desire to cross over the binary from culture to nature by expressing a death wish, exemplifies that the nature/culture division has become so cemented that it prevents the possibility of any fluidity between two hierarchal structures. Her subversive agency lies in her death-affirming final decision where she wrests the control of her body from the patriarchal structures.

Kevin Delapp argues that "Anthropocentrism is a normative concept that embodies or expresses a set of beliefs or attitudes that privilege some aspect of human experience, perspective or valuation" (37). This concept prioritizes human beings over everything else and has been critiqued for its cruel treatment of animals and natural resources. Various theorists have raised their voices against the inhuman treatment of animals by arguing that these species too are worthy of moral consideration. Peter Singer's utilitarian approach argues that since animals are of use value to us, so we ought to be vegetarians. It is not a rights but a utility based approach (325). However, Tom Regan disputes Singer's theory and asserts that the utilitarian approach does not serve the interests of animal rights and liberation as it does not accord them any intrinsic value. He adds, "...fundamental wrong is the system that allows us to view animals as our resources" (31). Peter Singer adopts a welfare theory by



launching the animal rights movement bringing to fore the pernicious effects of the treatment of animals in the meat production industry. He argues that if an animal is capable of feeling pain or pleasure, then he must be included in the moral universe. Thus, the purpose is to save animals from the pain caused to them because of their instrumental value to us. To this Steiner adds:

Are capacities such as rationality relevant to considerations of moral worth? Is sentience, the capacity to experience pleasure and pain, morally significant, and if so, how are we to compare the value of animal pleasures and pains with those of human beings? If we agree that mammals are sentient, do we avoid moral problems by killing them painlessly? Can a being possess moral worth if it lacks rationality or sentience? Are animals to be treated differently in this regard than, say, an infant or a persistently comatose human being? Are there grounds other than experiential capacities that are of fundamental relevance to the moral status of animals? Should we take Hume seriously when he places the cosmic value of a human being on a par with that of an oyster? (3).

Thus, the moral value of animals and the treatment meted out to them has invited a lot of debate and criticism. The novel echoes the conception of environment including plants and animal species as having intrinsic values through the attitude of the female protagonist while the patriarchal system around her sees environment and animals as instruments to further the human agenda. Thus, the book positions itself to articulate the problematic that the treatment of non-humans is intrinsically wrong. The protagonist stands as a parable questioning the superiority of human beings over other living things.

Most ecofeminist theories trace overlapping connections between the oppression and of women and degradation of nature. Sturgeon argues:

Most simply put, ecofeminism is a movement that makes connections between environmentalisms and feminisms; more precisely, it articulates the theory that the ideologies that authorize injustices based on gender, race, and class are related to the ideologies that sanction the exploitation and degradation of the environment. (237)

The relationship between anthropocentrism and patriarchy, as proposed by Keller & Golley (6), is that they are both ‘validated by the same conceptual logic’, i.e. anthropocentrism and patriarchy encourage dominion over women and nature where they are disregarded in most

decisions and are thereby negatively affected. Eco-feminism as a critical theory analyses female interaction with the environment. It further stresses that there are commonalities between the twin concepts of gender oppression and environmental degradation which are caused by male dominance and western patriarchal ideologies. Thus, ecocritical practices of reading would entail paying keen attention to gender oppression and environmental degradation and seeing them as two sides of the same coin, each creating and reinforcing each other.

Anthropocentrism and patriarchy are thus analogous as they view nature and women as inferior to men. According to ecofeminist critics, the world is divided both hierarchically and dualistically in Euro-western cultures with dualisms such as reason/emotion, culture/nature, mind/body are created and the first is given priority over the second (Lorentzen 1). Keller and Golley argue that both are “validated by the same conceptual logic” (6) of the superiority of man over women and nature. Sturgeon adds that “where women are degraded, nature will be degraded, and where women are thought to be eternally giving and nurturing, nature will be thought of as endlessly fertile and exploitable.” (242)

Following the same hierarchy, animals are placed further below the order of things. Gary Steiner argues that anthropocentric views are entrenched in the western philosophy with philosophers like Aristotle, Augustine and Kant bestowing a low status and moral consideration to animals. He further asserts that, “these philosophers’ views are linked by an underlying logic:

That all and only human beings are worthy of moral consideration, because all and only human beings are rational and endowed with language. Only such beings are capable of genuine self-determination and moral responsibility, and are moral beings in the most complete and authentic sense. As nonrational beings, animals are due less moral consideration than human beings, and on some accounts animals are due no moral consideration whatsoever. (2)

Thus, anthropocentrism as an ideology rests on the assumption that human beings and nature are independent units. This segregation is further rarefied and morphs into an opposition between nature and culture. Val Plumwood argues that this dualism between nature/culture is “the foundational delusion of the west” and has asserted that “it is a dangerous doctrine strongly implicated in the environmental crisis” (28). The paper analyses this novel using the

framework of ecocritical feminism and questions the anthropocentric philosophy by positioning a female character at its heart to counter it with a biocentric approach.

This novel—told in three parts—questions and deconstructs the anthropocentric value system of human beings and argues the case for the intrinsic value of nature and animals. The first part shows the transformation of Yeong-Hye from a meat-eating person to a vegetarian and her family's ensuing shock at her decision. Yeong-Hye's refusal to eat meat is part of a larger problem. Her nightmares are psychological manifestations of her realization that these embodied beings too have a right to life. Her radical decision comes as a recurring consequence of a nightmare. Her decision to become a vegetarian is to wash her hands off the cruelty which she has been a part of for all her life.

The first part is told from the perspective of her husband with intermittent episodes told by Yeong-Hye. Her husband describes her as a timid-personality, docile and not making any demands on her husband's time. Their conjugal life is an aberration, there is no romance or love between them. The very fact that he married her because of her docile personality conveys a sinister patriarchal attitude towards marriage. It is an alliance of convenience for the husband to have a wife like Yeong-Hye whose views regarding this marriage are not conveyed to the reader. She is "completely unremarkable in any way" (14). Mr. Cheong did not have to pretend to be erudite or intellectual to woo her, and after marriage she did not make any demands on his time or money. This arrangement was of particular suitability to Mr. Cheong's lifestyle. He also describes her as aloof, engrossed in her work with reading as her only hobby which kept her occupied during her free time. However, this ordered, convenient arrangement is thrown into disarray when his wife, after a strange dream about animals, stops eating meat altogether. After that nightmare, Yeong-Hye decides to throw away all the frozen meat in their kitchen adding that "beef for shabu-shabu, belly pork, two-sides of black beef shin, some squid in a vacuum-packed bag, sliced eel that my mother-in-law has sent us from the countryside ages ago, dried croacker...." (9) were the cause of discomfort for her.

After five years of marital bliss, this was the first time "I'd to go to work without her handing me my things and seeing me off" (11), complains Mr. Cheong. Although the first part is told from the masculine perspective of Mr. Cheong, intermittent stream-of-consciousness dialogues of a very surreal nature define the experience of Yeong-Hye. On hearing the very bizarre cause for his wife's decision, in a patriarchal vein he asserts that it was just "obstinacy

for a wife to go against her husband's wishes" (14). The repercussions of her decision are manifested in her body where she loses weight and slips into a state of insomnia. On a dinner with her husband's colleagues, when she refuses to eat anything—because the entire menu is non-vegetarian—she is called “narrow-minded” and as “meat eating (is) seen as fundamental human instinct” her decision to is viewed as “unnatural” (23).

This novel reworks issues of violence towards women and animals, thus making the female a mediator through which the nature and animals can be re-read. The questions regarding environmental ethics entail the distinction between instrumental value and intrinsic value. Instrumental value registers that things are means to an end and intrinsic value sees things as ends in themselves. From the anthropocentric perspective, a hierarchy has existed between humans and nature. This human-centered western perspective argues that only humans possess intrinsic value. The value judgment passed on vegetarians by most meat eaters subscribes to the paradigm of anthropocentrism.

### **Violence against Women and Animals**

Two episodes in Yeong-Hye's life definitively portray the violence against women and animals. Her husband's description of her behavior after her radical dietary change smacks of fear and irrationality although he is privy to the trigger to that decision. As he lacks the understanding to accept the change nor has any power to force her back to her traditional meat-eating routine, Mr. Cheong seeks help from her in-laws to resolve the Gordian knot. The family comes together for dinner, and while the mother and sister show some sympathy for their kin, the shocking force-feeding of meat by the father pushes Yeong-Hye to a suicide attempt. The entire episode is steeped in patriarchal violence for the female as well as for nature. Her father is an army veteran, is known to have been violent to Yeong-Hye till the age of eighteen. On multiple chidings, when Yeong refuses to budge from her position, she is slapped by her father. He then asks his son and Mr. Cheong to hold her down signifying that unquestioned violence towards women and animals has been a way of life for him. He refuses to understand his daughter's mindset, and argues “If she eats it once, she will eat it again. It's preposterous, everyone eats meat!” (39).

Patriarchal oppression and anthropocentric attitudes are exemplified in this episode where her brother and her husband hold her arms and her father push a piece of meat in to her mouth, thus epitomizing the ultimate violence that men can wreak on women. She breaks away from the hold, spits out the piece of meat and unleashes violence not on others but herself by

mutilating her wrist with a fruit knife. She slashes her wrist which can be construed as a rebellion against those patriarchal mores which have suppressed her since she was a little girl. At this point, we are recounted an episode from Yeong-hye's childhood which might have been one of the psychological reasons for her aversion to meat. The incident is beset with primal and gory violence. The anecdote reveals the violent temperament and a criminal disregard for the rights of animals. As a child Yeong-Hye was bitten by a dog, and her father's revenge was an orgy of violence which left a deep psychological impact on his young daughter. First, he scorches the dog with a lamp and then for the final punishment, he ties the dog to his motorbike and keeps driving till it is tortured out of his breath. They feasted on the same dog for dinner and Yeong-hye remembers how she relished that meat without any regard for life. In hindsight, she also recalls the blood shot eyes and the agonized expression on the dog. This traumatic incident is a key to understanding her recurring nightmares. The notion of violence has been central to exploring patriarchal oppression of women and nature as it exposes the patriarchal and ecophobic mindset.

When she is admitted to the hospital, her mother again tries to feed her meat soup by masking the smell with strong medicine. But again, she vomits out the soup and in a soliloquy recounts confesses to the mental and psychological angst: yells and howls, threaded together layer upon layer, are enmeshed to form that lump. Because of meat. I ate too much meat. The lives of the animals I ate all lodged there. Blood and flesh, all those butchered bodies are scattered in every nook and cranny, and though the physical remnants were excreted, their lives still stick stubbornly to my insides. (49)

When her husband is informed that she will be soon be discharged from the hospital, he adds, "I would once again have to live with this strange, frightening woman, the two of us in the same house. It was a prospect I found difficult to contemplate." (44) Again, at the end of the first section, Yeong-Hye walks out and removes her hospital gown, exposing her naked body to the sun and asks "Have I done something wrong?" (45) while holding a dead bird with a predator's bite marks. This is symbolic of mankind as the predator, women and nature at the receiving end of their predatory instincts. This entire episode pushes her insensitive husband to seek a divorce arguing that his wife can never be normal again. Yeong stays with her sister and her husband post her discharge from the hospital.

The second section of the novella also shows the gradual movement of Yeong from humanity to a desire to be more and more plant-like. When Yeong-hye's sister's husband who is a

graphic artist envisions a scene between two people, with flowers painted on their bodies, Yeong-hye agrees to become the subject of his artistic imaginary. The idea appeals to Yeong-hye as she feels a compulsion to take off her clothes and expose her naked body to the sun, likening her existence to that of a plant. After the flowers are painted, she expresses a desire to keep the paint on her body forever as they stop the nightmares from coming. The flowers work as psychological markers for her perturbed state of mind as they mimic the pattern of nature and allow her to feel at one with it. The dichotomy between the two states – human and nature – and her dreadful desire to crossover from the former to the latter is symbolic of the questioning of our foundational hierarchies. When her sister discovers the pornographic film made by her husband, she calls social services. Even when the paramedics are called in, Yeong refuses to put on her clothes and even bites one of them to escape from their hold.

Thus, her body becomes a site of violence and control by the male patriarchal authority. She is raped by her husband, treated cruelly by her father and other family members and forced, thus denying her any control or agency. Further, her body is the site of her brother-in-law's degenerate and depraved idea when he makes a pornographic film of the two of them. Her decision to shun eating meat has an adverse effect on her body, she looks completely emaciated, loses her libido and any desire to live like humans. As a consequence, she first abandons wearing underclothes and then gives into nudity as an aftereffect.

After In-hye catches her husband while making love to her sister, she separates from him citing that her husband had taken advantage of her mentally fit sister. In part three of the novella we are constantly reminded of her pain and anguish about her divorce as she simultaneously takes care of their son. This part is told from the perspective of Yeong's sister, where we are informed that Yeong had gone missing from the hospital and was later found in the woods. She is then incarcerated in a mental institution treated as a deranged person who has no regard for her life. She refuses to eat anything and confides in In-hye that all the trees are her siblings. She imitates the posture of a tree and tells her sister that she had been standing all wrong while doing a headstand. Despite herself battling depression, In-hye regularly visits Yeong-hye and presses her to eat food. It is only her sister who remains and supports her whereas all other family members jilt her after her breakdown. It is at this point that her biocentric impulses reach a pinnacle. She completely rejects human traits and behaves more and more like a plant, despite being treated for mental illness. According to the Biocentric position, "birds, trees, and the land itself considered as the biosphere have a right to be and to live out their individual and species' potentials, and that members of the

human species have no right to disturb, perturb or destroy the ecological balance of the planet.” (Watson 245)

It is indeed the desire of Yeong-hye to not hurt any of the species by completely negating her humanity and eschewing the human ways. During one of her solitary walks, Yeong-hye goes missing and she is later found “in an isolated spot deep in the woods covering the mountain slope, standing there stock-still and soaked with rain as if she herself was one of the glistening trees” (125). When Yeong-hye gives up food altogether, the doctors and nurses force feed her. Not able to see her sister in such a state of misery and bodily pain, she takes her to a different hospital. Her sister’s attempts to save Yeong are ineffectual as she not only eschews food but also reimagines herself as a life force altogether different from a human being. She says, “Why is it a bad thing to die?” (157), thereby entirely rejecting the primal anthropocentric urge of survival. She imagines herself to be a tree needing only water and sunlight to survive.

The central character and her treatment fall within the paradigm of the oppression of women and oppression of nature as coexisting categories and her resistance lies in the cessation of male domination over both. Thus, in a way ecofeminism although seeks to bring together feminism with ecological consciousness, their purpose according to Aggarwal is “to create egalitarian, non-hierarchical structures” (qtd in Manion 4) which is brought to a paradoxical acme in this novel as one exists only at the other’s expense. Yeong-hye’s life threatening/death embracing desire to become a tree envisions a biocentric world but with paradoxical consequences. Hierarchies do not cease to exist but are turned upside down in her head. She configures a reality opposed to anthropocentric principle which bestows the right to moral consideration only upon human beings. Her dreams are an unconscious manifestation of her opposition to this worldview and confirms environmental ethical theories which endow the right to moral consideration on nature.

Through Kang’s protagonist, the text introduces a character who seeks to deny her humanity and therein lies her agency. Her suffering has a didactic character, because it is a suffering which she undergoes to prevent harming more animals and as a form of repentance for the ones she has hitherto devoured due to her dietary inclinations. She has been a victim of gender/patriarchal violence as a child and as an adult. Her character undergoes a mental metamorphosis, quite unlike Gregor Samsa’s physical transformation- from being a quiet, obedient, docile- woman to a woman of fierce resolve not to eat animals. With this, she

incurs violence on her body, “she is likened to a wild thing and her gestures are animalistic” (34). The enduring environmental theme of the dream of relinquishment also finds expression in this novel. Her father’s violent treatment of the dog and her family and doctor’s traumatic force feeding inflicted on Yeong-hye’s body becomes a key to understanding why she shuns and rejects the civilized world. The deconstruction not just of the anthropocentric mores but also of her own identity as a human by means of a tree becomes her only way of negotiating the reality of her bodily abuse and suffering.

Lawrence Buell (1995) suggests that there are certain primary criteria for evaluating a text as embodying an environmental consciousness. To begin with, the human and the non-human world is not presented as a background but a genuine presence which suggests an integration of the human and the non-human worlds. Furthermore, the human interest is not the sole judgement criteria for actions taken by the characters. The text shows that the characters take full responsibility for their action which may be of detrimental effect to the environment around them. Here, the central character prioritizes the interest of the non-human world over her own life by first quitting meat and then becoming vegan. Her first response to the blood drenched nightmares and an episode of childhood in which her father scorched and inflicted suffering on a dog are unconscious manifestations of her guilty conscience. Thus, this text in its own way concurs to the points raised by Buell.

Thus, Yeong-hye’s radical decision subverts not only the patriarchal structures but also mankind’s unquestioned pillaging of nature and mistreatment of animals. She is able to seize control of her body from patriarchal structures which had hitherto been responsible for suppression. Her awakening leads to a death-affirming decision which has consequences and it ultimately questions and points towards the limits of biocentrism, and the possibility of peaceful co-existence between man and nature.

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## Socio-Cultural Conflict and Political Resistance in Pakistan-Afghanistan Borderland: Reading Jamil Ahmad's *The Wandering Falcon*

-Ankita Kumari

### Abstract:

Through the textual analysis of Jamil Ahmad's short-story collection, titled, *The Wandering Falcon* (2011), the article aims to highlight the tussle between the assimilative policy of the state and the resisting approach of the tribes in the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) of Pakistan-Afghanistan borderland. It further attempts to offer a critique of the state-hegemonic forces visible in the form of border-management politics which strive to territorially control and disintegrate the Pak-Afghan borderland population in the name of attaining national sovereignty. While doing this, it also engages with the concept of transnational identity as a subversive tool employed by the central character Tor Baz to undercut the dominant narratives of nation and nationalism.

Key-words: Pak-Afghan Borderland, Border Politics, Transnational Identity

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Border-building process has been an outcome of the colonial enterprise that used it as a political tool to separate, map and control territories and populations. By drawing borders, colonialism sought to homogenize diverse cultures, languages and histories of people under the label of nation and nationalism. The formations of nation-states and national boundaries are coterminous. Borders are, therefore, not only material constructions which lie out there, but are lines demarcating people both physically as well as psychically. Borders construct a separation line not only between geographical spaces, but also between respective populations, demarking the space as “here” and “there,” and the citizens as “the insiders” and “outsiders.” It is by dislocation between two clearly defined polarities that borders mostly function (Newman 148). Borders, in this way, never occupy a transcendental space in which identities remain unquestioned (Agnew 181).

However, in lieu of this, the space on the border or in between the border, the borderland, presents a complex political reality, as it resists and defers being confined into the inside/outside rhetoric of border-construction. As a zone, it functions as an uneasy amalgamation of either both sides or of none. Moreover, as a marginal space, it operates as a classic site of confrontation between state and its people (Baud and Van Schendel 215).

Borderlands are not simply frozen pieces of land, but are marked by frequent movements in time, place and activity (Butcher 137). They are also meeting points where different political, economic, and cultural systems collide and converge to offer a unique understanding of the ways in which identities are formed (Flynn 312).

Pakistan-Afghanistan borderland area is one such spatial construct which has been imbued with incidents of political conflict and violence. The population residing in this area encompasses varieties of tribes from both sides of the borders who practice their own traditional-local customs and ways of governance. The border-policing rules, thus come in direct conflict with the nomadic life of the border-zoned population in Pakistan-Afghanistan region.

Through textual analysis of Jamil Ahmad's short-story collection *The Wandering Falcon*, this essay attempts to examine the culture, customs and lifestyle of the tribal societies residing in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. From the very first story in the collection "The Sins of the Mother" to the last one "Sale Completed", Ahmad draws upon the history and dialectic of continuous conflict between the nationalistic dominance and tribal resistance in the region. The pastoral identity and territory of the tribes in the region is shown by Ahmed as constantly under the threat of enforcement by the state authorities. The analysis, therefore, aims to analyse the state-hegemonic forces visible in the form of border-management politics which strives to territorially control and disintegrate the Pak-Afghan borderland population in the name of national sovereignty. It endeavours to re-instate Bruce Kings's observation that the text is a "missing link in the history of Pakistani literature" (325). By consciously mixing into the narrative the dialects and everyday speech pattern of the tribe, the text itself undercuts the state-sponsored agenda of modernity. Hence, the essay responds to the challenges and repercussions of nationalistic dominance over informal tribal setting of the Pak-Afghan borderland area.

The Federally Administered Tribal Area is a tribal region which is located in the north-western part of Pakistan, and is spread across the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to the north and east, Balochistan to the South and Afghanistan to the west. The geographical location of the region itself puts it in a conflicted zone as Pakistan and Afghanistan constantly remain on the lookout to claim the land as their own. The area comprises of a strong tribal structure with many tribes and sub-tribes like Bajaur, Mohammads, Afridis, Orakzai,

Kurrams, Wazirs, Mahsuds, Kharots, Pashtuns etc. The community residing in this area is governed by its own tribal laws and customs though with relative autonomy.

During colonial period, the British imposed the Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR) to control the region. Under this regulation, more power was given to the administrative officials who acted as political agents and provided funds to tribal agencies in exchange of their loyalty. Since it was difficult to exercise their control completely and directly over the tribes, they introduced *Jirga* (council of elders) and *Maliki* system of administration. *Jirga* system was based on the concept of collective responsibility where a group of elders was assigned the responsibility of resolving disputes and other issues of concern within the tribal community. *Malikis*, on the other hand operated through *Maliks* (local chiefs) who acted as mediators between the tribal community and colonial authorities. Since then, the area is governed by these colonially constructed rules along with their own local law-system.

After independence, the parliamentary form of governance was applied to the rest of the Pakistan without making any change in the political and administrative set up of the tribal society. The area still remains under direct executive control of the president of Pakistan who manages the regulation and amendment of tribal laws through the Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa who acts as his agent in these matters. People living in this zone continue to be deprived of their fundamental rights and socio-economic development. The very first chapter of Ahmad's short-story provides an insight into the landscape of the borderland tribal area which is filled with barren deserts, mountains and harshness of nature:

In the tangle of crumbling, weather-beaten, and broken hills where the borders of Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan meet is a military outpost manned by about two score soldiers. Lonely, as all such posts are, this one is particularly frightening. No habitation for miles around, and no vegetation except for a few wasted and barren date trees leaning crazily against one another, and no water other than a trickle among some self-encrusted boulders, which also dries out occasionally, manifesting a degree of hostility. [1]

The severe blows of the winter season bring with it excruciating struggle for life further by the inadequate availability of resources for livelihood. Gusts of high wind surfacing on top of mountains destroy not only the tall pine trees but also the wide verdure. In the face of utter poverty, the people residing in the frozen land sometimes raid the neighbouring tribes in the plain. But, this kind of robbery in the tribal law is not considered as a crime, but rather seen

as a natural order of life and principle of survival. Shedding light on the survival philosophy of Mahsud and Wazir tribes, Ahmad states, "If nature provides them food for only ten days in a year, they believe in their right to demand the rest of their sustenance from their fellow men who live oily, fat, and comfortable lives in the plains. ...In neither community is any stigma attached to a hired assassin, a thief, a kidnapper, or an informer. And then, both are totally absorbed in themselves" (24). What appears as anti-social and illegal in the eyes of the state-sponsored law, is actually a just action for the tribes to secure their freedom and life. The much-required developmental policies of the state rarely make way into the poverty-stricken land of the tribes. Rather than addressing their own failure in uplifting the living standards of the tribes by not offering them jobs, houses, education, technology and basic resources, the authorities are seen setting new norms to ostracize and subdue the entire border-zoned population. The concept of civilization and progress therefore are used at the whims of the state-officials only to execute anti-tribal agendas.

Migration, in this way, is not a choice, but a necessity for the tribes. The urgency of their frequent movements can be understood well by the fact that women have to entirely depend on it to ensure safe pregnancy. Even the basic right of enjoying phases of motherhood is denied to them for the lack of resources in the mountains. Rather than being a reason for celebration, it becomes a matter of concern if by any chance the child's delivery falls in the winter season. Sherakai, whom her father sold out for failing to provide for her, mournfully recalls how out of five children born to her, only three could survive:

On the mountain, the survival of the mother and child depended entirely on nature. The timing had to be just right so that the mother did not have to carry the child on the journey during the last days of pregnancy. Most of the children that survived were born immediately on their return to the highlands. If they were born too late, they again found it difficult to survive the downward journey in infancy. (Ahmad 35)

Their cross-border movement, however, is rarely an easy task. This risk is always double-folded---because on one side lies the fear of the night-patrolling officers while on the other lies the fear of the ostracizing tendency of the city-dwellers. In moving along with family, animals and possessions, they are compelled to risk their lives. While crossing through the urban and semi-urban areas of the plains, they face racial slurs and, in some cases, become targets of stone-pelting. In some areas, the so-called civilized population of the plains

deliberately attempt to stampede the animals by cutting off their roads in order to create chaos among the wanderers.

Walking, walking, and walking, using the roads at night when the law allowed them to, the side trails during the day, the graveyards and small unmarked patches used for hundreds of years by gypsies for resting and cooking. Avoiding the towns and villages where they were not welcome, as the locals said they were dirty, damaged the crops, and were suspicious about their tendency to steal. They carefully skirted the cities, fearing to fall afoul of the police, and spread out into the plains, where they did menial jobs, working as porters, carriers, scavengers—whatever work they could find—during the three months before starting their long trek back to the mountains.

(35)

Further, we get a glimpse into the regulatory methods of the state which in the name of peace-making tricks the innocent tribesmen into death. The Baluch tribe is known for its graciousness, honour, brevity and blind devotion to the cause of the common good of the tribe. It is only when the state government encroaches into the legal and administrative structure of the tribe that the situation gets aggravated. They intend to replace the tribal governing system with the modern mode of governance where people will be subjected to the laws of the state and not to their tribes. This move is made to stop violence in the region in the name of attaining national security. Roza khan, the Sardar of the tribe, along with Jangu, his chief feel threatened as "The officers of the district chose to remove and arrest the chief of our brother tribe. We allow the right to make and unmake chiefs only to ourselves. We do not accept the power of anyone else to decide who our chief shall be or shall not be. That is the cause, and we cannot help but fight for such a cause" (Ahmad 11). The chief explains this whole situation as a way to restrict the autonomy of the tribal law and custom. This self-defensive measure taken by the Baluch against the state authorities is perceived as a danger to their existence.

Not only this, the tribes who resist being a part of the new law-making process face death at the hands of the state agencies. By turning them economically and politically crippled, the administration forces them to succumb to state-policies. Their houses are set on fire, their crops are burnt or seized, their cattle slaughtered and their families are put in jail. The fact that they live in the border areas and remain defenceless, they are easily targeted by the state. This new initiative is based on the colonial discourse of civilizing the other who are

not included in the nation-making process. The treachery of the authorities can be seen in the way they fool the Baluch people in believing that they are invited to the government office for peace-making talks. While on the contrary, it turns out to be a way to trap them into death only to erase their history and autonomy from the area.

The reporters and the government remain indifferent to the news of death sentence of a group of seven Baluch in the magistrate's office. The politicians talk of human rights, economic exploitation, poverty, lack of education on the one hand, but maintain ruthless silence over the atrocities of the state against the tribal people on the other. The death and the simultaneous decay of the Baluch culture is described effectively as:

There was complete and total silence about the Baluch, their cause, their lives, and their deaths. No newspaper editor risked punishment on their behalf. Typically, Pakistani journalists sought salve for their conscience by writing about the wrongs done to men in South Africa, in Indonesia, in Palestine, and in the Philippines—not to their own people. No politician risked imprisonment: they would continue to talk of the rights of the individual, the dignity of man, the exploitation of the poor, but they would not expose the wrong being done outside their front door. (Ahmad 12)

The tribals die hundred deaths every day in their struggle to survive in the harshness of the nature. The Kharot tribe sheds light on their nomadic and homeless lifestyle which continues to change according to the change in the seasons. They define themselves as "Powindas" (Ahmad 14), which means "the foot people" who are always on move from one place to another. This necessity arises because of the urge for food, shelter and security for their families. Despite these struggles, the tribe seems to relish and preserve the pastoral way of life with a sense of dignity and liberty. That is why when the news of border enforcement spreads in the region, they feel a sense of danger and loss. For this border-making will limit the free seasonal migration of the tribe for cattle grazing between Pakistan and Afghanistan. To cross the border, they will now have to produce identity proofs, birth certificates, health documents, travel documents along with cattle transport permit. The newly-formulated concepts of citizenship, nationality, statehood seem meaningless and incomprehensible to the tribe for whom the entire landscape has been home for centuries. Illiterate and unable to read, the Kharot tribe feels the same sense of betrayal which the Baluch leaders felt when they were tricked into surrendering in favour of an offer to share their grievances with the authorities. Ahmad emphasizes this concern through the conversation between Karim Khan,

the general of the tribe and the border control soldier while they are on the brink of crossing the border check-point of Pakistan. Too young to understand the border-politics, Karim Khan's son apprehensively asks the soldier:

How is it possible for us to be treated as belonging to Afghanistan? We stay for a few months there and for a few months in Pakistan. The rest of the time we spend moving. We are Powindas and belong to all countries, or to none, ...Our animals have to move if they are to live. To stop would mean death for them. Our way of life harms nobody. Why do you wish for us to change? (Ahmad 16-17)

The border-enforcement order directly gets connected to a state of disorder in FATA region. The irony of these bureaucratic policies lies in the fact that they conveniently overlook the root cause behind these seasonal, yet compulsory migration of the tribes across the border in search of livelihood. Rather than addressing the real issues of poverty, discrimination and decades of ignorance surrounding tribal lives in the region, the government imposes new policies that restrict access to their only source of survival---movement from plains (Pakistan)to highlands (Afghanistan) and vice-versa. Further, it is intimated to the tribesmen that the concerned policies are being implemented to control rising incidents of crimes in the area which includes occasional occurrence of theft, abduction, family clashes, bride-price disputes and local resistance against the draconian laws of the State. Now, the factor that is problematic in this whole rhetoric of border-policing is what Imtiaz Gul defines as the "principle of collective responsibility, wherein the entire locality and tribe is considered responsible for the criminal actions of its individuals" (78). Ahmad's text too gives a glimpse into the manipulative legal system of the state:

The relationship between the tribes and the government was based on a formal treaty entered into by two contracting parties. The treaty stipulated in precise terms the payment of a regular yearly stipend to the tribe and non-interference in their customs and management of their affairs. The obligation on the part of the tribes was the good conduct of each member of their community and of those residing in their area of responsibility. This was formally termed as "collective tribal and territorial responsibility." The tribe or its members could be chastened for any lapse or infraction in this responsibility through the authority of an instrument called the Frontier Crimes Regulations. (26)



This regulation is certainly used by the legal authorities as a bureaucratic tactic to invade and tame the tribal lives. It is a strategically-formulated tool to legitimately massacre an entire community for the crimes committed by an individual. The fact that Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) act is still operational in the region is proof that the state is deliberately following the colonial strategy of using it as a tool to penalize people as slaves than to serve them as citizens.

The new policy emphasizes the authenticity of written words/documents over the orally constructed tribal laws. In the domestic affairs of tribal bodies, law and discipline is maintained orally. It is not the individual but the communal, not the isolatory but the participatory values which are propagated among its people. The elder members of the society are seen as epitomes of knowledge and divine wisdom. They are considered as souls bestowed with the power and authority to protect the community against all the adversities. Further, they harbour the legacy of ancestral and cultural memory. Thus, the spoken word, for the tribes do not only mean a medium to communicate, but also a medium to keep intact their linguistic, cultural and ancestral values. Added to that, the physical, natural and the spiritual world are all seen as appendages to each other. Land and nature are considered to be engrained with deep spiritual meanings. That is why when the Kharot tribe hears of the implementation of the strict border-crossing rules which requires them to produce a prescribed set of documents, they anxiously think of the effect it will have on their lives. For them "there was no way to obtain travel...documents for thousands of their tribesmen; they had no birth certificates, no identity papers or health documents. They could not document their animals. The new system will certainly mean the death of a centuries-old way of life" (Ahmad 17). These documents, in this way, turn out to be sites of demarcation constructed by the political elites to channel their inclusion/exclusion politics. So, before borders, it is the "bordering process" (Newman 148) which becomes instrumental in creating the insider/outsider dialectic. Henry Newman emphasizes how "bordering process" is integral to the establishment of border as an institution:

The process through which borders are demarcated and managed are central to the notion of border as process and border as institution. ...Demarcation is not simply the drawing of a line on a map or the construction of a fence in the physical landscape. Demarcation is the process through which the criteria of inclusion/exclusion are determined, be they citizenship in a country, membership of a specific social or economic group, or religious affiliation. The borders enabling entry to, or exit

from, these diverse spaces and groups are normally determined by political and social elites as part of the process of societal ordering and compartmentalization. (148)

While discussing which side of the border to choose for the survival, they frequently bring in the concerns of their cattle. Moving towards Afghanistan implies spats of prolonged winter for them and their herds as there would be no pasture, no labour and no trade. But, the option of moving towards Pakistan is equally dangerous as between them and the plains lies two check-points patrolled by armed soldiers with orders of shooting the trespassers at the very first sight. However, the green plains beyond the border-line would mean life to their hungry sheep and camels. Keeping in mind the well-being of their animals, they decide to move forward to Pakistan. The moment they arrive at the fort, a group of soldiers block their entrance and ask them to go back. In this situation, they find themselves left with two options---move forward and die or move backward and stay alive, but with a kind of life equal to death. Dawa Khan, the *sardar* of the Kharots makes several attempts to explain the urgency of the situation to the officer-in-charge and desperately asks for his consideration. In response, the officer insists on ordering them to stay back or face death. On observing the hopelessness of the conversation between her husband and the officer, Gul Jana, the *sardar's* wife, naively grabs a copy of the Koran as a shield to protect herself from bullets and attempts to cross the border to water her thirsty animals. Seeing this, the soldiers indiscriminately open fires killing a number of men, women, children and animals. Gul Jana, whose "belief that the Koran would prevent tragedy" (Ahmad 18) dies too in the firing and with this dies the innocence of her people, her culture and belief-system.

On one hand, the text narrates the exploitative mechanism of border-fencing which clearly demarcates the line between an insider and an outsider, while on the other hand it also gives an insight into tribal ways of subverting the rigidity of such narrow definitions. The scattered stories of this collection are all connected to each other through the central character of Tor Baz "the black falcon" (Ahmad 20) whose identity is never fully described as he does not belong to any particular tribal group. From the beginning till the end, he is seen traversing different localities and communities without being affiliated to any one of them. His nomadic self represents old tradition of a fluid and borderless world and further offers a scathing critique of the containment policy of nation-states. Tor Baz, in this way, stands in sharp contrast to the homogenizing policy of the state. He inhabits a self which seamlessly blends with people and cultures across and beyond tribal and national boundaries. His frequent

movement from one side of the border to other side weakens the demarcating tendency of the borderline.

Through Tor Baz, Ahmad attempts to scrutinize the exclusionary nature of border discourse deeply invested in the politics of otherness. At the core of the construction of a national boundary lies the concept of "protecting what is inside, by excluding whatever originates from the outside" (Newman 150). The framework of self versus the threatening other regulates the discriminatory existence of national borders. In fact, they operate by perpetuating and re-perpetuating the ideologies of difference and othering. However, the text appears to transcend this divisive world-view by shedding light on the multi ethno-cultural identity of Tor Baz. He resists being confined to any singular identity and rather signifies a trans-national, trans-border subjectivity. His multi-ethnic self offers the possibility of re-imagining a post-national space in which borders as well as individual identities are made to appear transparent and fluid. He inhabits a space which Homi Bhabha conceptualizes as a "liminal space". Bhabha's critical intervention in the nationalist discourse reduces national territory as a fragile and nebulous structure:

The boundary that marks the nation's selfhood interrupts the self-generating time of national production and disrupts the signification of the people as homogenous.[...] We are confronted with the nation split within itself, articulating the heterogeneity of its population. The barred Nation It/Self, alienated from its eternal self-generation, becomes a liminal signifying space that is internally marked by the discourses of minorities, the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities and tense locations of cultural difference. (212)

This site of heterogeneity located in the identity of Tor Baz finds expression in the curiosity of the Deputy Commissioner when he asks, "Tor Baz... tell me one thing. Who are you? You live with the Wazirs, but you are not one of them. With your looks, you could be taken for a Mahsud, which you are not, because your accent and your way of speaking are different. I have been trying to place you, but I have failed. Who are you, and where do you come from?" (Ahmad 25). Adopted by Baluch rebels who fight against the nation-state authorities and later on raised by Mullah Barreri, Tor Baz continues to travel across the landscape inhabiting multiple ethnic and cultural identities. He defies being fixed to any monolithic identity and easily moves in the dangerously unstable tribal world of bravery, courage, pride, humanity, and above all, poverty. In a land, "where survival is the only virtue", Tor Baz finds a way to

mediate safely between the authorities and the tribes to earn a living for himself (Ahmad 24). His hybrid self surpasses the limitations imposed by the nationalist ideology of "bordering ordering and othering" (Tripathi and Chaturvedi 173) and stimulates multiple engagements with cultural differences, individual contradictions and conflictual identities. This gets reflected in the way he answers to satiate the commissioner's curiosity, "It is true, I am neither a Mahsud nor a Wazir. But I can tell you as little about who I am as I can about who I shall be. Think of Tor Baz as your hunting falcon. That should be enough" (Ahmad 25). His position echoes Bhabha's "third space... which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized, and read anew (Po-co Studies Reader, Bhabha 208).

His aimless wanderings serve as a trope to dismantle the popular discourse of nationalism which homogenises disparate identities and fails to acknowledge their unique individuality. The way he mediates constantly between the authorities and his people without losing his subjectivity raises the question if borderland is actually a peripheral space or a focal point for the nation as it undergoes multiple social, economic and cultural transformations. He seems to proclaim the view that borderland zone is a zone of innumerable possibilities and cross-cultural conversation. By manipulating cultural border and boundaries for his own financial benefit, Tor Baz forms a cohesive and transnational identity for himself. Unlike his fellow tribesmen who feel a sense of displacement, Tor Baz feels a sense of "deep placement" and "deep territorialization" (Flynn 312) in order to be able to forge an interstitial identity for himself. He finds strong rootedness in the borderland space despite his rootless identity. The closing sentence of Tor Baz, "Who but God knows what the future holds for me and for this land?" (Ahmad 42) brings the narrative to a full circle indicating how the land and its people are entangled in a new understanding of the unusual dynamics of the borderland.

Jamil Ahmad's stories, therefore, weave diverse narratives that emerge from the lives lived on the liminality of the border space, and critique the discourse of the nation, nation-state and nationalism that gets formulated in the mainstream of the culture as an exclusive political structure.

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## *FICTION:*

### **The Fauji Boot**

-Khurram Siddiqui

It was made of pure, rough and hard black leather with a thick sole. Even a glance at it would infuse a chill in spine to an innocent child or to someone who saw it for the first time. It was especially designed and stitched to outlive the extremes of weather and to walk upon the rugged, uneven and stony paths. It reflected a sense of strength and power. One could well imagine and comprehend the consequences if it was hit on some soft skin. It could easily peel off the skin from that particular area of body where it was hit with full force.

As a child Momin could feel the awe and terror of that boot. Its impact was so far-reaching that whenever he slept he woke up with a jerk as it enlarged and hovered high upon his head like the Damocles' sword during the sleep. He knew that if he committed any act of mischief that may annoy his father he would be beaten hard by that boot. His first encounter with it occurred when he was merely six years old and his father came home on some off days from his unit. He was fascinated by his father's shining Khaki uniform and glittering black Fauji boot reaching till his calves. Once he was beaten with it when he spent too much time playing Carrom board. It left a red scar on his back and since then he was overawed by its strength. His father who was a soldier in Pakistan Army has told him in clear terms, "If you did not follow the kind of discipline and manners that I, as a soldier, was made to follow then you would not only be bound to fail but would also be beaten by this boot."

As a child he was quite talkative and restless. He could not sit peaceful and silent even for five minutes and used to express his views on every matter. He was particularly frightened by the boot when his father visited home after fortnight or a month. He prayed that his father might go back soon so that he might be saved from that impending threat. Although it frightened him whenever it was present in the home or at any place even when the wearer was not there but its terror was a bit lessened when his father was away. He was aware that his father would come to know about his activities if even he was not in the town and whenever he would return he might be punished ruthlessly. Therefore, he acknowledged its extraordinary effect right from his childhood and made every possible effort to avoid a contact with it. He also started to harbour a desire to become a soldier and to wear that magical shoe that might make a person look impressive and powerful. He unconsciously developed a submission to it though he detested it the most. As his mother loved him so much, she did not tell his father anything about him that may spark his anger. Since as a child he was restless he was bound to commit some impulsive acts. He improvised a novel plan to avoid it after his first beating. Whenever he committed any act of indiscipline, was not able to have Fauji hair cut or if his room was at sixes and sevens he kept its record in his mind and whenever his father returned home he himself picked that boot and told him about all his

mistakes and asked him to beat with the boot as a punishment. Upon this his father was first amazed and then he smiled, gave him a detailed lecture on the benefits of a disciplined life and advised him not to repeat that act again. When he grew older and started to go to school he realized its significance and overwhelming influence of the boot.

Everywhere in the school he was known as the son of an army man and the boot continued to haunt him wherever he went. Initially he wanted to get rid of that sticking identity and wanted to establish his own individual identity. When he wanted to get admission in college he was again encountered by its enormous and intrusive power. His father asked him to opt for the Science subjects in Intermediate classes but he was inclined to study Arts subjects. His father told him plainly to study science subjects or to face the wrath of boot. So he started to study the Science subjects unwillingly. He tried to study hard but he soon realized that he was not able to concentrate on science subjects. After coming back from the Science College and then going to an Academy to get the tuition of the science subjects in evening he felt a sense of futility. He thought painfully why he was forced to study the subjects which he did not like. He could not sleep the whole night and thought about different ways to get away from the shadow of the boot. If he had refused to study the subjects which his father had asked him to study he would have been kicked out of the home.

One day, he while finding no other way did not return home and without telling anybody made a bee line to railway station and boarded on the first train that was leaving the platform. He knew that soon his parents and particularly his father would come to know about his departure and he could not escape the beating by boot so he headed for an unknown destination. When asked the fellow passengers about the destination of the train they told him that the train was heading to Rawalpindi. He heaved a sigh of pain as he knew he would be caught. He did not tell anybody about his whereabouts and travelled silently. The ticket checker when saw him travelling without a ticket, demanded for money. He had only 400/- rupees with him at that time out of which he gave 200/- Rupees to the ticket checker who then allowed him to sit on the floor near the gate. While travelling he was all the time thinking about his mother who would be worried about him and was really terrorized by the boot. He after reaching Rawalpindi station went to a Madressah (a religious school) where many other students of his age were living and studying. He asked the administration of the Madressah to let him live there as he had no other place to go. They asked about his background and parents. He was confused by this question and could only say, "The Fauji Boot."

The administrator looked at him in surprise then nodded his head as if he had got the answer and asked him to stay there only for a few days as they could not enroll a student that could not tell about his particulars precisely. He thanked him and went into a room where some four to five students with beard and turbans were staying. He exchanged his views with them. Most of them have never attended any school or college and had been studying and living there since their childhood. They mostly studied Quran, Hadith and Islamic Jurisprudence. They told him many prayers and asked eagerly from him about the schools and colleges. He

told them many things about the school and college subjects and the atmosphere there which they listened to with keen interest. They looked at him as he was a creature from some other planet. He looked quite queer there wearing jeans and casual shirts. Upon their insistence he changed his clothes and wore the only Shalwar Kamiz which he has brought with him. The life there was also under a strict discipline. They had to offer prayers five times regularly and attend all the lessons till evening. Though those two or three days provided him with an opportunity to learn about the atmosphere of Madressah, he could not adjust himself there either and found that their life was harder than the life he was leading in his home. He was in a fix and could not decide what to do next. Soon after two days his pocket money was finished and the administrator of Madressah asked him to leave or to get proper enrollment in the Madressah. He thanked the kind religious scholar for his hospitality and came out of Madressah. Now he was left with no other option but to come out and face the stark realities of life. The boot again overwhelmed his thoughts and he feeling confused he just heaped on the soft grass in a public park. He remained there till evening then he decided to go to his uncle's home in Rawalpindi and stay there. He had no money so he hired a taxi and went to his uncle's home. He was already aware of his missing from home and he promptly informed his father about his safety. Now while sitting in his uncle's home, biting his nails, he was waiting for the Fauji boot. His uncle possessed a bit milder disposition than his father. He explained to him that as he did not want to study science subjects he could not thought of anything else but to run away from the authoritarian control of his father. Fortunately his uncle understood his problem and assured him that he would try his best to bring his father round. His father came infuriated, gave him a sound beating by the Fauji boot and took him to the home again. His uncle had held some conversation with his father about him and he remained as silent as a grave during the journey. He was constantly looking at the boot which had assumed a bigger and more terrifying shape. After reaching home, his father allowed him to appear in the exams of Arts subjects.

When he grew older and stepped into his practical life he fully realized that there was no escape from that boot. Its power was rooted in the overall culture of the land. It was ubiquitous and wielded an extraordinary power. He started to tune himself according to the discipline and manners as dictated by the boot in a language that had no words but rules. It was always visible and he kept in mind the shape of the boot while having hair-cut, studying and making friends. When he joined a school as a teacher it was also managed by the Fauji and he found that he had rightly gauged its power and influence. As he had adjusted himself according to the rules of the boot with great difficulty he already knew how to do the job. The years passed by as he was submissively working and living under its shadow and avoided to exercise his own free will as far as possible but it was an extremely arduous task for him as he had a free temperament. There used to be discussion in the staff room during the break in which the teachers discussed many things including religion and politics but he could not do so as he knew that anything silly may again revive the strength of the boot. During their discussion he found that boot was looming large as it was a determining factor even in the politics. He was fully aware that in every field of the country he would be under the gigantic shadow of the boot.



Due to his conversance with the language of the boot and submissiveness the principal of the school, a retired Army Colonel, liked him and referred to him as a good soldier. He was pleased that he was successful to come up to the expectations of the authorities that wore the black boot. He was hoping that the boot would never raise its ugly face again but his pleasure was short-lived. It again reared its ugly head when he got married. The principal of the school declined to give him any leave for marriage. When he made many requests and assured him of his allegiance to the boot even after his marriage he allowed him with the condition to bring his bride to him the next morning for breakfast with him. He was shocked to listen to it as how a groom, on the very next day of his marriage could bring his bride to the school. He refused and told him plainly that it is always difficult for a couple to get up early after their wedding night, get prepared and come to bow before the boot but as always the boot had its own logic hard, plane and indigestible. He went alone the next day of his marriage to pay homage to the boot and had to resign from his job. He joined another college in another city but unfortunately it was too beheaded by a Brigadier (Retired) Army. He again started working as per the rules of the boot. During his job in that college his wife gave birth to a baby girl in his home town. He asked for the leave from the Brigadier retired to go to his home town and see his child. He was again not allowed and the boot again grew enormous and bigger. He went to his hometown, met his wife and kid and came back to discover that he had to leave that job, too, as he has openly violated the commands laid down by the boot. He then decided not to join any institution which is headed by any in-service and retired military officer. He just wanted to get rid of the looming curse of the boot but it was only his wishful thinking. He applied at many places and at last he joined an institution that was headed by a civilian. But even there he could hear the footfalls of the people wearing that boot. Though it was not directly visible but it made its presence felt everywhere. At last, after some years of contentment the head of that institution was also replaced by a retired major of Army. He again started suffering from insomnia and psychological problems. In this institution of civilians, the boot did not even wait for any act of indiscipline by him and started to hit him hard from the outset. It was particularly allergic of writers and artists. He silently went to the office of chairman and gave him the boot to hit him as there was no escape. But he unlike his father did not smile and hit him with that boot again and again.

Glossary:

Fauji- soldier in Army

Shalwar Kamiz Pakistan National dress

Madressah: a school for Islamic learning with hostel.



## *POEMS:*

### **My Secret Garden**

-Ashok Bhargava

Morning sky promises  
a glossy pink  
color of the sunshine  
and a newly born  
yellow-green sprout  
a taste of honesty  
continuity  
brevity  
precision  
beauty  
born after yesterday's harvest  
that whispers to me  
the secret of reincarnation  
while my fingers snap  
a newly formed bean.  
After watering  
I become air  
Invisible.  
Flowers dance  
with the words  
I sow

### **Half A Face**

Sky is alive with bright hues of orange, yellow and gray  
beneath the dark green cedar tree.

It is quiet on the bench where we sit  
thinking darkness is just another shade of light.

Inhaling deep, you clear your throat  
wipe tears and begin to sing lyrics in a broken voice.

Telling stories of unfulfilled dreams  
you ripple with pain but regain composure soon.

You shine like a half moon  
thin like a sheet of paper  
sliced directly down the center  
with a razor-sharp precision.

### **A Sign**

The afternoon sun is a fireball  
skimming the horizon.

Inside the church hymns being sung  
filling the air with aphorism  
about finding the way home.

The fence separating priest's podium  
from the parishioners  
illuminated with the light filtering through

the stained-glass windows, created  
an image of Jesus fallen off the cross, stuck in the fence.

Awaken the gods  
mop up the ichor

make room for the homeless,  
aliens and destitute  
because it's a sign !

### **Kinship of Ganga**

Today is a colorful day,  
blossoms bend like an arch  
in the perfumed fresh wind.

Silky sun-rays are warm,  
the birds fly around  
with melodies of delight.

I step into crystal clear water  
that has absorbed  
ashes and bones of my ancestors.

It makes me realize  
that I will reap eternity here  
when it will absorb my ashes too.

I see distant things  
as if they were close and  
take a distanced view of close things.

I know truth must be seen as  
what it is,  
not what I want it to be.



## Oman

-Amita Sanghavi

### I

A poem:  
Hesitant,  
Hidden in a dance  
Behind a half glance.  
I quietly pick it up  
Hold it on my tongue,  
And dress it in words.

### II.

Before it escapes, I catch  
The shy song  
That tried to hide  
And note by note,  
I write.

### III

My eyes,  
Gliding through massive paintings  
Scores of poems  
Rush to me,  
I stuff my mouth  
As the words crowd.  
I let out the lyrics,  
  
I spell them firmly  
They sit down  
On the page  
Looking all dainty:  
A new-born poem,  
Stares back sweetly.



## Book Review

### *A Farewell to Gabo and Mercedes: A Son's Memoir*

-Rajesh Sharma

Memory is our gift and curse. It gives us identity but also makes us vulnerable. We do not want to remember that we live in time, in death's shadow. A memoir, even a short one, is a marathon of heroic and tender remembering in search of reconciliation. It redefines the writer's relation with time, with all that exists in time and will cease to exist with its passage.

Rodrigo Garcia's *Farewell* is a son's memoir of his departed parents, Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Mercedes Barcha. He is a screenwriter and director and lives in Los Angeles. Conscious of the formidable shadow cast by his famous father, he chose to follow a different calling instead of becoming a writer. And yet the reader of this moving little book, which is at once serious and light, cannot but admire his mastery of the story teller's craft. The son rises to stand in his own circle of light, with a grace that impresses and touches. The portrait he draws of Marquez is refracted through a relationship that is affectionate but complicated.

He grieves without inhibition and writes earnestly about grieving. And his control never loosens. You watch him watching himself and can see that the control comes from a firmly maintained inner distance. You sense it also in the narrative economy, in the solemn rhythm and in the pace of narration, which is of a mourning procession.

Rodrigo faces up to the harrowing reality of Gabo's disintegrating self as dementia progressively eats away the aging writer's memory. The old man is distraught by the prospect of a mind without memory, his principal tool and raw material. One day the secretary sees him standing alone in the garden, brooding. I'm crying, he tells her, but without tears. The coming end makes him immensely sad, he tells his son.

That Rodrigo is a discerning reader with a passion for writing is obvious from his selection of the passages from Marquez's novels that adorn the five parts of the book as epigraphs. Premonition lights them up, as if their writer had somehow foretold his own fate in the stories he spun.

Rodrigo reminds the reader that for Marquez the demand of writing was absolute: 'If you can live without writing, don't write.' The fulfilment it brought was absolute too: 'There is nothing better than something well written.' The man of cinema that he is, Rodrigo cannily chooses what to show of his father's life and work to the reader. The glimpses unfurl like movie clips of stunning clarity and meticulous detail. You get to see Marquez on his writing desk with his immense powers of concentration. You admire his austere discipline and perseverance. You are astonished by his disarming simplicity: he would say that nothing interesting had happened to him after the age of eight, which echoes in Rodrigo's own conviction from experience that 'most things worth knowing are still learned at home'. Marquez was suspicious of hierarchies instituted in the arts and mocked the itch to intellectualise that afflicts many professional readers of literature. He disagreed with those

who thought that the novel was an easier and freer form for telling one's stories. It had to have a rigorously worked out shape, he believed, within which alone the story could come alive.

Mercedes died in 2020, six years after her husband's death. Rodrigo's relationship with her was, in comparison, uncomplicated and warm. She was a simple woman and had no higher education. When during Gabo's memorial service the Mexican president described her as a widow, she was offended. 'I am not the widow. I am me,' she would later tell people. In spite of her husband's enormous shadow, she had grown to be 'a great version of herself', as Rodrigo says with a supreme bow to her memory.

This is a mourner's memoir no doubt, but it is more about life. In *Love in the Time of Cholera*, Marquez wrote: 'It is life, more than death, that has no limits.' His son keeps that faith.



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